

APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS	29461
ASSYRIAN RESOURCE CENTRE	29431
BARBARA WISEMANTEL, McLEAN CARE RESIDENTIAL CENTRE VOLUNTEER	29490
BIOSECURITY	29457
BOARDING HOUSES	29502
BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS	29472
BUSHFIRE RISK MANAGEMENT	29452
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	29420, 29462
CABRAMATTA ELECTORATE BUDDHIST COMMUNITY EVENTS	29501
CHARLES DALEY ACT OF BRAVERY	29491
COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION	29462
COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF POLICING PROGRAM	29494
COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS	29488
CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS) BILL 2014	29422
CORAKI HEALTH SERVICES	29497
DAPTO RESPITE CENTRE	29499
DAVIDSON ELECTORATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS	29504
DEATH OF THE HONOURABLE NEVILLE KENNETH WRAN, AC, CNZM, QC, A FORMER PREMIER, MINISTER OF THE CROWN, MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND MEMBER FOR BASS HILL	29474, 29475
DISTINGUISHED VISITORS	29475
ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION	29458
FAIRFIELD CITY LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS	29503
FAIRFIELD FOOD SERVICES FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY	29488
FAIRFIELD LAW EXPO	29490
FEDERAL BUDGET	29504
HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (GUARANTEEING FREE PUBLIC HOSPITAL SERVICES) BILL 2014	29420
HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS	29451, 29454
HUME COAL PROJECT	29493
HUNTER NEW ENGLAND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND COUNSELLING SERVICES	29437
INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT (MINISTERIAL CODE OF CONDUCT) BILL 2014	29422
IVY AND ROSE FLOWERS	29489
JEWISH LAG BAOMER	29491
JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE	29445
KIAMA STUDENT LEADERS FORUM	29499
LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE	29448, 29449
MACQUARIE GENERATION	29455
MAITLAND ELECTORATE SCHOOLS	29490
MARIE ADAMS, AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS AWARD	29505
MEDICARE CO-PAYMENT	29453
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES	29459
MOOREBANK INTERMODAL TERMINAL	29501
MR AND MRS GRAY FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY	29491
MR AND MRS ROSSITER SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY	29491
MULTICULTURAL DISABILITY ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION	29489
NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK	29496
NEWCASTLE TRANSPLANT GROUP	29505
OCCULI KENNELS BEST OF BREED	29491
PENRITH POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARDS	29490
PETITIONS	29463
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	29492
QUESTION TIME	29451
RABITAH INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY	29489
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT	29506
RACING ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (SPORTS BETTING NATIONAL OPERATION) BILL 2014	29420
RAUL VELLANI, NEW SOUTH WALES LIONS YOUTH OF THE YEAR	29489
RESOURCES FOR REGIONS	29460

RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (VEGETATION CLEARING) BILL 2014	29470
STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2014	29466
SUTHERLAND SHIRE MAYORAL DEBUTANTE CHARITY BALL	29488
TRIBUTE TO COLIN CONDON	29491
TRIBUTE TO JOYCE STEVENS	29492
TURKEY MINE EXPLOSION	29495
VISITORS	29451, 29462
VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AWARDS 2014	29490
WAGGA WAGGA ELECTORATE GOVERNOR VISIT	29498
WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2014	29463

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 29 May 2014

The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

RACING ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (SPORTS BETTING NATIONAL OPERATION) BILL 2014

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (GUARANTEEING FREE PUBLIC HOSPITAL SERVICES) BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr John Robertson, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [10.06 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The change that Labor seeks to enshrine today is fundamental. Free access to hospital emergency rooms in New South Wales is non-negotiable. Today is our opportunity to guarantee the protection of our hospital emergency rooms from the obscene precedent set by Tony Abbott's general practitioner [GP] tax. Our society is based on the principle that hospitals are open to young and old people, the wealthy and the poor who need them in an emergency at any time of day, even the middle of the night. Labor built Medicare. Labor is proud of Medicare and Australians are ferociously protective of it. They know how precious it is compared with the inequitable healthcare systems that are found elsewhere in the world. They also know that the Abbott budget trashes Medicare. A \$7 GP tax from a Government that promised no surprises and no excuses is a very nasty surprise and the \$15 billion ripped from New South Wales public hospitals is a complete kick in the guts.

How dare Tony Abbott and the Liberals kill off our system of universal health care without saying a word before the last election? Tony Abbott may be wheeling the cash registers into the GP clinics but members on this side will not allow the Premier to wheel the cash registers into public hospitals. Today the Parliament has an opportunity to protect New South Wales hospitals from this garbage and from a weak and wobbly Premier who cannot stand up to Tony Abbott, his best mate. Under the bill Labor seeks to amend section 57 of the Health Services Act 1997 to prevent a patient in a public hospital from being charged for any health service that is currently free. The bill further states that even if any law or agreement between the Commonwealth and New South Wales is amended to provide for the charging of a co-payment, a New South Wales hospital is not entitled or authorised to charge any fee. Labor's reason for introducing the bill is simple. The Liberal Party in New South Wales cannot be trusted to keep access to public hospitals free.

Across this nation families are frightened out of their wits by Tony Abbott's \$7 GP tax. The tax will not only apply to GP visits; it will also apply to blood tests, X-rays, infants needing immunisation for whooping cough, women worried about breast lumps and pensioners vulnerable to the flu. In fact, if a person with a chronic condition has to see a doctor two or three times a week and maintains a constant log of prescriptions, that person's liability under this tax is endless. The people know something else: the \$7 GP tax introduced by Tony Abbott will not remain at \$7. It will rise to \$15; it will sneak up to \$30. If the Prime Minister puts his hand on his heart and rules out such an increase who would believe him anyway after what we witnessed less than a

month ago in his first budget? The real tragedy of this GP tax is that its poison will seep right across our healthcare system. Our GP clinics do not exist in isolation. If there is a \$7 GP tax many people will try to evade it by turning up at the free public hospital. This will especially be the case for the most vulnerable in our society and people such as pensioners. Indeed, the Commission of Audit made exactly the same point. I quote from the commission's report:

By introducing co-payments for services that are currently covered by bulkbilling there is a risk of cost shifting as some patients may seek out free treatment in the emergency room of public hospitals for services that would more appropriately be treated by a general practitioner.

The report continued:

To address this issue State Governments should consider introducing equivalent co-payments for certain emergency room settings.

The Abbott budget adopted this recommendation explicitly permitting States to introduce a new charge for hospital emergency visits. It is hard to overstate how foolish such a policy would be. The most dangerous act any government could undertake would be to deter someone from reporting to hospital for what turns out to be a serious risk to their health. That is exactly what Tony Abbott's GP tax will do, and a hospital tax would do the same. Across New South Wales thousands of families could literally be forced to choose whether to feed their sick children that night or take them to a hospital. They may be forced to stay at home anxious at how little money is in the household budget, unaware that their little girl's earache is actually pneumonia or their little boy's stomach pain is actually appendicitis.

We should never want to live in a State where parents are forced to make such a life or death decision—namely, to self-diagnose from a position of ignorance or cut off from expert advice. Our doctors never fail to remind us of the importance of preventative health. They tell us that early detection saves money and it saves lives. A tax on emergency hospital rooms would turn this decades-long wisdom on its head. It would send a shameful message to every person in New South Wales—namely, do not bother accessing our hospital system until you are in so much pain you can barely pick up the phone to call for an ambulance.

There is a reason everyone from the Australian Medical Association to the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association has described a hospital tax as unworkable. Under Medicare, fought for and delivered by Labor, our hospitals have traditionally been cash-free zones. Our doctors, nurses and surgeons are meant to be saving lives, not acting as tax collectors for the Government. It is not their job to rattle the tin and demand cash before treating someone's bloody gash to the head or performing emergency heart surgery. Simon Judkins from the Australian College for Emergency Medicine told the ABC:

Trying to ask people to pay ... whatever the co-payment is up front would be flawed and very difficult to manage. And doing it retrospectively once the actual diagnosis has been made and then somebody deciding whether this was a GP-type problem, again ... the bureaucracy involved in any sort of system like that would be impossible ...

In other words, doctors and nurses know the idea of a hospital tax is ludicrous. It is obscene; it is also self-defeating. It would cost more to collect the revenue than the revenue received. This is a final vital reason why Labor's bill must be passed as a matter of urgency. The New South Wales Premier cannot be trusted to stand-up to Tony Abbott. The Premier's stance on the Abbott budget has been one of phoney opposition from day one. The morning after the budget the Premier said it was a "kick in the guts" to New South Wales. Two days later he was standing next to the Prime Minister and had the chance to give him a public drubbing then and there about the budget.

Dennis Napthine had an angry phone call with the Prime Minister; even Campbell Newman had a go. Our Premier hoisted the white flag almost immediately. The so-called "kick in the guts budget" was downgraded to a mere "challenge". To this day Premier Mike Baird has refused to condemn the Abbott Government's GP tax, the Abbott Government's petrol tax, the scandalous cuts to pensions and the Newstart allowance, and its unfair deregulation of university fees. When it comes to the Premier's view of the hospital tax we have seen the same weasel words. On Wednesday 14 May the Premier said that he would be ruling it out, but only days later standing shoulder to shoulder with his good mate Tony Abbott he said:

We'll be considering and obviously watching events as they unfold. We're in a position where we will monitor the impact on emergency departments and others—it is part of the broader discussion we want to have on health.

That was the Premier's chance, on behalf of the people of New South Wales, to stand-up to the Prime Minister. That was his chance to defend our public hospitals and do it to Tony Abbott's face. It was a real test of the

Premier's mettle. He failed. What on earth is the Premier talking about when he says he wants a broader discussion of the hospital tax? As far as Labor is concerned there is no broader discussion to be had. Free access to public hospital emergency wards is non-negotiable. But I fear if the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government supports the GP tax, then it has no option but to back the tax at the hospital ward. The taxes are inseparable. They are like two heads of the one monster. You cannot have one without the other.

Let us never forget that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has already ripped \$3 billion from hospitals in New South Wales. It has closed an entire ward at the Prince of Wales Hospital, cut the cardiac unit at Blacktown Mount Druitt Hospital, forced the maternity unit at Nepean Hospital to turn expectant mothers away, betrayed nurses from Lismore to Bathurst, left Sutherland and St George hospitals crying out for refurbishment and left the Hunter without a specialist eye clinic.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Oatley will have an opportunity to debate this issue at a later time. The member for Oatley will come to order.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The member for Oatley is getting rather excited. His reaction is an acknowledgement of the failures of this Government. As we sit here today, hospitals at Gosford, Wyong and Maitland have some of the most stressed and overwhelmed emergency departments in this State. Their treatment times are well in excess of the National Emergency Access Target. Across New South Wales in the last quarter, a whopping 33,678 patients or 6 per cent of total emergency admissions gave up and left hospital without receiving treatment. I very much fear that instead of owning up to their responsibilities to properly resource our hospital emergency wards and ease these crippling pressures, Liberal members in New South Wales are eager to follow their colleagues in Canberra. They are itching to shift more of the burden onto the seriously sick.

A tax on hospital emergency wards is in the Liberal Party's DNA. If the Premier is genuinely prepared to rule the tax out, I challenge him to back his words with bipartisan action. It is time to protect our hospitals and our patients—not just say it, but commit those principles to paper. Premier, if you truly oppose a hospital tax, then you should join with Labor and enshrine that position into law. A tax on hospital emergency visits must never be allowed in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Pursuant to sessional order General Business Orders of the Day (for Bills) proceeded with.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT (MINISTERIAL CODE OF CONDUCT) BILL 2014

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 8 May 2014.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.20 a.m.]: The introduction of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Bill 2014 is about hypocrisy, nothing more and nothing less. It is no surprise that it was introduced by Labor because they are the party of hypocrisy. In this bill there is no mention of Rex Jackson. In this bill there is no mention of Eddie Obeid. In this bill there is no mention of Ian MacDonald. In this bill there is no mention of the countless members of the Labor caucus who, because of their corrupt activities, have found themselves appearing before the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] either before or after this bill was introduced.

Labor created the job commission but no jobs. Labor created a petrol commissioner but, as it happened, prices kept going up. Labor welcomed the Vietnam veteran's home but they did nothing but criticise the Vietnam War and the veterans during that sad time in our nation's history. The Labor Party are all about hypocrisy. Remember the recent visit from the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince George. Labor Party members were falling over themselves to be photographed next to these members of the royal family but they forgot to mention that they are the party which wants Australia to become a republic. Labor salute the flag but they also want to change the flag. Labor want to get tough on alcohol-related crime but oppose measures to

reduce it. Labor talk about political donation reform but, when we scratch the surface, there is not one member of the Labor caucus who has not received donations from hoteliers and developers. Labor try to legislate against union corruption but they are bankrolled by corrupt unions.

Now Labor are trying to reduce corruption. They are acting in response to an inquiry into Labor corruption—that is, the systemic corruption of past Labor Governments. This is the same systemic corruption that let the Opposition Leader into this place and made him Leader of the Opposition. When I google the words "corrupt politician" guess what comes up? The top result is for Eddie Obeid. The list goes on: Rex Connor, Rex Jackson, Ian MacDonald, Karyn Paluzzano, Tony Sheldon, Craig Thomson and Richard Face. All these names of Labor Party members come up if you google "political corruption". The results list name after name of members of the party of those opposite.

Now those opposite stand up and try to legislate against corruption. They have forfeited the right to talk about corruption because they keep on preselecting and promoting corrupt politicians. How long did it take the Leader of the Opposition to report a \$3 million bribe? Did it take a day? Did it take a week? Did it take a month? No, it took the Leader of the Opposition three years to report a \$3 million bribe. The Leader of the Opposition forgot that he was offered a \$3 million bribe—that is not something the people on this side of the House would forget. I would imagine that it is not an everyday occurrence to be offered a \$3 million bribe. So when you get an offer of a \$3 million bribe, you might remember it. Being offered a \$3 million bribe must not be a big deal to the Leader of the Opposition; it was such a small thing that he forgot to mention it. He forgot about his \$3 million bribe. Now he has brought in this legislation. This is nothing more than hypocrisy.

Labor have no credibility. The people of New South Wales find them repugnant. They are repugnant in their failure to address corruption in this place. The fact that Labor even introduced this bill demonstrates their hypocrisy. Labor claim that legislation should be considered. So what have they done? They have introduced this legislation while a joint parliamentary committee inquiry is considering amendments to the disclosure obligations of members of Parliament. Talk about putting the cart before the horse—the horse has not even been born yet.

What has the Coalition Government been doing? I can list what the Government has done in this area. We delivered record funding to ICAC, the Audit Office of New South Wales, the New South Wales Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission [PIC]. They are receiving an additional \$121.5 million this financial year. We passed legislation to strengthen the powers of ICAC and provided additional protection to whistleblowers. Labor incentivised lobbyists' backroom deals, but our Government got rid of lobbyist success fees. We banned lobbying success fees. What are we doing? We are bolting shut the back door. We are ending the decisions-for-favours culture of Labor and the Hawker-Britton-led Labor Government.

The New South Wales Government will make publicly available records that show a quarterly diary summary of Ministers' external meetings. These will disclose the purpose of the meetings, the organisations represented and the details of any registered lobbyists present. I notice that 90 per cent of the Labor caucus has now left the Chamber because they do not want to be exposed to this debate about how corrupt the Labor caucus has been, the history of the Labor caucus and the establishment of ICAC. We are establishing an independent regulator of lobbyists under the New South Wales Electoral Commission. We are applying a new set of ethical standards to all third-party lobbyists and others who lobby. Furthermore, the independent regulator will have the power to investigate breaches and impose sanctions.

For third-party lobbyists, the primary sanction will be removal from the register—that is, a ban on lobbying. For other organisations, they will be placed on a watch list, which will restrict their access to government. At any meeting two departmental officials, including a note-taker, will be present. We are ending impropriety in government. We are bolting shut the back door. Labor are continuing their hypocritical whingeing. But Labor have no right to legislate on this. Labor are the party that the people of New South Wales kicked out at the last election. They were sick and tired of Labor's culture of corruption, back-door deals and money for favours. Labor's record on this matter is appalling. I oppose the legislation. The people of New South Wales want to see something done, and the Baird Government is responding with vigour.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [10.27 a.m.]: I speak on the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Bill 2014. I note the interjections from the member for Oatley in regard to the previous speaker. What those opposite should realise is that, as politicians, we have never had a lower standing in the community. They may know it and privately acknowledge it but they do not say it publicly.

Mr Greg Smith: Well it is your previous Government's Ministers who have given them that low standing and reputation. The member speaking will not answer that interjection because he does not want it recorded in the *Hansard*.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! The member for Epping will come to order.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The interjection of the member for Epping is telling. It reinforces what those opposite refuse to acknowledge. The worst thing we can have in politics is the bad apples theory—that is, it is just a couple of bad apples; it is not the rest of us. The greatest protection and means of restoring the trust of the community in every member of Parliament is the disinfectant of sunlight. If anybody thinks that only one side of politics is full of shonks and shysters then they are out of touch. They are wrong, and every one of them knows it. The greater protection we can have is to know and to be absolutely sure that a code of conduct is applicable and that everything is publicly available. The culture of decisions behind closed doors for vested interests has brought the standing of politicians to its current level. Until it changes, with bipartisan support, we will continue to be harassed when we hand out leaflets at railway stations.

The bills introduced by the Leader of the Opposition are a call for open, honest and accountable government. It is the only way that we will restore public faith in our politicians and attract people to the political process who wish to contribute to our State. The Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] scandals involving both sides of politics over the years have damaged the stature of politicians in the community. I have acknowledged the interjections of members opposite because I wanted to place them on *Hansard* to show that they say one thing and do another. This morning's *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial notes that the Premier has said he wants to do something. He has appointed an eminent body made up of three highly respected individuals who have an enormous amount of experience, but he has given them so long to report that the Parliament will never be able to discuss their recommendations.

Dr Schott, Mr Tink and Mr Watkins will be able to make an enormous difference to the people of this State if the Premier gives them the opportunity to do so. This can, should and must be done. Otherwise, they can make all the recommendations they like but they will not be able to do anything about the problem. The Government's opposition to this bill says it all. It is all bluster, spin and rubbish. That is why we, as members, all get treated badly by the community. They do not trust us, and who would? Both sides have been wilfully blind to completely unacceptable behaviour by members of both parties. This bill is an attempt to do something about that. Those opposite make meaningless interjections and rhetoric, but the people want action.

I urge the former Attorney General to publicly call for the eminent people on the committee to be enabled and to have their recommendations discussed by him and all members of this Parliament. That is how we will clean up the political process and eliminate the cash-for-comments and cash-for-decisions culture that the public believes we have. The previous speaker mentioned the publishing of ministerial diaries at three monthly intervals. That is utterly inadequate. If Barack Obama can publish his diaries quicker than that, why can't we? As to the disclosure by members of their annual taxable income, anyone can contact the Clerk's office to read my taxable income. Why can the same not be said of members opposite? What have they to fear from making their taxable income available and it being read by Andrew Clennell? He and the people of the State have a right to read it. What is the problem with that?

Furthermore, what is the problem with disclosing commercial arrangements that relatives of members have entered to? Members who are honest will have nothing to fear. When Sean Nicholls reviewed the pecuniary interest declarations of the shadow Cabinet he said words to the effect that it was a "pretty prosaic" lot. "Pretty prosaic" is probably the best description of the pecuniary interests of the shadow Cabinet. What about Government members? Why will not one of them publicly declare his or her taxable income from the past year? This bill will mean that members must disclose their pecuniary interests, taxable income and the commercial arrangements of their relatives.

In addition, the bill will go even further and deal with the code of conduct for Ministers of the Crown. How can we allow a loophole that provides that the code of conduct for Ministers is not adopted for the purposes of section 9 of the Act? Labor's bill acts on the recommendation of the Independent Commission Against Corruption to adopt the code of conduct for Ministers as an applicable code for the purposes of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. The code of conduct is not particularly onerous for an honest human being. What are Ministers hiding?

Mr Greg Smith: Ha.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I note the interjection of the member for Epping. If he and all the Government members had nothing to hide they would support this bill. This is a bill for the future. Twenty years from now there will be no way that a person will be able to become a member of Parliament without publicly disclosing all of the matters addressed in this bill. That is the way the world is going. The days of decisions behind closed doors where spivs, shonks and shysters can attend fundraisers to duce Ministers and then meet in their offices without the public knowing can, must and will go. Government members can knock this bill back today and tomorrow and do their best to hide behind their arguments that the bill is unimportant rubbish, or they can simply do what honest human beings do: tell the truth, tell it early and tell it themselves. That is what this bill is about. I urge members to support it.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping) [10.35 a.m.]: It is interesting to see the crocodile tears of members on the other side as they try to drag our side of politics in with theirs. We have a Leader of the Opposition who is begging us to disclose everything. How many years did it take him to disclose the \$3 million bribe offer? Did he ever disclose that he had stayed at Eddie Obeid's chalet? What other favours did Eddie Obeid do for him? That is what I want to know. I want the Leader of the Opposition here on oath to tell us what happened. I offer to cross-examine him about his past.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: Standing Order 76 requires members to speak to the subject matter of the bill in order to be relevant. I ask that you bring the member back to the leave of the bill.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I remind members to speak to the leave of the bill, which is a broad-ranging bill.

Mr GREG SMITH: This is an extremely broad bill that addresses codes of conduct and declarations by members. I will say here and now that the only income I have is that which I get from this Parliament. I would say that is the case for most members. What does it prove to show that to the—

Dr Andrew McDonald: It proves you are telling the truth.

Mr GREG SMITH: Are the journalists going to declare their earnings and all the gifts that they receive?

Dr Andrew McDonald: They don't need to.

Mr GREG SMITH: No, because they do not have to—nor do we. Members on this side of the House are not going to abide by the directions of a group that is part of a rotten culture which over the past three or four years has been exposed as the worst corruption in this State. Eddie Obeid is said to have received \$30 million from the Mount Penny development, which Ian Macdonald rubberstamped.

Mr Mark Coure: How much?

Mr GREG SMITH: He received \$30 million and stood to make \$100 million, as I understand it. Labor members should hang their heads in shame because that man had enormous power. It was not just him who was filling his pockets. He and his mate Tripodi—Eddie and Joe—controlled the Labor Party in this State.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Back to the bill.

Mr GREG SMITH: No, we are talking about codes of conduct and corruption. When Labor members claim to be the bastions of decency and purity we should investigate how sincere or hypocritical that is. They should not be the pots calling the kettle black. They should hang their heads in shame and apologise to the people of this State for the years of bad government run by people who were corrupt. According to the evidence in the ICAC, Joe Tripodi supported releasing a document to damage Labor candidate Jodi McKay.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: It relates to Standing Order 76. This debate is about the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Code of Conduct) Bill 2014.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I am familiar with the short title of the bill. I am also familiar with the content of the second reading speech of the Leader of the Opposition, who may have strayed from the leave of the bill. In the circumstances, it is reasonable that latitude be extended to all members. I will listen carefully to the member for Epping to ensure that his contribution generally is within the leave of the bill.

Mr GREG SMITH: I will pose a question to those bastions of purity on the other side, whose organisation for 16 years did very little in developing infrastructure to advance the cause of this State. The only thing on infrastructure that they did was introduce part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Under part 3A dishonest developers were able to give large amounts of money to a dishonest party. We eliminated part 3A because it led to corruption. Part 3A was a fester on this State. One Labor Premier, Nathan Rees, recognised the damage that his predecessors had done to this State.

In a desperate attempt to survive—apart from wasting probably a billion dollars on the Rozelle Metro, which I do not believe involved corruption but was more to do with bad judgement and bad government—and to try to distract from the corruption that had come from part 3A and the enormous donations being made to the Labor Party by developers, Nathan Rees put a ban on developer donations to his party. The reason for that ban was the guilt of Labor—guilt that had been exposed by this side. Now they are the pot calling the kettle black. They now complain that Coalition members do not want to show their tax returns and that if we did perhaps they would show the same sort of money.

Dr Andrew McDonald: You can look at mine.

Mr GREG SMITH: I do not know whether the member charges for his other services, or whether he is still providing them, or whether he is declaring that he is working at another job one day a week.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Both. Read them. Yes, it is there.

Mr GREG SMITH: Good. I am just checking on these things, because he has written himself as a man of purity and a man of decency. But he too must stand the test. He is a good man, and I am not going to attack him. But I will attack others who have given this Parliament a bad name. This bill is not needed because we are bringing in those practices. As the Premier has said, we are approving the recommendation from ICAC that a ministerial code of conduct become applicable under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, giving them the power to investigate and make findings on a Minister's compliance with the code. We are introducing these reforms and rules on lobbyists.

Lobbyists were a big problem under Labor. It was lobbyists under Labor that really gave lobbyists a bad name. Ministerial diaries is another thing Labor governments did not deal with in their 16 years. They never exposed ministerial diaries. Boy, would it not have been fun if Obeid's, Macdonald's and Tripodi's diaries were open to scrutiny and we could see who they were meeting. Would they be filled in accurately? That is a good question. I do not know the answer.

Mr Nick Lalich: Why didn't you blokes put up amendments?

Mr GREG SMITH: We did not have the numbers, just as you do not have the numbers at the moment. The reason you do not have the numbers is that the people of New South Wales got so sick of your corruption and mismanagement that they flushed you down the drain and gave us a go, and they will continue to give us a go.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [10.43 a.m.]: I speak on the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Bill 2014. I have listened to the good member for Epping and the good member for Baulkham Hills. Although they turned up the volume somewhat, it was enjoyable to listen to them because in essence their arguments are exactly the arguments that are needed to realise why this bill is important. It is good that members can stand in this place and quote chapter and verse of corrupt activities; undoubtedly, more Government members will list all sorts of corrupt activities associated with this Parliament, including those of individuals and those resulting from structures.

Mr Andrew Fraser: In ministerial offices.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: In ministerial offices—the whole lot. That is exactly why this bill is so important. If there had not been past corruption, those opposite would not have any contribution to make to this debate. But they do have contributions, and they have been good. They have given a whole bunch of reasons why this bill is so important. They will mention names like Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald, and we could mention Nick Greiner, Robert Askin and Barry O'Farrell. The reality is that ICAC has already claimed the scalps of two Liberal Party Premiers. All this bill seeks is more transparency. The reputations of politicians are in tatters. I am of the opinion that almost everyone who serves in this Chamber and the other place are good, honest people. But there are rotten eggs and some rotten structures. There have been rotten eggs and rotten structures on both sides of politics.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Don't try to share your blame with us.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: There are those on the other side who would deny that the corruption that exists on their side was the cause of the tattered reputation of politicians. I stand in this debate saying, "Yes, we have had problems in the Labor Party." I am honest and bold enough to say that, and I ask those opposite to be likewise honest and bold about their side of politics, because the reality is that there have been problems on both sides. So why fear this transparency measure? That is the crux of this debate.

Members can argue that this transparency could have been introduced in the past, or they could argue that it has been done in part here and there. But why fear the call for transparency proposed by the bill? That will be for those on the other side of the Chamber to argue and debate. I urge anyone reading the record of this debate to look at the full range of the debate, because no matter whose side you read you will be left wondering why this bill was not supported. Schedule 1 to this bill seeks to insert in the Independent Commission Against Corruption Regulation a new schedule 1, which in part A outlines two principles, which this debate is all about. Those two principles to guide ministerial conduct are:

1. Ministers will perform their duties honestly and in the best interests of the people of New South Wales.
2. Ministers will be frank and honest in official dealings with their colleagues and will maintain the confidentiality of information committed to their secrecy.

Anyone who reads this debate, knowing now what sits in the bill and what it is about, must wonder, "Why would you possibly vote against that? Why would you possibly vote against honesty, frankness and confidentiality?" It will be difficult for the public to understand that some members would vote against that. It will be very difficult for the public to understand why someone would vote against that when they read the speech of the member for Baulkham Hills, who spoke about the ethical code being introduced for lobbyists. That member said that an ethical code was going to be introduced for lobbyists, but at the same time he said that that ethical code should not, could not and cannot apply to politicians or to the behaviour of our Ministers. On the one hand, very proud is the member for Baulkham Hills that there will be an ethical code for lobbyists but, on the other hand, he is saying, "Oh, but Ministers cannot have a code like that," which can be tested by ICAC.

It is just bizarre. Listening to this debate, I feel like I am in some sort of alternative universe. I have read the disclosures of those opposite and they show almost nothing. I am amazed at how many members of this Parliament do not own a house, do not have debts, do not have investments, do not have shares; they do not have anything. I am amazed. I welcome anyone to look at my disclosure because I have listed everything. Members of the general public are asked to have confidence in their politicians. We go to them every four years and ask them to trust us and to vote for us. In response to that trust we cover up, we disguise, we hide, we protect, and we bury the details. We ask the electorate to trust us but we hide everything. That is what happens in 2014 in New South Wales politics. It has happened for eons and it needs to stop. Members of Parliament must be transparent in their dealings and that is what this bill is about.

I return to that important phrase in the bill: "Ministers will exercise their office honestly and in the public interest." Honestly and in the best interests of the people of New South Wales—why is that something that we want to hide? This bill is about members of Parliament declaring their taxable income, which includes their investments, their trusts, and their outside business interests. This bill is about members of Parliament declaring in their pecuniary interests the positions of their spouses and dependants and whether their family members hold contracts with the New South Wales Government. That seems to me to be fair and reasonable. I return to the matter of the confidence of the people of New South Wales. It does not matter whether a member is an Independent or a member of The Greens, The Nationals, Labor or Liberal, they would have to agree that the confidence of the public in politicians today is at an all-time low. If we can agree on that fact as a starting point, regardless of whose fault it is—

Mr Andrew Fraser: You don't want to admit guilt, do you?

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Coffs Harbour. I defy him to explain to the Chamber why he refuses to acknowledge the behaviour of Nick Greiner, Robert Askin, Chris Hartcher, Chris Spence and Barry O'Farrell. I challenge him to explain why the Independent Commission Against Corruption has claimed two of his Premiers.

Mr John Williams: Nick Greiner? Go back to Nick Greiner, mate—found not guilty.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: And what did those opposite do with Nick Greiner? They rolled him back to be the head of Infrastructure NSW. He was disgracefully removed as the Premier of New South Wales and those opposite brought him right back. It would be like us bringing Eddie Obeid back to be the chair of Infrastructure NSW. It is ridiculous, bizarre, and those opposite should grow up, 'fess up and claim what they own. They are yours, not ours. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [10.53 a.m.]: I want to put some thoughts on the record in relation to this legislation.

Mr Nathan Rees: "Thoughts" is a strong term.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Toongabbie, who at a media conference in this place said, "If I am not Premier at the end of this day, you can blame Eddie Obeid and Joe Tripodi"—because they are crooks. The ICAC has proven them to be crooks. The member for Cessnock can be forgiven because he is a relatively new member in this place and he comes here with an innocence that is to be applauded. I will read the "General obligations" of the bill onto the record:

Part 1 General obligations

- 1.1 Ministers will exercise their office honestly and in the public interest.
- 1.2 Ministers should avoid situations in which they have, or might reasonably be thought to have, a private interest that conflicts with their public duty.
- 1.3 In conformity with their Executive Councillor's oath and the requirement of confidentiality of Cabinet proceedings, Ministers will make no unauthorised use or disclosure of information committed to their secrecy.
- 1.4 A Minister shall be responsible for ensuring that members of his or her staff are made aware of their ethical responsibilities. A Minister shall require such disclosure or divestment of personal interests by staff members as seems appropriate to the Minister.
- 1.5 A Minister shall be frank and honest in official dealings with colleagues.
- 1.6 A Minister has a duty to Parliament to account, and be held to account, for the policies, decisions and actions of the Minister's departments and agencies.
- 1.7 A Minister shall give accurate and truthful information to Parliament correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.8 A Minister who knowingly misleads Parliament will be expected to offer his or her resignation to the Premier.
- 1.9 A Minister should be as open as possible with Parliament and the public.

That is a list of the endemic failures of the former Labor Government. The member for Cessnock claimed, under the protection of privilege, that Nick Greiner and Barry O'Farrell were corrupt and found to be corrupt by ICAC. That is a lie. He is misleading the House and the people of New South Wales. Nick Greiner was found to be corrupt but the decision was overturned by the court. Barry O'Farrell made a statement and on the basis of his own ethical standards and the standards of this Government he resigned as Premier. People in the street say to me that Barry O'Farrell should not have resigned because he had not declared a bottle of wine that he had no memory of receiving.

Mr Nick Lalich: It was \$3,000 worth.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: We know about the activities of the member for Cabramatta on Fairfield council. He has a hide to speak in this place about corruption. We know all about his actions and one day we might put them on the record. In introducing this legislation the Labor Party is attempting to sweep under the carpet the abuses of its 16 years in power. Sixteen years during which we saw a conga line of Ministers going before ICAC and findings that they had acted corruptly within their portfolios—corrupt actions that would return tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars to them and their associates. That is not chicken feed. They were taking money away from the public of New South Wales whilst acting as Ministers in responsible positions.

The "General obligations" in the bill highlight the failings of the last Labor Government. The bill says: "A Minister shall give accurate and truthful information to Parliament correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity." That is exactly what Barry O'Farrell did. Eddie Obeid, Joe Tripodi, Ian Macdonald and

Tony Kelly still deny that they did wrong, yet they have been found to be corrupt by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. This legislation will not correct that sort of behaviour; it will still go on. These blokes swept it under the carpet and now they say, "Look at us. Aren't we pure?" In my maiden speech I referred to the word "honourable" in relation to members. I would say that the vast majority of the Ministers in the last Government did not act with any honour.

Mr Nathan Rees: The majority.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: The vast majority. I was about to accept the member's interjection on the basis that I think he did have some integrity as Premier.

Mr Clayton Barr: A good Minister too.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I know he was, and I have told him that. He gave me a chainsaw for the East Bank Fire Brigade, with which the bureaucrats were playing games. Some political areas had integrity, but all the rot, nonsense and filth happening in ICAC is the Labor Party brand. That demonstrates absolutely that this legislation is nothing more than a smokescreen. Anyone who takes an oath of office as a Minister or officer of this Parliament has an obligation. Unfortunately, ICAC was brought in to uncover corruption within the public service, which includes the New South Wales Parliament. I challenge those opposite to read section 8 of the Act and familiarise themselves with their duties not only as a member of this place but also as representatives of their communities. I was going to say that the hypocrisy in this debate from those opposite is unbelievable, but that is not the case; it is believable because as has been said quite often, though perhaps jokingly—but it probably is true—ICAC has car parks reserved for Labor Party members. People have been convicted.

Mr Richard Amery: There is subletting for you lot now.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: If members want to take the broad-brush view and if current allegations against Liberal members are correct, then it is a form of corruption. The funny part is that the money being identified currently was not put into anyone's hip pocket; it was used in election campaigns. Eddie Obeid, Ian Macdonald, Tony Kelly and all the rest stuck the money straight into their pockets purely for self-gain at the cost of the New South Wales taxpayers. When I was shadow Minister for Local Government the corruption at Strathfield council and all the others was appalling. This bill is nothing more than an attempt by a grubby party down to 20 members from the last State election to hide its history and say, "Look at us, aren't we clean?"

The Leader of the Opposition must be questioned regarding his role in the 47 coal seam gas exploration licences that were issued. His affiliation with Eddie Obeid and his promotion to the leadership of the Labor Party must be questioned. I might believe those opposite when they put up their hands and admit to the endemic corruption within the Labor Party for the past 16 years and earlier, and stop pointing the finger at those ICAC did not find corrupt and who walked away from responsibilities in this place, such as Barry O'Farrell. This legislation is a farce.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [11.02 a.m.]: I support the Independent Commission Against Corruption (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Bill 2014. Whenever I witness a contribution by the member for Coffs Harbour I always wonder why he does not start with the phrase, "Once upon a time" and conclude with "and they all lived happily ever after". Clearly, his penchant is for fairytales. Only moments ago he stood opposite, straight faced and in complete denial about the cavalcade of crooks from his own side being paraded before the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] in recent weeks. In stark contrast to Labor, those characters remain in this Chamber. The Obeids, Macdonalds and Kellys no longer are in the Labor Party, nor in the Parliament. But this Government is prepared to tolerate amongst its members the presence of characters who have been accused of unsavoury conduct by the commission down the road.

The member for Cessnock alluded to the crisis of confidence in the public domain about the behaviour, propriety, probity, public conduct, et cetera, of New South Wales politicians and Ministers. I agree with the member for Cessnock. From my recollection, I do not believe our standing has ever reached a lower ebb—certainly not in my lifetime. The government of the day cannot go too far in trying to remedy the situation. This bill is a sensible amendment to existing arrangements. A government cannot go too far in seeking to rectify public opinion of the administration of the State. Despite the happenings at ICAC in recent weeks, the loss of Ministers, the loss of a Premier and the crisis of confidence in the public domain, this Government has completely missed the boat on this issue.

The Millennium Forum and the Free Enterprise Foundation continue to operate, and the Liberal Party office has been folded into considerations around donation reform. That is a fundamental error and a clear demonstration that this Government simply does not get it. The Government has perpetuated existing arrangements that the public finds distasteful and which, arguably, are illegal. The State Liberal-Nationals Government, in cahoots with its head office, has systematically circumvented donations laws. The remedy is to shine light on all activities of Ministers and Government members. That is why this bill is important. I will not be lectured, nor will my colleagues, by a Government that is doing zip—absolutely zero—on this matter. We will not be lectured by this Government.

When we were in government we introduced a ban on developer donations. We started the process heading towards public funding of election campaigns. We introduced the lobbyist register. We introduced a code of conduct for lobbyists. We overhauled the Freedom of Information Act to make the decisions of the New South Wales administration the most transparent of any Australian jurisdiction and, arguably, the world. We will not be lectured to by a crowd that has seen its own cavalcade of crooks down the road and has done precisely zero to address the crisis of confidence the public has with this issue. This bill makes very sensible suggestions. The code of conduct should be known to all members, particularly Ministers of the Crown. No-one can reasonably assert that the bill is anything other than a sensible plank in an overall probity and transparency agenda. The opposition of Government members to this bill again demonstrates clearly that they just do not get it. The public is entitled to transparency, and probity checks and balances.

This bill seeks to deliver just that. The Government's opposition to the bill demonstrates that its members are out of touch and simply do not understand the public mood. Those opposite should walk down Martin Place or head out to the watering holes in Bourke, Swansea or wherever else and ask people what they think about the actions of government and what measures should be put in place. I challenge any Government member to outline the elements of this bill to any punter in their electorates because I know what will be the response. They will say, "You can't do it quickly enough." Those opposite are out of touch. They have missed the boat with this legislation. The new Premier has failed his first test. They have completely misread the public mood. This bill is an essential element to restore trust and public confidence in decision-making in New South Wales. Those opposite have missed the boat and failed miserably. I support the bill.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [11.08 a.m.]: I shall make a brief contribution to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Bill 2014. It is interesting to talk about people in positions of responsibility and office. Unfortunately, it all comes down to the person's background. It is not about putting in rules and regulations; it is about the individuals who take up those positions and their *modus operandi*. From past failures, I guess on both sides of this House, and the greatness we have seen from representatives and Ministers, one must examine their background and *modus operandi* because they determine character. I remember events within a particular financial organisation many years ago. The finance industry is the most regulated industry. It operates with extreme codes and compliances to ensure nothing unpredictable happens, and, obviously, to control those appointed to manage finances.

I remember an occasion when the manager of this organisation said to me, "This guy has just rewritten the book. He has found a process in that document whereby he can be corrupt." The rules and regulations, and codes of practice that are put in place in this organisation look good on paper but the ultimate responsibility comes down to an individual. It is not about the set of rules that he or she abides by. Ministers of this State go through a swearing-in process that establishes that they have a responsibility to conduct their duties on behalf of the people of New South Wales.

Yesterday I highlighted what occurs when we manage electoral funding in this State. Once again it comes down to how people are appointed to this House and how they are sworn in as Ministers. Fortunately, it does not happen in the National party because its members are pure in the way they do business. We do not get involved in these capers, but we see members of other parties who are owed a favour. We have no control over what their motives are, what their background is and how will they behave once they enter this House. All we know is that someone who is owed a favour can be brought into the Parliament. Upper House members of the former Labor Government were brought into the Parliament as a favour. Their appointments had nothing to do with their capabilities to carry out their duties as a member of Parliament, and they did not earn the opportunity to be here. They entered the Parliament as a favour and therefore the system was already corrupted.

Regardless of the rules and regulations, and code of conduct that is in place, people such as Macdonald and Obeid had enough time on their hands to find a way to engage in the affairs that they were involved in. They committed serious offences against this State and they were not suitable candidates to be members of Parliament. They were here for the wrong reasons. We do not know how someone will behave unless he or she has earned the right to be here. Unless someone has demonstrated by his or her past behaviour that he or she has

the highest standards and is suitable to be elected to the Parliament, this mess will never be cleaned up. Both parties can reflect on the Ministers and Premiers who did a great job. The distinct difference is that they were elected to the Parliament for their character. If a member's motive is to act against the interests of this State, which is what this debate is about, they will never be controlled. They will corrupt the system. No book is big enough with rules and regulations for them to abide by because they will just ignore it.

Today Labor is attempting to gain some credibility. It has fallen into a big hole. These bills have been constructed to clean up a mess. The fact is that Labor had a group of politicians in this House who did not abide by the regulations that Labor now wishes to introduce. I do not think the bills are right or wrong, it just adds to the volume of codes and conditions that people are required to operate under. If an individual is morally corrupt, he or she will never be changed by rules and regulations. I am not opposed to the bills Labor is putting forward, but I oppose it on the basis that it is coming from Labor, which is trying to promote itself as a party. Labor is trying to clean up its act, plain and simple. It is hoping to get the brush out to whitewash the past and come out crystal clean at the end of the process. It is not good enough. If there are to be rules and regulations introduced, this side of the House is better qualified to do it than is Labor.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [11.16 a.m.]: I ask members to note that the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Bill 2014 and the Constitution Amendment (Disclosures by Members) Bill 2014 are supported by one National party member. The member for Murray-Darling admitted that he agrees with the content and goals of the bills but that he cannot support them because Labor is introducing them. That is an exciting way of looking at legislation. The bills are the subject of a public debate about how we manage the allegations of corruption involving members of Parliament from both sides, how we will restore confidence in the public, and how we will put rules in place to improve the way that members of Parliament, Ministers and lobbyists and so on operate in the future. It is not about cleaning up their acts or not accepting defeat or admitting corruption.

The examples put up by Government members have been shallow. Apparently all corruption in New South Wales is centred on two or three former members and Ministers of the upper House and that is the sole reason the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] exists. Of course, that defies history. In his contribution former Premier Nathan Rees mentioned what former Labor Governments have done to address this issue as an ongoing business. He talked not only about his own reform of banning developers—which has entrapped many Liberal Party members recently—but also the Wran Government bringing in the pecuniary interest register and the public funding process where donations over a certain value have to be declared. It has been evolving ever since.

It is absurd for a National party member to say that his party is pure. I have been here long enough to remember the ICAC inquiries into the North Coast of New South Wales. There were more white shoes in the National party up there than there were in the Ballina or Tweed Heads Bowling Club. It was identified as an operation conducive to corruption. We have all had this sort of business. We can all trot them out one after the other. But in each and every term of office some members, such as those who have been highlighted by members opposite, enrich themselves by abusing the law, the processes of government and ministerial codes of conduct. On the other hand we can also highlight those members of the Liberal Party who are currently trying to evade the law of the land.

Pursuant to sessional order business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

Pursuant to sessional order General Business (Notices of Motions) (General Notices) proceeded with.

ASSYRIAN RESOURCE CENTRE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.20 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the former Federal Government on establishing the Building Multicultural Communities Program.
- (2) Condemns the current Federal Government for failing to honour the funding commitment of \$150,000 to the Assyrian Resource Centre.
- (3) Condemns the Minister for Citizenship and Communities and the member for Smithfield for failing to challenge the Federal Government decision to rescind funding for invaluable local community groups such as the Assyrian Resource Centre.

In 2013 the former Labor Federal Government announced a one-off funding grant for community organisations throughout Australia.

Mr Kevin Conolly: It would not have been August 2013—caretaker time?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The member should get his facts right before he interjects. The total funding pool was \$4.55 million and was available under two streams. The first stream was for grants between \$1,000 and \$10,000 to support non-fixed infrastructure and equipment projects such as computers and printers, photocopiers, telephones, furniture and sporting equipment. The second stream was for grants up to \$150,000 solely for capital works projects and non-fixed infrastructure. This included multicultural hubs and purpose-built buildings, such as community halls, community radio stations, performance studios, et cetera, as well as meeting rooms that form part of a public building.

The Building Multicultural Communities Program offered some much-needed funding to community groups throughout Australia. The program was very well received throughout my local community and a number of groups lodged applications. The Assyrian Resource Centre lodged a stream 2 funding application of \$150,000 for upgrade works to be undertaken to meet the growing demand on their organisation. The centre had received approval for its funding application, which left its clients and local community cheering. Unfortunately, upon the election of the Abbott Liberal Government, tears of joy were abruptly turned into tears of sorrow. The funding for this infrastructure project was pulled because the Abbott Liberal Government concluded it wished to "reduce the scope" of the project. The Abbott Liberal Government wrote to the successful stream 2 applicants and advised them:

In light of the current state of the Federal budget, the Government has decided to reduce the scope of the Building Multicultural Communities Program.

The successful applicants were subsequently advised:

The department is withdrawing the offer of funding.

Where was this Government when the State's community groups lost a large amount of funding? Did it come to the aid of the community groups throughout New South Wales and stand up to its Federal colleagues? No, it did not. Some members in this Chamber may not know that the Assyrian Resource Centre is not only the first point of call for a very large migrant community but it also offers assistance to absolutely anyone who walks through the doors. The Assyrian Resource Centre primarily assists Assyrians, Chaldeans, Mandeans and a large number of Muslim community members. However, the Assyrian Resource Centre does not turn anyone away who is in need of assistance. It helps the entire community. The sheer turnover of community members who require assistance from the Assyrian Resource Centre is astounding.

On my visits to the resource centre, I often witness in excess of 30 people standing or sitting in the foyer waiting to receive assistance. That is not because staff are slow or are few in number, it is because the local community knows that if they need help they go to the Assyrian Resource Centre. The centre will help to get things done. The Assyrian Resource Centre is in urgent need of upgrading its facilities. The sheer turnover of individuals and the demand on it from the local community to provide ongoing assistance means that it needs to ensure that its facilities are modern and capable of handling the influx of community members who walk through its doors. But the assistance offered does not stop there.

The centre also provides outreach to individuals who wish to give back to the community. For example, the centre provides training for individuals who wish to pursue a career as a social worker. It helps them attain their required certifications and provides them with the necessary experience to become an active social worker in the local area. Fairfield has the highest number of migrant Assyrians in the State. The member for Smithfield, Mr Andrew Rohan, was previously on the board of the Assyrian Resource Centre. However, we have yet to see him take any action in standing up for this invaluable community resource. Both Andrew Rohan and the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, the Hon. Victor Dominello, have remained silent on this matter.

In the past the Minister has deemed issues like this to be a "Federal matter". But Federal decisions directly affect the constituency of New South Wales, and the people in New South Wales need a voice too. Who is their voice? This Government is their voice. Why do those opposite remain silent while the Abbott Liberal Government continues to take away much-needed resources from our local community? I fail to understand why Andrew Rohan thought it was okay to write to residents in 2012 using his parliamentary entitlements and resources to endorse his staffer, Mr Zaya Toma, in the then upcoming council elections, spruiking his concerns on the "introduction of the carbon tax". He had no problem speaking on Federal issues then. I have a copy of that letter.

Mr Kevin Conolly: Point of order: The member has only a few minutes in which to make his contribution. He should not be wasting his time on things that have nothing to do with this motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: How dare you? Why don't you say that to the Assyrians in my electorate? The member should come to Fairfield and speak to those migrants who need this assistance. No, you would not understand that. This is a copy of the letter that the member for Smithfield circulated to his electorate endorsing a disendorsed Liberal councillor using parliamentary entitlements. How dare you?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! The member for Fairfield will direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Why is it that Mr Rohan shies away and remains silent when a local Assyrian community group has been slugged so hard? The local community deserves better. This motion deserves to be supported because the Assyrian Resource Centre does such a great job in Fairfield and the surrounding areas. I commend the motion to the House. I once again congratulate the former Federal Labor Government on implementing such a wonderful Community Grants Program and I condemn the Abbott Liberal Government for failing community groups not only throughout New South Wales, but across Australia.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I remind members that they should refer to other members by their correct titles and not by their names.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [11.27 a.m.]: It is beyond belief that the member for Fairfield has the nerve to stand before this House and move a motion that dupes his constituents and the people of New South Wales. The member for Fairfield should hang his head in shame. He and his colleagues opposite are responsible for the budget emergency facing our country. The addiction to spending of those opposite knows no bounds but, as Margaret Thatcher so eloquently put it, "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money to spend." The former Federal Labor Government had no sense of responsibility or accountability. I will list just a few examples of how the former Labor Government spent hard-earned taxpayer's money: \$443,000 for a study into the God of Hegel's Post-Kantian Idealism, and \$164,000 for a study into how urban media art can best respond to global climate change. What a joke! Is this the kind of government the member for Fairfield proposes should continue in office?

The State electorates of Fairfield and Smithfield share a boundary and represent a common local government area. The City of Fairfield local government area is home to more than 130 different ethnic communities. These are decent people, proud of their heritage and of Australia—their adopted home. They have worked hard to build a new life in Australia. They want the Government to build important infrastructure to improve their quality of life, such as WestConnex, and to support hospitals—and I secured \$1 million last year for the Fairfield Hospital. They put their faith in the Government to deliver on its promises. Sadly, on more than one occasion, the broken promises of the previous Federal Government shook their faith.

These broken promises led to a decline in the polls for the previous Federal Labor Government. Previously safe Labor seats like McMahon were at risk. The Labor Government became desperate to "save some of the furniture" in Western Sydney and unashamedly pledged money that they knew did not exist with their Building Multicultural Communities Program. The Federal election date was set for 7 September 2013 and the writs were issued on 5 August, when the formal caretaker period commenced. In a moment of extraordinary cruelty the desperate Labor Government wrote letters of offer to a number of these multicultural organisations, promising money that the Government did not have.

These false promises were made on the same day the writs were issued. It is clear that these promises were never going to be made good on and that this money was never going to make it to those it was promised to. It was a cheap bribe used by Federal Labor in an attempt to avoid a third "blue wave", a Liberal whitewash, in Western Sydney. This move was clearly unethical. No doubt it was designed to buy the community's votes. I have with me here one of these letters of offer for \$150,000, exclusive of the goods and services tax, to the Assyrian Resource Centre. Guess what date the letter is from? It is from 5 August—that is, the date the writs were issued.

Mr Guy Zangari: Which year?

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: It is the same year: 2013. It is dated 5 August 2013. The former Labor Government had six years to offer the Assyrian Resource Centre a funding grant. I especially want to remind this House that the member for Fairfield had 2½ years to fight for the Assyrian Resource Centre and secure them funds while his Labor counterparts occupied the Government benches in Canberra. After all, the Assyrian Resource Centre is based in Fairfield—in the dead centre of the Fairfield electorate. Just to put it on the record, I have served as a volunteer on the board of that organisation for over 26 years.

Mr Guy Zangari: You should stand up for them.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: They are in the electorate of the member sitting opposite. The question I ask is why the member for Fairfield, Guy Zangari, did nothing to support the Assyrian Resource Centre during this time? As the member for Smithfield, I have always supported my constituents. He should follow my lead and do the same. He and New South Wales Labor should follow the lead of this Liberal-Nationals Government and support projects such as the Community Relations Commission's \$1.4 million Multicultural Advantage Grants Program, which this Government increased by \$200,000. He also should follow our lead in implementing the New South Wales Multicultural Business Advisory Panel, the Premier's Multicultural Community Medals, the Premier's Multicultural Media Awards, the New South Wales Human Rights Award and the National Multicultural Marketing Awards. These have raised the profile of individuals, organisations and businesses alike. There is one thing the member for Fairfield should not do—that is, blame others for his own failures.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.33 a.m.]: I commend the member for Fairfield for bringing on this motion about the Assyrian Resource Centre. I commend him for demonstrating that there is only one side of this House that cares about multiculturalism. There is no doubt about that. I was delighted to hear some of the words of the member for Smithfield, particularly some of his comments about the Multicultural Advantage Grants Program. This is the \$1.4 million program that was given a token increase of \$200,000. At the same time this Government spends \$5.3 million on private jetties around Sydney Harbour. I think that demonstrates just how much this Government cares about multiculturalism.

If we are talking about tokenism, I have watched the Hon. Victor Dominello, the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, for three years. Every now and then he comes along to events around Western Sydney. He has offered nothing but tokenism for our multicultural communities. I hear constantly from many different organisations how this Government has failed to step up and support our multicultural communities across this State. This debate is the perfect opportunity to send a strong message to Prime Minister Abbott that the Federal Government was wrong to cancel this program. Did we hear anything from the Minister or from the former Premier? How about the new Premier? How is he going in this area? We are now seeing him being forced to go out to Western Sydney for the first time. I saw him in Bankstown the other week for the first time. He looked daunted.

Mr Guy Zangari: He must have been lost.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I think he was lost. He had a ghostly appearance. It is a very daunting task for him to turn up to multicultural events now. He is struggling with his speeches and struggling to get the terminology right at some of these functions. He relies heavily on notes. It is interesting. We have heard nothing from the Government on this. They had an opportunity to stand up here and say that Prime Minister Abbott was wrong about proposed changes to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. But nothing was said. There was no attack on Prime Minister Abbott about that. There was no attack on the removal of funding from the Building Multicultural Communities Program. The member for Smithfield has been quiet about this. It is not only the Assyrian Resource Centre that has been short-changed; it is also the upgrade of Jensen Park in Bankstown. Bankstown Multicultural Youth Service has also lost funding. A whole range of organisations missed out on this funding.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: My point of order goes to Standing Order No. 76 on relevance. The member has not mentioned the Assyrian community once. This has just been an excuse for her to stand up and abuse this Parliament and abuse the multicultural communities. I ask the Acting Speaker to call the member back to the leave of the motion or to sit her down.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I remind the member for Bankstown of the leave of the motion. The member for Kiama will resume his seat. I do not need any assistance.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: This Government had an opportunity to send a very strong message to Prime Minister Abbott. The member for Smithfield knows that he has failed the Assyrian community out there in Smithfield, and he will learn that next year. He knows that he has failed them.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [11.37 a.m.]: The multicultural communities in New South Wales have sussed out members opposite. They know about their stunts by now. Members opposite have form on pulling this sort of stunt, trick or cruel hoax. What we have seen is this cruel hoax where in government they roll out promises whilst in caretaker mode knowing that they will never have to fund them. In January 2013 Julia Gillard announced the election date. Everybody knew the date. Everybody knew it was coming and exactly when it would be. The Federal Government announced the Building Multicultural Communities Program in June 2013. It invited applications and said there would be lots of money.

Everybody knew that the Labor Government had a huge deficit. Everyone knew they had racked up a huge debt that we would have to repay. But suddenly in June 2013, and knowing the election date, the Labor Government discovered a pot of money. They said to the ethnic groups, "Come and apply; ask us for funding because we have suddenly discovered this money." The multicultural community in New South Wales is awake to this now. What happened was that the writs were issued in August. Suddenly the letters of offer emerged. This was during caretaker mode. They said, "We are going to give you this pot of money; but, sorry, we are in caretaker mode so we cannot give you a guarantee. Sorry, it's too late for us to actually commit to it."

That money never existed and the Labor Party knew it. Labor members could read the polls like everybody else. They knew they would not be back in government and would never have to honour the cynical promise they made in the pork-barrelling which was an attempt to save a few seats in Western Sydney. The seats of McMahon, Blaxland and several others across Western Sydney, some of which were under threat for the first time, had to be saved. They decided to try to do it by dangling a pork barrel in front of people.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. While this show by the member for Riverstone is very interesting and entertaining, under Standing Order 76 the member should be brought back to the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! The member for Shellharbour will resume her seat. I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. There is no point of order.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: I am talking about their program. It was exactly the same tactic that they have used time and again as a hoax to make the community vote for Labor. The Labor Party has form on it. It happened in my electorate in February 2011.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76. The member for Riverstone has not touched on the motion regarding the Assyrian Resource Centre in Fairfield.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! The member is within the leave of the motion.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: Members opposite and their colleagues in Canberra perpetrated the hoax on the Assyrian Resource Centre and other communities. The people at the Assyrian Resource Centre were led to believe that \$150,000 had suddenly materialised. Despite the huge deficit in Canberra and the massive debt we had to pay off, it seemed a pot of money suddenly emerged before an election. Labor members said, "We are going to offer it to you; all you have to do is vote Labor."

Multicultural communities across New South Wales saw that happen not only in 2013 at the Federal level but also in 2011 at the State level. The Sikh Association of Australia based at Glenwood was promised \$150,000 in February 2011 just as the Government went into caretaker mode at State level. The money was never budgeted for. It was not in the forward estimates. It did not exist. Labor played a cruel hoax on the multicultural communities of New South Wales, and those communities are awake to it. [*Time expired.*]

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [11.41 a.m.]: I join my colleague the member for Fairfield in condemning the Abbott Liberal Government for failing to honour its funding commitment of \$150,000 to the Assyrian Resource Centre at Fairfield. During the 1970s and from the late 1990s onwards Australia experienced an influx of Christian Assyrians under the family reunion, refugee and humanitarian programs. Most were fleeing persecution and genocide in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey. There are now well in excess of 40,000 Australians of Assyrian origin.

The Assyrian Resource Centre was established by the Assyrian Australian Association in 1984 to help the growing Assyrian community in the Fairfield and Liverpool areas to settle into their new life in Australia. Each year the centre helps some 3,500 people. It provides clients with information and referrals, immigration

advice, direct support work, case management, and runs educational groups and community development programs. The centre runs groups for senior citizens, women and newly arrived people. The centre is also a strong advocate for the Assyrian community in Sydney. In recognition of the centre's overall contribution to the community its manager and settlement officer, Carmen Lazar, was recently awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia.

The Assyrian Resource Centre is doing a great job supporting and building the strength and resilience of the Assyrian community in the Fairfield and Liverpool areas. That is why I do not understand the Abbott Government's choosing to abolish the Building Multicultural Communities Program and not honouring its funding commitment to the Assyrian Resource Centre. The member for Riverstone said that the Labor Government engaged in pork-barrelling shortly before the last election. I do not know how he can say that when he knows full well that only two weeks ago Tony Abbott took \$300,000 that was to be spent on a closed-circuit television project away from Fairfield City Council and gave it to a Liberal-controlled council. What was that if not pork-barrelling for the next State election? Pork-barrelling has been done by both sides and Tony Abbott did it blatantly only two weeks ago.

The Building Multicultural Communities Program was an important program that provided funding to community organisations for new infrastructure, equipment and capital works to promote social inclusion and to enhance multicultural community spaces. The funding promised to the Assyrian Resource Centre would have helped it finance a much-needed upgrade of the centre. Along with numerous others, that project is now at risk. I am appalled that the Minister for Citizenship and Communities and the member for Smithfield have done nothing to stand up to their Liberal Party colleagues and support our community. They continue to fail at their job, which is to advocate in the best interests of their community. I call on the Liberal State Government to urge its Federal colleagues to do the right thing and honour the \$150,000 funding commitment to the Assyrian Resource Centre or otherwise to make up the funding shortfall. I support this important motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.45 a.m.], in reply: In concluding debate on my motion regarding the Assyrian Resource Centre I acknowledge but cannot thank the member for Smithfield and the member for Riverstone for their contributions. I do thank the member for Bankstown and the member for Cabramatta. The member for Smithfield is completely out of touch with the Fairfield local government area. In his contribution he said something to the effect that Assyrians are not his problem because they live in Fairfield and not in his electorate. Come on, member for Smithfield. Do Assyrians not live in Bossley Park and Wetherill Park? Of course they do, but the member forgot about that.

It is remarkable how the member for Riverstone makes contributions without getting his facts right. The applications closed in June. That means the former Labor Government initiated the program well beforehand. Members who do not have the facts should sit in this Chamber very quietly and not speak. I invite the member for Riverstone to come to Fairfield to have a coffee and to talk to the people at the Assyrian Resource Centre. The member spoke about pork-barrelling and tokenism. Speaking of which, what will his Government do in February 2015? I can hear the crickets in the background. We will have to wait for that answer.

During his contribution the member for Riverstone remained silent on the repeal of section 18C in the Federal Racial Discrimination Act. Government members puffed their chests out but they did not say anything about that issue. I thank the member for Bankstown for her contribution. She spoke about Minister Dominello visiting multicultural communities, walking around and eating the multicultural food. He has enjoyed a few cannoli here, a few baklava there. He has sipped Turkish coffee and had a good cappuccino. Token, token, token. He could come to Neeta City, cash in all his tokens and get the big Smurf on level two. All they do is engage in tokenism. They set up ministerial consultative committees, which are ministerial consultative secret committees.

I point out to the member for Smithfield that I was happy to support the Assyrian Resource Centre by acquiring \$40,000 of funding from the Community Building Partnership Program. As the member for Cabramatta said, Carmen Lazar is doing a fantastic job in our community. It was a bittersweet phone call when I rang her to tell her the news about the funding. It was bittersweet because on the one hand she had received the letter that said the \$150,000 funding had been withdrawn, which brought her to tears, but on the other hand she learned she would receive \$40,000 from the Community Building Partnership Program.

When the member for Smithfield speaks in this Chamber he should get his facts right. He cannot accuse me of not standing up for the Assyrian community because I am there and he is not. The member says that he is supporting them, but I am the person moving this motion highlighting the fact that they need all the help they can get. As the member knows, our electorates in the Fairfield local government area have the highest

number of Assyrian refugees and migrants in New South Wales and this country. Shame on the member for Smithfield for not sticking up for them. It is disappointing that the member for Smithfield, who is of Assyrian background, does not support his community. It is a known fact in the Fairfield local government area that he does not support them. It is appalling and disappointing that the member spoke against this motion. Members on this side of the House support the motion and I commend it to the House.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 24

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

Noes, 52

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Roberts
Mr Aplin	Mr George	Mr Rowell
Mr Ayres	Ms Gibbons	Mrs Sage
Mr Bassett	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baumann	Mr Holstein	Mr Smith
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mr Souris
Mr Bromhead	Mr Kean	Mr Speakman
Mr Conolly	Dr Lee	Mr Stokes
Mr Constance	Mr Maguire	Mr Stoner
Mr Coure	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Toole
Mrs Davies	Mr O'Dea	Ms Upton
Mr Dominello	Mr Owen	Mr Ward
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Edwards	Ms Parker	Mrs Williams
Mr Elliott	Mr Patterson	
Mr Evans	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Flowers	Mr Piccoli	Mr Cornwell
Mr Fraser	Mr Provest	Mr J. D. Williams

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

HUNTER NEW ENGLAND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND COUNSELLING SERVICES

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.58 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that around 1,400 clients rely on Hunter New England Health counselling services.
- (2) Notes that, in the context of a review of community health services in the Hunter, the loss of any community health jobs will have a severe impact upon Hunter residents and those most in need.
- (3) Notes concerns regarding the cost to patients of services provided by non-government organisations and the payment of upfront fees on attendance.
- (4) Calls on the Government to show its commitment to improve the lives and futures of those needing counselling by ensuring no community health jobs are lost to the region and Hunter Health reinstates counselling services.

The 1,400 people who rely on Hunter New England Health counselling services will be left in the cold by this Government's callous disregard for the mental and emotional health of the most vulnerable in our society in its reckless pursuit of a better bottom line. There is no duplication of this service, and nothing can match what it does. I am worried about this matter. I am saddened to inform the House that 50 highly qualified and caring staff and clinicians will lose their jobs next month, that is, in June.

The free counselling services cater to people running the gamut of severe mental health issues, ranging from chronic suicidality and self-harm to chronic trauma, stemming from such things as physical and sexual abuse, as well as a host of personality disorders. Often these people lack a strong social support network and would be unable to pay for the treatment. This service—free and available for as long as they need it—is their last resort and their best hope of living a better life. This service is vital for improving people's lives and, in some cases, it is vital to keeping them alive. A commentator on the *Newcastle Herald* website wrote:

This service has been the end of the line and last-chance option for people desperate for adequate support where people fall through the cracks of eligibility criteria for other services or have found services inadequate elsewhere.

Those who need short-term counselling without a medical diagnosis will now have nowhere to go unless they can afford to pay. Most professional or medical services require a diagnosis and a referral, which is not always needed for short-term counselling. A medical diagnosis can be detrimental to future job prospects, in no small part because of the stigma that still surrounds mental illness. All they may need is someone to talk to—a professional who can lead them in the right direction. Despite the recommendations of staff, non-government health organisations and the Health Services Union, from 30 June this year Hunter New England Health is ending this vital service. Despite assurances from Hunter New England Health to the contrary, alternative services are all but non-existent in various outlying areas in the Hunter. I was gratified to see that an exemption to these closures has been made for Muswellbrook. I can only hope that Hunter New England Health will grant a similar reprieve to the much-needed services at Port Stephens, Cessnock and Singleton.

In order to access mental health care, a patient will have to obtain a referral to a mental healthcare professional from a general practitioner [GP], and, as we know, that is now going to cost. That will require a longer and more expensive appointment. This byzantine process is difficult enough to navigate with a stable support system. With the counselling service, referral pathways were smooth and no GP visit was required. However, now a would-be patient without access to a GP will have no referral pathway. Is this how politicians think mental health issues should be addressed? One member of the community wrote to my office, "The cost to the community in the long run will be overwhelming."

Teegan Pryjma, a constituent of mine in Wallsend, is one of the people who rely on the counselling service. She was profiled in the *Newcastle Herald* earlier this year. Teegan lives with a number of chronic health issues, including spina bifida, scoliosis, epilepsy and a form of lupus. She started attending counselling sessions in 2012 and says that the free counselling service allows her to seek help with the emotional burden of her medical conditions, "... without the stress of a financial burden. If I had to pay to see a counsellor, I could not go as often and I would constantly worry about money." Teegan is just one of many people for whom this service has played an active and vital role.

I can see no reason for cutting this service. Staff are in favour of retaining it because they are providing a needed service, and non-government organisations are in favour of retaining it because it provides a referral base for patients with issues more complex than they can handle. The initial phase of the review conducted from October 2012 until February this year recommended that no changes be made. Hunter New England Health is not answering calls from either staff or the union to share the information presented to the board that led to the decision to cut this service. Until that information is presented for scrutiny, we are left to draw our own conclusions: that this service, vital to the lives of so many, was cut to meet a draconian bottom line.

Reducing Hunter New England Health Counselling Services is a retrograde step. One email to my office stated, "Lives are worth more than money ... it is better for the community to focus on maintaining and improving our health, mental and emotional." I call upon the Liberal-Nationals Government and on local members of Parliament to take whatever steps are necessary to save this service. There is simply no replacement for it in the lives and communities that will be affected by its axing.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [12.05 p.m.]: I speak in opposition to the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. The New South Wales Government is committed to improving health services for people across this great State, and that includes the Hunter Valley. We are investing millions of dollars to deliver on that commitment, including \$20 million to continue vital planning work on the new Maitland Hospital. I note that the member for Maitland is in the House.

Dr Geoff Lee: The good member for Maitland.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: The great member for Maitland. A new \$6.5 million emergency department at Muswellbrook is under construction. A new \$6.4 million subacute unit at Kurri Kurri—in the electorate of the member for Cessnock—and \$600,000 to plan for the dedicated paediatric intensive care unit at John Hunter Hospital. A new \$2 million emergency department at Cessnock. I note that at my own local hospital at Belmont—

[Interruption]

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: Those opposite also closed 22 beds at Belmont Hospital, including the entire subacute ward, which we reopened last year.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the first time.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The member has not yet addressed any of the issues in the motion. The motion is about counselling services, not about money or other issues. The member should address the issue, for a change.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Swansea is being relevant. Opposition members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: I foreshadow that, given the interruptions, I may have to ask for an extension of time. While we continue to improve Hunter health infrastructure, the Hunter New England Local Health District is making the important decisions on the day-to-day running of services. The decision to change the provision of generalist counselling services is in line with the New South Wales Government's commitment to local decision-making and strengthening partnerships with Medicare Locals and non-government organisations in the primary care sector. Again, I note that this change was not a decision by this Government but one taken by the administration of the Hunter New England Local Health District.

The residents of the Hunter New England district continue to have mental health support and 24-hour, seven days a week access to services, including specialised mental health services. People with complex mental health issues—including those who experience suicidal thoughts or seek to self-harm—will continue to receive specialised care from mental health services. The Hunter New England Local Health District also will continue to provide specialised counselling in response to sexual assault and drug and alcohol abuse.

Prior to making its decision, the Hunter New England Local Health District analysed the generalist counselling services, including the services provided, the structure of those services, and the patient loads. The district then consulted with senior counselling staff and alternative counselling providers, including the Hunter Medicare Local and a range of non-government organisations. This will inform a plan to transition responsibility for general counselling from the Hunter New England Local Health District to the primary healthcare sector. Clinical teams in the district are now assessing hundreds of local clients and people on general counselling waiting lists and supporting them to transition to the most appropriate provider. That is in stark contrast to the current program where some counsellors see only one patient per day—a system that is neither effective nor efficient.

People requiring generalist counselling services can still access the Hunter New England Local Health District's Referral and Information Centre by phoning 4924 2590 and speak with trained professionals who will provide advice and refer them to an appropriate provider. People across the Hunter New England Local Health District can also self-refer to all mental health services via the Mental Health Line at any time. A general practitioner [GP] referral is not needed. These service providers are funded to provide general counselling services and have the required governance, experience and range of services to ensure people have ready access to those services. These service providers have indicated to Hunter New England Local Health District that they have the capacity to accept an increase in referrals after the district's general counselling services cease in July.

Each organisation has its own schedule of fees that vary depending on the type of service and circumstances of each individual client. Many organisations offer free services by bulk billing fees, while others may charge a minimum fee. The Hunter New England Local Health District also is supporting its counselling staff during the transition by working closely with the psychologists and social workers, in consultation with the Health Services Union, to identify redeployment opportunities in other specialised services run by the district. This new system of generalist counselling services is a vast improvement on the existing model. It greatly increases access to services for patients whilst returning to the community a hugely more efficient facility. We are committed to front-line service delivery and to efficient and effective governance. We continue to put the people of New South Wales first, something those opposite failed to achieve during their 16 long years of administration, and in utter breach of their various duties of care to the people of New South Wales. I do not support this motion.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.12 p.m.]: I support the motion of the member for Wallsend calling on the Government to commit to improving the lives of people in the Hunter region. I have the great privilege of serving a community that benefits enormously from counselling services offered through Community Healthcare in Cessnock, and those more broadly across the Hunter. I have met with some of the staff who work in these services—the psychologists and social workers. They talk about the complex needs of some of their patients, and about the geography and isolation of where they live. The member for Swansea claimed that these counsellors see only one patient a day. One staff member I spoke to talked about a patient who lived in the valley approximately three hours' drive from the centre. They saw that client at their home because there was no other way to provide counselling services. If it took the whole day for a counsellor to provide services at a patient's home in an isolated area, I believe that is providing a valuable service.

Closing the counselling services offered by Hunter New England Health seems to be a race between the State and Federal governments to see who can get out of the business of providing mental health the fastest. Of course, everybody could see that the Federal Government was moving towards shutting down Medicare Local offices, and it was widely reported in the media. The Hunter New England Local Health District, with its limited budget, chose to make savings by providing some counselling services through Medicare Local. Medicare Local already provides that work from some offices, but the recent Federal budget means that Medicare Local has only 12 months left to operate. Essentially, this is a cost-shifting exercise because the State no longer will fund the mental health needs of the people of the Hunter as those services were to be moved to the Federal budget. Of course, we then heard that the Federal budget also will no longer provide for the mental health needs of the people in the Hunter. So now no-one will provide those services.

The member for Swansea alluded to some health services, which is fantastic for those who live in Newcastle because that is where most of the providers are based. Some are based in Maitland, but none are based in Cessnock. The correct, decent and proper solution is to make mental health services more accessible, not less. It is not appropriate to say that calling Lifeline is the same as seeing a trained professional psychologist or social worker. They are two completely different services. Medicare Local referred its complex cases to counselling services provided by Community Healthcare, but with this latest announcement the mental health needs of the people of the Hunter, including those I represent, will be deserted. It is a shame that Government members cannot support this motion and, in turn, show their support for their communities. I commend the motion.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [12.16 p.m.]: I shall make a brief contribution to the motion, though my colleague the member for Swansea articulated the facts reasonably. Clearly, we on this side of the House, as we all do in a bipartisan sense, care about the provision of mental health services for consumers, carers and

families. We established the first ministry dedicated to the provision of mental health services in New South Wales and in 2011 Kevin Humphries was sworn in as the Minister for Mental Health. I support my colleague's comments that, essentially, this is an administrative decision. Hunter New England Health was not forced to make the decision. It reviewed the region's generalist counselling services and reached the decision that services were being duplicated and costing a lot of money with no significant gain for people with mental health. Alternative counselling providers in the area were consulted, including Hunter Medicare Local, as the member for Swansea articulated, and a range of non-government organisations to investigate the transition of general counselling from the Hunter New England Local Health District to the primary healthcare sector.

I have spoken personally to the chief executive officer of Hunter New England Health, who has assured me that these providers have the capacity to undertake these general counselling services. Hunter New England Health initiated the transition and I have great trust in its chief executive officer. He assured me that people will be redeployed and all counselling services in the region will pick up the services that were provided. I have no reason to doubt him. This proposal is a viable and useful way to use the Hunter New England Health budget to reduce cost duplication—that is all it is doing. Hunter New England Health already funds other regional counselling services to provide general services, and they have in place the required governance, experience and range of services to ensure ready access for those who need general counselling services. Despite what the member for Cessnock says, no-one will go without general counselling services. We have all been assured of that.

Hunter New England Local Health District also is supporting its counselling staff throughout this transition and is working closely with psychologists and social workers, in consultation with the Health Services Union, to identify redeployment opportunities and other specialised services run by the district. People will not lose jobs over this change. This motion has no significant efficacy apart from rationalising a viable, correct and businesslike end to duplication while maintaining counselling services and jobs. I do not see any efficacy in the motion of the member for Wallsend. I agree with the member for Swansea that we as the Government will oppose this motion because it is not factual. The facts are that nobody will go without the health services that were provided during the normal consulting period and people will not lose their jobs—end of story.

Ms Anna Watson: Yes they will. They won't have the money to go.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time.

Mr TIM OWEN: This decision was not driven by the Government. Rather, it was taken by the health district based on how it sees the patient load at Hunter New England Health. It seems to be a smart and rational thing to do.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.20 p.m.]: I commend the member for Wallsend for bringing this important motion to the House. I do not wish to traverse the issues that she has passionately spoken about. The member for Wallsend has illustrated clearly the importance that the Hunter New England Health Counselling Service provides to the Hunter community. How any government can see fit to cut this service is, at best, mind-boggling. I draw to the attention of members the need for services to treat patients with an eating disorder in the Illawarra region. I acknowledge that this is a difficult and complex area. I also recognise that the Government has recently published a comprehensive NSW Service Plan for People with Eating Disorders for 2013-18.

Under the service plan local health districts identify and expand local treatment options, including local clinical and support networks and pathways to local and tertiary services funded under the plan. The Government acknowledges there is no dedicated Adult Eating Disorder Day Program in the Illawarra region. While this motion makes a plea for the Government to restore counselling services in the Hunter, patients with eating disorders in the region are well serviced by treatment options. By contrast, the Illawarra is not. The *Illawarra Mercury* has published a series of articles over the past 12 months to highlight the prevalence of eating disorders among young people in the Illawarra region. The cases of these eating disorder patients are sad and harrowing for them and their loved ones. The NSW Service Plan emphasises the responsibility of local health districts to develop a local service plan within the next two years and to outline plans for creating local networks with referral pathways and treatment options to maximise local access and service provisions.

I have raised with the Minister for Mental Health the need to address service provisions for people with eating disorders in the Illawarra region. As I have said, this issue is difficult and complex but it is an issue that every member in this place must be concerned about. I will continue to raise it with the Government until the Illawarra region has a comparable access service that is enjoyed in the Hunter region. I can see the member for Kiama nodding his head in agreement. I commend the member for Wallsend for bringing this motion to the attention of members. I urge the Government to give her motion serious consideration to restore counselling services, as she has called for.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.24 p.m.]: I support the motion of the member for Wallsend, which calls on the Government to reinstate the free and highly accessible community counselling service that is operated by Hunter New England Health.

Mr Brad Hazzard: How could we deny such an intelligent, good-looking, astute fellow? It would be impossible.

Mr GREG PIPER: I acknowledge the interjection of the Attorney General. On 17 February Hunter New England Health announced that the Community Health Social Work and Psychology Counselling Service, which has operated for 30 years, would close at the end of the financial year. The 30 counsellors who are employed by the service provide therapy to 1,400 clients each year at walk-in counselling centres in Toronto, Maitland, Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Newcastle, Windale, Raymond Terrace and Nelson Bay. They are experienced, degree-qualified social workers and clinical psychologists who provide an important professional service to a great range of clients.

Anxiety, depression, relationship and family breakdown, removal of children, sexual abuse, physical assault, end-of-life grief, school or peer group problems, eating disorders, and agoraphobia are some of the issues for which counsellors regularly provide therapy. Issues that arise from domestic violence account for 40 per cent of the counsellors' workload. Hunter New England Health says that clients will be absorbed by other government and non-government operated services but most services that have been mentioned as alternatives already have waiting lists. Indeed, until now, some have been in the practice of referring clients to the Community Health Counselling Service. The Community Health Counselling Service is a free service that is open to all, with no limit on the number of sessions a client can have, whereas many of the alternative services have fees or criteria that will exclude many current community health clients from receiving treatment.

Many clients from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have a regular general practitioner. The prospect of booking an appointment, sitting in a waiting room before divulging deeply personal thoughts and concerns to a doctor they do not know and paying a gap fee or a \$7 co-payment for the consultation is a big enough obstacle that will prevent them from taking that critical first step. We need to remove barriers to mental health services, not put up more. Early intervention is essential and the Community Health Counselling Service provides an accessible service in a non-judgemental environment that encourages people to seek help. I believe Hunter New England Health should reconsider the closure of this effective grassroots service. I thank its representatives for taking the time to speak with me about this issue but I remain unconvinced that the decision is in the best interests of mental health services in our area.

Since that time, the reliance they were placing on Medicare Local has changed, and that has to be taken into consideration. I have a nursing background. I was trained as a psychiatric nurse and spent most of my time in recent years in developmental disability. I speak regularly to many people who work in the sector and they are appalled at this decision. A former workmate's wife died a poor death from cancer some years ago and he has never recovered from the trauma. He would not be easily diagnosed with a definable mental illness. He has anxiety, melancholia and depression, which do not fit into other counselling services. The community counselling service was accessible to him and was not far from his area. Residents of the inner Newcastle area may be able to access other services but that will not be the case in more remote areas. I ask that the Government review its decision.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [12.28 p.m.], by leave: A few of us in this place understand the pain that is experienced by some of the people with which we share our lives. The question that members opposite should ask is whether they are showing wilful blindness to the needs of those people or they are just accepting the speeches that have been written for them by the staff of the Ministry for Health. Last week

I visited a caravan park in the Hunter where many of my clients do it tough. I see poverty by exclusion: these people are excluded from society for a variety of reasons. This decision is about money, not about needs. It is about shifting costs that are currently borne by the State Government to the Federal Government as payback for the Federal Government actively ignoring its responsibility for health in New South Wales—a clear abrogation of responsibility by the Abbott Government.

It is also about the \$3 billion worth of cuts from the Baird Government. Studies about poverty worldwide have proven that the most important factor is continuity of care. These 1,400 clients trust their counsellors and they see them because their assistance keeps them safe. As members opposite have said, these people have availability to care 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That is high-end, expensive care, and that is what these people will use if this counselling service is not available. This service saves money. By cutting this service, healthcare costs and waiting times will increase. The other services that have been offered to these clients are grossly overprescribed. In Maitland, Headspace has 40 new clients per week and has nowhere to refer them, and the Medicare Locals are at great risk of being closed by members opposite.

Even more worrying is the attempt by the Minister to outsource the decision for this to the local health district. Those are doing this because they are forced to do it. The Treasurer is groaning. He claims this is someone else's fault, but it is his fault. They would not be making this decision if their budget allowed them to provide this service. Basically what will happen is that these people will cycle around services, there will be less continuity of care, the total cost to the taxpayer will increase and staff expertise will be lost. Staff have a gun to their heads. They have been told to either take voluntary redundancy now or forced redundancy in three months' time. The staff will not be redeployed within NSW Health. Their expertise will be lost permanently.

Ms Robyn Parker: How do you know that?

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I ask the member for Maitland to say that these staff will be redeployed. It would be great for the staff and the people of Maitland if the member for Maitland were to put that on the *Hansard*. Members opposite talked about the redevelopment of Maitland Hospital as the great saviour. What we have is a \$20 million sign at the new Maitland Hospital site. We do not have any commitment to funding or a disclosure as to a timeline. Jenny Aitchison, the Labor candidate for Maitland, is working hard on this. Members well know that this is a very unpopular decision in the Maitland area. The member for Maitland has ignored the needs of these clients. She has done nothing to stand up for these services. I look forward to her contribution to this debate. If these services are to go, where will the people go?

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Shellharbour has made comments that are not on the record. To some extent those comments canvass my rulings. If the member continues to make such comments she will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms Anna Watson: Those on the opposite side are allowed to speak, but not those on this side of the Chamber.

Mr Gareth Ward: We just gave you leave.

Ms Anna Watson: I am talking about the constant interjections.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the second time.

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland) [12.32 p.m.], by leave: Mental health should be above partisan politics. The shadow Minister for Health, with grubby and outrageous claims, is trying to politicise an issue that affects the most vulnerable in society. It is hypocritical of those opposite to criticise, for example, a \$20 million commitment to a new hospital at Maitland because in the 16 years they were in government there was no such commitment. This motion is about mental health patients and vulnerable people. This was a local decision by Hunter New England Health about how best to apply resources to those most in need. The shadow Minister for Health should rise above the sorts of claims he has made. From what he said one would think that these people had no other form of support. They do have support.

We are talking about a transition of general counselling from the Hunter New England Local Health District to the primary healthcare sector. A local decision is being made to find the best way to care for these

people. Services are out there, but the member for Macquarie Fields is attacking those non-government organisations. He is saying, "Hang on, they are not good enough." We are saying that they are good enough. Those services are appropriate for these clients. Indeed, that is what this shift is about. The Government is backing them. A range of general counselling services is already available to care for those people. The Hunter New England Health Local Health District will continue to provide mental health support and access to service 24 hours, 7 days a week. People touched by mental illness will continue to receive specialised care from mental health services.

Specialised counselling will still be available to those who have experienced sexual assault as well as those experiencing drug and alcohol issues. Clinical teams in the district are currently assessing clients on waiting lists. Support is being provided to transition to the most appropriate provider to suit their needs. There is an information centre and backup for these people. Also people across the Hunter New England Health Local Health District can self-refer to all mental health services via the Mental Health Line at any time. A referral from a general practitioner is not needed. This allows people to speak with a mental health professional 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The shadow Minister for Health mentioned a couple of services in my electorate that offer great service. [*Time expired.*]

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.36 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Swansea, Cessnock, Newcastle, Shellharbour, Lake Macquarie, Macquarie Fields and Maitland for their contributions to this debate. Seven speakers on a motion must be a record. It shows how important this decision is. I was sad to see three members of Parliament from the Hunter weakly and poorly defending a bad decision made by Hunter New England Health. Medicare Local has been in touch with my office and said that, even if it wanted to, it "could not" take on the thousands of people displaced by the axing of services by Hunter New England Health. So they have admitted that they could not do it anyway.

The member for Swansea said it is all about local decision-making and blamed Hunter New England Health for the decision. I repeat: It is a bad decision by Hunter New England Health. The first four minutes of his speech on this very important issue were spent on spin and advertising for the Liberal Party—shame on him. He failed to mention that non-government organisations are not free. I ask the member for Swansea to name the psychologist or the clinician who attends to only one person per day. As the member for Swansea pointed out, if there were a reference to that then it was probably one of the clinicians attending to a person who lives in an isolated area. We know they are run off their feet.

The member for Cessnock talked again about the isolation factor and that social workers with Hunter New England Health now attend to those who cannot leave their homes. That is really important. Social isolation is important not only in the Hunter but also in areas such as the electorates of Murray-Darling and Barwon. I lived in Walgett and I know of the isolation there. We need to make more serious attempts to ensure that we look after those who live in isolated areas of New South Wales. The member for Newcastle blamed Hunter New England Health for duplication. He talked about a duplication of the service. There is no duplication of the service. I challenge the member for Newcastle to find a free and easily accessible alternative for those people in the Hunter who need counselling.

The member for Newcastle stated that nobody will go without counselling services. But he did not point out that nobody will go without counselling services if they can afford them. I dispute his claim. The member for Shellharbour talked about eating disorders. We see people with eating disorders presenting in not only the Illawarra but also the Hunter and Shellharbour. This occurs right around New South Wales. I am glad that the member pointed out this different angle of people who need access to free services. The member for Lake Macquarie knows a lot about this issue. He talked about the accessibility of a free service that has been operating for 30 years. Hunter New England Health, with the support of the State Liberal Government, is now taking the service away.

The member for Lake Macquarie talked about the fact that it is a free and unlimited service and that patients can have as many services and meetings as they need. With other services the number of meetings and interviews that a patient can have is very limited. The member for Macquarie Fields talked about poverty by exclusion. The axing of this counselling service will increase poverty by exclusion. I urge all members, especially the Liberal members of Parliament for the local Hunter area, to support my motion.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 24

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

Noes, 53

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

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [12.48 p.m.]: I move:

That this House acknowledges that:

- (1) Judicial independence is necessary to the rule of law and the separation of powers, and is a fundamental requirement for a fair trial.
- (2) As a member state of a State Party to relevant United Nations instruments, New South Wales must apply basic principles on the independence of the judiciary, including respect for and observance of that independence and allowing the judiciary to decide matters impartially and without inappropriate restrictions or influence.
- (3) Broad sentencing discretion allows the courts to consider all relevant circumstances surrounding an offence, the offender and the victim to ensure the punishment fits the crime and the criminal, and reflects the community's sense of justice.

Courts are charged with the ultimate decision over the freedom, rights, duties and property of accused persons. Protecting the innocent and ensuring punishment fits the crime are fundamental to a liberal democracy, and these are only possible if the courts exercise decision-making powers fairly by considering all relevant information, with final decisions made independently and without interference or influence. Everyone has the right to a fair trial, and that is important to decisions on both conviction and sentencing. A fair trial can only be achieved with an independent judiciary that has full discretion.

Judicial independence is a vital part of the separation of powers, which is central to the rule of law in Australia. The separation of powers divides the institutions of government into three branches: the legislature,

which makes the laws; the executive, which puts the laws into operation; and the judiciary, which interprets the laws. Each has separate powers and functions to avoid a concentration of power in any one arm of government. Parliaments should not set laws that force courts to make specific decisions because it takes away the courts' ability to ensure that decisions are fair and that they reflect the nature and severity of a crime. Australia is a member state of the United Nations and party to its instruments. As such, New South Wales is required to apply basic principles including those on the independence of the judiciary that enable it to decide matters impartially and without inappropriate restrictions or influence.

Under the United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders we must enshrine judicial independence; ensure the judiciary decides matters impartially based on facts without restriction, improper influence, pressure, or interference; and ensure that the judiciary has jurisdiction over all judicial issues. Our human rights obligations require access to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal, and prevention of arbitrary imprisonment and access to sentence reviews by a higher tribunal. Arbitrary imprisonment can occur if a sentence does not reflect the true nature and circumstances of a crime.

Like many in the community, I have been concerned by mandatory sentencing laws in this State where Parliament has set a minimum sentence for someone convicted of the murder of a police officer or of intentionally hitting someone while intoxicated resulting in death. When these laws were introduced there was a barrage of verbal attacks on the judiciary by members of both sides of this House and by some in the media based on a small number of cases. Targeting judges is unhelpful. In order to ensure a fair trial, judges are not meant to take into consideration what is being said in the media. Instead, we need to educate people about the importance of judicial discretion in creating a fair and equitable society. We need to educate them about how judges determine a sentence and why sentences sometimes seem lenient. And we need to trust the courts' extensive appeal system.

Justice requires that the punishment fit the crime. This can only be done if courts have broad sentencing discretion that allows them to base a sentence on all relevant circumstances surrounding an offence, the offender and the victim. When parliaments set minimum sentences, prison terms become inflated. Depriving people of their freedom is a serious thing that should not be treated lightly. It should be done only through a fair and independent trial based on the merits of the case. An unjust and excessive sentence can ruin a person's life. We cannot predict every scenario that is relevant to a case, so it is wrong for parliaments to play judge. Courts and the judiciary must remain independent from parliament and the executive, and have the discretion to consider all relevant circumstances. That is fundamental to our international obligations and to ensuring everyone has access to a fair trial. I commend the motion.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [12.52 p.m.]: I thank the member for Sydney for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House. It gives members the opportunity to reflect on the role of the judiciary in our legal system and, more importantly, our society. As the Attorney General and first law officer of the State I place on record my thanks to members of the judiciary for the function they carry out every day in the courts of this State. It is appropriate to reflect on judicial independence, as the member for Sydney has indicated. It is, after all, a cornerstone of our democracy. The Judicial Commission of New South Wales has observed:

Judicial independence may be defined as the ability of a judicial officer to conduct their work free from improper pressure by executive government, by litigants and by particular pressure groups. The fundamental concept of judicial independence came into being in England in 1701 with the enactment of the Act of Settlement. This statute formally recognised the principles of security of judicial tenure (holding office during good behaviour) and the need for appropriate mechanisms to exist for a judge's removal (by address by both houses of Parliament). This essay focuses on the history of judicial independence in England and Wales and also looks at how it operates today. It concludes by briefly examining contemporary pressures on the judiciary in these countries and cautions that a democratic society, which takes the independence of its judiciary for granted, does so at its peril.

I recommend a broader reading of the works of the Judicial Commission of New South Wales in regard to its observations about judicial independence. The significance of the independence of the judiciary cannot be overstated. It is and has been observed on many occasions as being the very concept that lays at the heart of our system of government in New South Wales and across Australia—that is, the democratic system. It is, though, often taken for granted. We who live in this State and country tend to rely on judicial independence. We do not notice it all that much; we just accept that it is there. We know that if we are on the receiving end of excesses of government or enforcement authorities we can rely on judicial independence. As the Attorney General, I will argue and defend that case completely. In her Victoria Law Foundation Law Week oration the Chief Justice of Victoria, the Hon. Marilyn Warren, AC, noted:

As Sir Gerard Brennan observed, a free society exists only so long as it is governed by the rule of law. Sir Gerard also observed that judicial independence exists to serve and protect "the governed" or, in simpler words, the community. It is a concept described as a bastion, even a fortress.

It is a fortress that the New South Wales Government, and I as Attorney General, will do all we can to protect, because it is in the interests of the community. The system of courts in New South Wales undertakes an amazing array of work. The Supreme Court usually hears somewhere in the order of 9,500 to nearly 12,000 cases per year. It is ably led by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Hon. Tom Bathurst. I thank all justices of the Supreme Court, and in particular Margaret Beazley, the President of the Court of Appeal, for their work and efforts on behalf of the community in ensuring that judicial independence is achieved in every case and that their decisions are in the best interests of our community.

I also thank the judges of the District Court, led by the Hon. Reg Blanch. Of course, the District Court is extremely busy. Without considering appeals, the court generally hears in the order of 15,000 to 16,000 cases a year. In any man's terms that is a heavy workload. As a Parliament and Government we are grateful for the work done by each District Court judge. The Local Court carries the bulk of the work. In any one year more than 400,000 cases will come before it. It is ably led by Chief Magistrate Graeme Henson. I thank him and all Local Court magistrates for their work. I also thank each judicial officer who makes up our court system for ensuring that the community's views are heard and that the community is protected.

Judicial independence is important, but there are times when a government is entitled to send a clear message to both the judiciary and the community that it is making a decision in the best interests of the community, which means that on occasions a sentence has to be determined in a minimum mandatory way. That is not a preferred position or one that the Government would leap to with great enthusiasm, but it is a position that an Executive Government and Parliament must be prepared to consider when there is a need for major cultural change. That has occurred recently in a limited number of circumstances in this Parliament.

Whilst I am thanking the judiciary for its work, as the Attorney General I also ask judges and magistrates to not accept the orthodoxy. In fact, I want them to challenge the orthodoxy constantly, within the construct of judicial independence. I ask them to do that because there are always better ways to approach our jobs and functions in society. I also ask them while they are considering the offender in that context of their judicial independence to also consider the aggrieved—the victim, the family and their friends—in a way that connects their decisions with the reality of the hurt and grief created by the actions of the offender. It is a challenge, but I know Parliament would like them to meet that challenge. Finally, I thank the President of the Children's Court, Peter Johnstone, the head of the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, Robertson Wright, and the array of justices and judges who ensure that judicial independence operates in the interests of the community of New South Wales.

By consent, Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) postponed to permit the conclusion of the current debate.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [12.59 p.m.]: The origin of judicial independence probably is Jethro's counsel to Moses in Exodus 18, and of course it should be enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 1966. Having heard the Attorney General's contribution to the debate on the motion moved by the member for Sydney, I take this opportunity to make a number of observations. Firstly, I commend the member for Sydney for bringing this motion before the House. Secondly, I want to recognise the contribution of the Attorney General. This was the first time for a long time that an Attorney General has stood in this House and taken such a considered approach, engaging in what for hundreds of years has been a traditional function of an Attorney General—to defend the judiciary, its reputation and its work.

The Attorney General is no ordinary Minister of the Crown. The Attorney General is also the State's chief law officer. It is his function to preserve the doctrine of separation of powers. He is the chief adviser to the Executive Government, and should be to the Parliament, in relation to those duties. Since the Mabo case and since Federal Attorney-General Williams did not defend the High Court in respect of the Mabo case, prompting Sir Harry Gibbs to make public statements, the function of the Attorney General to defend the reputation and role of the judiciary has fallen into disrepute. I have said in this House on a number of occasions that it is absolutely critical that the public have confidence in judges and in the judicial system. Judicial power is the cornerstone to democracy.

It is judicial power that ensures both the legislature and executive are bound by the concept of the rule of law. It is difficult to be the government of the day in this media climate. The Attorney General and the government of the day get the blame for every single decision with which the media might disagree. However, there are appellate processes and ways in which to have those decisions reviewed. The Attorney General of this

State has his own personal access to the appellate system should he disagree with the Director of Public Prosecutions. Judges have a difficult task. By the very nature of their independence, they operate in a cloistered and individual environment so that they are not affected by other people or other organs within society.

Unfortunately, attacks have a particular impact on them. But it is essential that personal attacks on them do not influence their decision-making process. I ask all members of this House and of the Executive Government to follow the lead of the Attorney General in this debate. I know it is difficult, and I know the public often clamour for vengeance in respect of a variety of issues that are the subject of publicity, but it is our responsibility to preserve and protect the Westminster system. It is our responsibility, as temporary trustees of that system, to moderate our language and to moderate our approach and support the entire concept of the independence of the judiciary. Its function and reputation in the community is dependent upon our accepting that responsibility.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [1.03 p.m.], in reply: I thank the Attorney General and the member for Heffron for their well-considered statements in support of the importance of judicial independence. Judicial independence is necessary to the rule of law and a fundamental part of the separation of powers, which requires judges to have full discretion over judicial matters. We must promote the independence of the judiciary to ensure that everyone in this State has access to justice. If we respect human rights and our international obligations, we must ensure that everyone has the right to a fair trial and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal. Mandatory sentencing prevents this and results in unjust and excessive sentences. Parliament should not direct the courts to make particular decisions in certain situations, such as those through mandatory sentencing laws; it should instead provide the courts with full discretion to make decisions based on all relevant circumstances with guidance on the intentions of laws. Judicial independence is fundamental to a healthy democracy. I commend the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to sessional order Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) proceeded with.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 55/55

Debate resumed from 15 May 2014.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.05 p.m.]: I report on the Legislation Review Digest No. 55 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. I commend the staff of the Legislation Review Committee for preparing the digest, and I acknowledge my fellow committee members—the chair and member for Myall Lakes, the members for the electorates of Swansea, Rockdale and Parramatta, and our colleagues from the other place, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, Mr David Shoebridge and Dr Peter Phelps. The committee considered six bills this week, including the Constitution Amendment (Disclosures by Members) Bill 2014. The bill will introduce amendments that will strengthen disclosure responsibilities by each member of Parliament to include responsibilities to disclose certain pecuniary interests of any spouse or de facto partner of the member and any person under the age of 18 years who is dependent on the member for support, and disclose annual taxable income. The committee made the following comment on the bill:

Given that registers of disclosures made by members of Parliament are available to the public, the Committee considers that the amendments proposed could impact on the privacy of members' spouses, de facto partners, relatives and children in some circumstances. The Committee notes the public interest intention of this bill in ensuring the integrity and accountability of members of Parliament and that other Australian Parliaments require certain third party interests to be disclosed, however, the Committee nevertheless refers this issue to Parliament for consideration.

The committee also reviewed the Crimes Amendment (Strangulation) Bill 2014. The bill will amend the Crimes Act 1900 to introduce an additional strangulation offence in New South Wales. The bill proposes a new offence that would apply if a person intentionally chokes, suffocates or strangles another person so as to render the other person unconscious, insensible or incapable of resistance while being reckless as to whether the other person is rendered unconscious, insensible or incapable of resistance. Through the proposed amendments, the bill responds to concerns raised by the Director of Public Prosecutions as to the adequacy of the current provision within the Crimes Act 1900 concerning strangulation.

The committee reviewed a number of other bills, including the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Amendment (Family Member Impact Statement) Bill 2014. The bill will enable a court to take a family victim impact statement into account for the purposes of determining an appropriate sentence on the basis that the impact of an offence on the immediate family of a deceased victim is an aspect of harm done to the community. Through the proposed amendments, the bill responds to concerns raised by the Director of Public Prosecutions as to the adequacy of the current provision within the Crimes Act 1900. The bill overrules the decision in *R v Previtera* (1997) 94 A Crim R 76 that the impact of the death of a victim on the victim's family is not relevant to the determination of the offender's sentence.

The Committee also considered the Home Building Amendment Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to amend several aspects of the Home Building Act 1989, including those relating to statutory warranties. The bill also seeks to increase penalties for unlicensed work; increase caps on deposits and regulating progress payments relating to contracts for residential building work; increase the cap on deposits relating to contracts to supply kit homes, and tighten provisions for contractor licences, supervisor certificates and tradesperson certificates. Unfortunately, the bill also amends section 18F of the Act and effectively increases the type of reliance that developers can have in relation to defences to shoddy construction work.

It also significantly changes the major defect definitions under statutory warranty provisions, watering down those provisions and making it almost impossible for home owners to claim the six-year warranty provision. The committee also considered the Home Building Amendment Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to amend several aspects of the Home Building Act 1989, including those relating to statutory warranties. The bill also seeks to increase penalties for unlicensed work; increase caps on deposits and regulating progress payments relating to contracts for residential building work; increase the cap on deposits relating to contracts to supply kit homes; and tighten provisions for contractor licences, supervisor certificates and tradesperson certificates.

In most instances it is likely that only the two-year provision will apply. This is of particular concern in relation to fire safety defects, waterproofing and other major structural defects that often are experienced by home owners and particularly those who live in strata units. At least 85 per cent of strata buildings have a range of defects that become apparent within two to five years of completion. The committee considered also two other bills in the fifty-fifth digest, namely the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Bill 2014, and the Maritime and Transport Licensing Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. I commend the digest to the House.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Legislation Review Digest No. 56/55

Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.10 p.m.]: I thank the House for the opportunity to update it on the comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in its recent digest, which was tabled on 27 May 2014. This is the fifty-sixth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of this, the Fifty-fifth Parliament. There were five bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 13 May 2014. The committee commented upon three of them. The committee considered the Energy Legislation Amendment (Retail Price Deregulation) Bill 2014 and noted that new section 234D provides that regulations may be made conferring powers on the market monitor to require certain individuals to provide information or other evidence for the purposes of an energy-related special review under the bill.

The regulations may also prohibit or regulate the disclosure of information or the provision of evidence to the market monitor. Provisions prohibiting conduct usually are supported by penalties. The committee expressed its preference that powers backed with penalties for breach or non-compliance are provided for in primary legislation, rather than subordinate legislation, as is the case in this bill. However, given that regulations are subject to disallowance by Parliament under section 41 of the Interpretation Act, the committee did not find the need to express further comment.

Turning to the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment Bill 2014, the committee identified two issues. The first issue is that the bill will increase, from four hours to six, the maximum

investigation period in which an individual can be questioned by police following arrest. However, police will be limited in the time sought for an extension to the initial investigation period. The time for extension will be capped at six hours, down from the current eight. The committee noted that the increase to the maximum investigation period in which an individual can be questioned by police immediately following their arrest may constitute a further deprivation of the liberty of the individual.

The second issue concerns a new category in which a police officer may undertake a search—including a strip search—of an individual where the individual has provided consent before the search takes place. The committee noted that there is an absence of provisions that require a police officer to inform the individual that consent does not need to be granted. The committee considered that this provision may constitute an interference with an individual's personal bodily integrity and referred this matter to Parliament for its further consideration.

Lastly, the committee considered the Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2014. The committee noted that certain proposed amendments are deemed to have commenced on the day the bill was introduced into Parliament. These amendments relate to expenses incurred on mine subsidence compensation claims. The committee noted that it prefers commencement of an Act to be either on assent or on a future defined date so that those affected can organise their affairs accordingly and in compliance with the law as it currently stands. The committee made no further comment on this bill. As always, I ask members to familiarise themselves with the contents of this and other digests. Digests are a valuable resource that assist in the detailed consideration and discussion of legislation introduced in the Parliament. I thank the staff for preparing the digest in the short time between sitting weeks. I commend the digest to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.16 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition I report on the Legislation Review Digest No. 56 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. I commend the staff of the Legislation Review Committee and acknowledge my fellow committee members. The committee considered five bills, including the Advocate for Children and Young People Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to establish the statutory office of the Advocate for Children and Young People and to provide for its functions, including the establishment of a new Youth Advisory Council and to abolish the Commission for Children and Young People.

It is imperative that the new Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People is properly resourced and staffed. I raised this concern during the second reading debate this week. The bill will require the advocate to report to Parliament on matters describing the advocate's activities, and to make recommendations on potential changes and improvements to legislation. The bill will still enable the formation of a parliamentary joint Committee on Children and Young People. However, because the functions of the advocate have been expanded beyond the functions that the commission previously had and because the advocate will now be responsible for young people up to the age of 25 years, the Government will need to resource the office accordingly. The Government should appoint a permanent person as soon as practicable, in the light of the fact that there has been an acting commissioner for more than 13 months.

The committee also considered the Energy Legislation Amendment (Retail Price Deregulation) Bill 2014. The bill modifies the operation of the national energy retail law so that the mandatory scheme requiring energy retailers to offer energy at a regulated price to certain small customers no longer applies. Schedule 1 item 9 new section 234D of the bill provides that regulations may be made conferring powers on the market monitor to require certain persons to provide information or other evidence for the purposes of an energy-related special review under the bill. These regulations may also prohibit or regulate the disclosure of information or the provision of evidence to the market monitor. The committee notes that provisions prohibiting conduct are generally backed by penalties. The committee noted that it would:

Prefer that the powers of the Market Monitor and any provisions that include penalties to be included in primary, not subordinate, legislation.

The committee reviewed the Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2014. The bill will make amendments to the Mine Subsidence Compensation Act 1961 to provide that the Mine Subsidence Board is not to pay out a claim for compensation relating to preventative expenses incurred or proposed before the relevant subsidence occurs. The bill also provides that the board may reject a claim for compensation if the board is of the opinion that the claim is disproportionate to the expense of repairing or replacing the improvements or household or other effects concerned. A further aim of the bill is to clarify that the board must notify claimants

of its decisions relating to claims for compensation and the reasons for those decisions and seeks to clarify the operation of provisions relating to board approvals and certificates of compliance. With regard to trespass on personal rights and liberties, the committee made the following comment:

The committee would prefer the commencement of an Act to be on assent or a defined date to ensure those affected can organise their affairs accordingly. The bill backdates the commencement of certain provisions to the date the Bill was introduced into Parliament. The committee notes that provisions in force before the introduction date will still apply to certain claims lodged.

The committee considered two other bills: the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment Bill 2014, and the Parents and Citizens Associations Incorporation Amendment Bill 2014. As always, our meeting was nice and short. The committee discussed the issue of whether it still holds its purpose or function or, in some respects, is becoming increasingly redundant given that often issues raised are ignored by Parliament. That is not a criticism of the government of the day, but perhaps at some point the functions of this particular committee might need to be reviewed. I commend the digest to the House.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Report noted.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.20 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I welcome to the gallery the New South Wales Apprenticeships Ambassador and Patron of the NSW Training Awards, Mr Bert Evans, AO. Mr Evans also is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2013 Australian Training Awards. Mr Evans is the guest of the Minister for Education and member for Murrumbidgee. I welcome also Katie Merriman from Abbotsleigh High School, Wahroonga, who is a guest of and undertaking work experience with the Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events.

I welcome 12 members of Rotary International District 3450, who are in Sydney this week for the International Rotary Convention, led by the past District Governor, Kenneth Wong. Welcome to the New South Wales Parliament. I welcome also Mrs Nellie Mangion, Mr Tony Mangion and Mrs Michelle Mangion, guests of the member for Swansea. I acknowledge 30 school leaders from the Hornsby electorate, guests of the member for Hornsby. Finally, I welcome Lindsay and Judy Chambers, guests of the member for Kiama.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.19 p.m.]

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. On 14 May the Premier told the House he is ruling out any charges on hospital emergency departments. Will the Premier keep his commitment by supporting Labor's laws to ban charges for emergency hospital visits or is he going to back down on another commitment?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It is an interesting question because the Minister for Health answered this question clearly, and it has been ruled out.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked the question. I am sure everyone would like to hear the answer.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As I was saying, and I apologise to the gallery, what happens in this place is that those opposite will ask questions, we give an answer, and they forget it happens, so I have to keep answering it. The question has been answered. The Minister for Health made it clear. I was reminded of the Leader of the Opposition's credibility in asking questions because it is a challenge. When he became the Leader of the Opposition a number of his own party members said he did not have the capacity to undertake the job. He came out with a defence.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Premier has not answered a question since becoming Premier. It would be good for him to start now. He should try to answer the question.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. I will not tolerate that type of behaviour in question time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As to his ability to ask questions, the Leader of the Opposition was put on the spot when members of his party said, "We don't think you have the capacity to be the Leader of the Opposition." He said, "I have written a book, so I have the capacity to do anything." The problem is that when they looked at the book they found out he was not the author. He admitted that he was a co-editor in some way, shape or form. But it got me thinking about the title of a book that was actually written by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr John Sidoti: It would be a picture book.

Ms Linda Burney: You're not a clown.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. I call the member for Toongabbie to order for the first time.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The Premier is in breach of Standing Order 73, personal reflections.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order. I remind the member for Macquarie Fields that he is already on one call to order and I remind the member for Shellharbour that she is on two calls to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The first title that came to mind was *Bribe and Prejudice*. That would be a cracking read. Imagine reading that. His economic manifesto, which goes into deep detail, could be called *Magic Pudding*.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: Under Standing Order 129, the Premier's answer is irrelevant to the question that was asked. The Premier should return to the leave of the question.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I could go on and on, but I will not. In relation to health across the State, this Government is proud to be putting thousands of more nurses on the front line and to be undertaking a record health infrastructure program across this great State. Close to \$5 billion will be spent on hospitals from one end of the State to the other. That is coming from a great Health Minister, who is making a difference at the front line for every person in this State. We will not listen to lectures from members opposite about the health system. We saw what happened to health when they were in power. It is a stark difference to our actions. This Government is proud of its record and the record of the Health Minister and we will continue to provide great health services to the people of New South Wales.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

BUSHFIRE RISK MANAGEMENT

Mrs ROZA SAGE: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government helping people to better protect their properties from the impact of bushfires?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Blue Mountains for her question. She has done an amazing job in her community on the issue of bushfires. I also pay tribute to the members of the Rural Fire Service. Every summer, when the pressure is at its greatest, they do a fantastic job. While we are at home, often watching the bushfires on television, they are protecting houses and lives. I pay tribute to the amazing work that they do for the people of New South Wales. Last summer we saw in graphic detail how devastating the bushfires can be.

The fires began early and by October there were more than 1,000 fires burning, which destroyed almost 7,000 hectares of land and more than 200 properties. All of us saw the devastating impact it had on those communities. Again, I pay particular tribute to the member for the Blue Mountains. Not only was she there on the day, as other members were in their communities, but she has been with individuals, families and businesses every day since to ensure that they get back on their feet. We are proud to have her as a member of our team. I pay tribute to the member for Blue Mountains for her efforts in her community.

This Government has looked for opportunities to further help landowners better protect their homes from being destroyed by bushfires. Today I was pleased to be joined by the member for Blue Mountains, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Rural Fire Service Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers. I also pay tribute to Rob Rogers. He looked at this challenge and came up with a way to help home owners make a difference in respect of safety. We thank him for his work. The Government wishes to provide additional powers to home owners. If they need to get rid of the dangers to their houses, then they can go ahead and do it. We will get rid of the red tape, the green tape, the trees and the vegetation. It is very simple. I am surprised to hear opposition to this measure because we make no apologies for saying to home owners, "We want you to protect your household." These powers will go a long way to doing that.

The additional powers will apply to residents whose homes are located in designated bushfire zones and will make it easier for them to enhance their ability to safeguard their properties before the bushfire season commences. I ask Opposition members to help us push this legislation through over the winter break to ensure home owners are promptly provided with these powers. Residents will be allowed to clear trees within 10 metres of their homes and shrubs and other vegetation within 50 metres of their homes. The Government also supports people, not just trees. Today we heard that the Opposition is against this. We are happy to put people before trees in the name of safety. The relevant areas will be known as 10/50 areas and will be determined by the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner and published on the Rural Fire Service website. The Rural Fire Service website has a huge number of followers because it provides an array of information to members of the community and helps them to deal with the challenges that bushfires present.

The Government has worked very closely with the Rural Fire Service to develop these rules. As the Minister said at the press conference this morning, we are in awe of the incredible work the Rural Fire Service does for the people of this State and we thank it for providing this practical solution. From today, as the laws are pushed through this Parliament, householders across the State who look out their windows and see trees and vegetation in risk areas—the days of red and green tape are over—will be able to clear their land and keep their house safe. This practical solution is long overdue and the Government is delighted to introduce it for the people of New South Wales.

MEDICARE CO-PAYMENT

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I direct my question to the Premier. Premier, do you support Tony Abbott's policy of a \$7 co-payment for visiting a general practitioner?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Government has answered this question. We have said clearly that we are very concerned about the health cuts that were made in the Federal budget and we have stood up to Canberra in relation to them. We will be ensuring that long-term health services continue to be provided in this State to their current level and beyond. The Minister for Health has made her position very clear. For the benefit of the people seated in the public gallery, this is the last day—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was specifically about whether the Premier supports or opposes the \$7 co-payment. It is straightforward and simple, even for a bloke of the Premier's capacity.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have this challenge. This is last sitting day before the State budget. Generally, the last sitting week before the budget—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD:—Opposition members ask questions about the budget papers. I have brought a copy of the budget with me. This is what it looks like. Members on this side know what it looks like. Those on the other side of the House should try reading it.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, relevance. The question bore no relationship to the budget. It was about whether the Premier supports the \$7 co-payment introduced by Tony Abbott. This year's budget or last year's budget does not relate to the question.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order. The Premier is answering the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Yesterday I reminded those opposite that the budget is coming but they have not responded. As the Leader of the Opposition just said, they have no budget questions. In fact, as he was taking his point of order I was reminded of another title for a book written by him. What about *Weekend at Eddie's*? That is one of my favourites: "It is winter time. They wax the skis, sharpen the edges and load them on the roof." It would be a long, long read.

In conclusion, we are delivering health services of which the community can be proud. The Government is very proud of two particular achievements in health: we are delivering more nurses on the front line and we are delivering more infrastructure. Those opposite hate it. How can they be against that? How can they be against more nurses on the front line and record funding levels? We have stood up to Canberra and we will continue to stand up for the people of New South Wales, and we will continue to deliver the best health services to this State that we can.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the second time.

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I address my question to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. How is the Government improving hospital emergency department treatment times for New South Wales residents?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Maitland for the question and for her ongoing support and interest in health care in Maitland.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Wollongong to order for the first time.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I was very proud to receive a copy of the latest National Health Performance Authority report on hospital performance for the year 2012-13, which was released this morning. That report shows that over the past 12 months our hospitals were assessed as showing year-on-year improvement. No other State matched that performance. In other words, we were better than any other State in Australia. Over the past 12 months more than 90,000 more patients were seen and treated within four hours in emergency departments.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Wollongong to order for the second time.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This is the National Emergency Access Target, commonly called the NEAT. When those opposite were in government, and the member for Macquarie Fields was the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Health, it was 59 per cent. Last year it was 71 per cent—just a small improvement! More than 38 per cent of our hospitals improved their NEAT target by more than 10 percentage points. The best performing hospitals were: Manly, 84 per cent; Auburn, 80 per cent—the member for Auburn should be thrilled about that great result—or a 13 percentage point improvement; Manning, 78 per cent—I recently visited that wonderful hospital with the member for Myall Lakes; Fairfield, 76 per cent; and Tweed, 75 per cent. Ryde, Mona Vale and Bathurst hospitals were all big improvers. We also had Nepean, Liverpool and Wollongong hospitals.

In 2013 there were approximately seven million patient presentations to our emergency departments across the county. Approximately 2.6 million of those were patient presentations in New South Wales—the highest number nationally. I give credit for that to the extremely hardworking doctors and nurses and those who support them in our hospitals. But this massive improvement is also due to the investment that this Government has made in hospital infrastructure. The member for Maitland successfully lobbied the former Government to allocate funds to purchase the site and start planning for the Maitland Hospital.

Dr Andrew McDonald: It was given to you.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: No, it was not. In fact, the member for Macquarie Fields appears to agree with the Government's approach to investing in health, and in engaging the private sector in building our public hospitals.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Tell me what I said.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I will tell the member opposite what he said. In an article in the *Newcastle Herald* on 23 May this year the member opposite revealed his support for a public-private funding model for the new Maitland Hospital. He said he believed that the facility could be built much quicker and that it could have a public-private partnership. He also said:

It has to be a public hospital, possibly with some private involvement as part of a public-private partnership.

That seems to be at odds with what he said back on 2 May 2013 on Radio 2GB. We had just announced a public-private partnership for the northern beaches, and he said, "The private sector has never in Australia ever been able to deliver public health services to everyone based on need. This has never worked before, and I have major concerns that it will work." Here is a man who does not know whether he is coming or going.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time. I call the member for Toongabbie to order for the second time.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This gives me an opportunity to speak further about the absolutely contradictory comments and quite odd position expressed by the shadow Minister for Health. I ruled out the charging of a co-payment to attend emergency departments in New South Wales. I did so the day after the Federal budget was brought down, which of course makes the introduction of a private member's bill by those opposite nothing but a stupid political stunt. I went on to suggest that we would look at options to invite general practitioners into our hospitals. The shadow Minister described that as a "thought bubble by the Minister".

I have news for the shadow Minister for Health. He should ask a certain paediatric specialist at Port Macquarie Hospital, whose name also happens to be Dr McDonald and who is an identical twin to the member for Macquarie Fields. That hospital has a co-located general practitioner [GP] clinic. The member should ask his brother about that. There are many examples of co-located GP clinics within hospitals and within the grounds of hospitals working to provide after-hours services. They actually provide GP services within our hospitals. So there was no thought bubble; the member opposite should get his facts right.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Drummoyne to order for the second time. Members will come to order. I call the member for Drummoyne to order for the third time.

MACQUARIE GENERATION

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question without notice is to the Premier. Will the Premier halt his plans to sell Macquarie Generation in light of the fact that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] has said if the sale proceeds as the Government has structured it that it will lead to a substantial lessening of competition and price rises for all electricity users in New South Wales?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The question has been asked and the Premier will be heard in silence. Any member already on a call to order is now deemed to be on three calls to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Government makes no apologies for taking action to enable us to build infrastructure across the State. We remember what those opposite did on infrastructure when they were in

government. Part of that has been the Macquarie Generation privatisation process. We have two criteria: it must clear competition hurdles—and that is exactly what is being considered at the moment by the Australian Competition Tribunal, about which it will make a determination—and it must clear retention value. That is very different from what we saw from those opposite when they were in government.

Mr Michael Daley: That is not what the member for Tamworth says.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Maroubra likes to rewrite history. He was the one who very happily signed off on the gentrader sales. We remember what that did. As the Auditor-General of New South Wales said, they were sold for less than half of what they were worth. That is what the member for Maroubra did. I worry about the member for Maroubra. I am personally worried about him on many fronts. He wants to take over as the Leader of the Opposition. I just do not know whether he will get there. An article in the *Australian Financial Review* that came to my attention spoke about middle managers. I wonder whether it applies in this case.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Whatever flight of fancy the Premier is currently on, he is not being relevant in any way, shape or form to the question he was asked. He should return to the leave of the question.

Mr Nathan Rees: It is why you shouldn't legalise marijuana.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I direct the member for Toongabbie to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Toongabbie left the Chamber at 2.46 p.m.]

Mr MIKE BAIRD: If the member for Maroubra wants to take over he has to have credible economic policies. The article says:

Middle managers may think they're doing a good job, but the majority of their colleagues disagree.

According to a new survey, more than half of middle managers have average or below average capabilities in key areas including people management, communication and leadership.

The member opposite does not have the capacity to take over.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: In 2½ minutes of speaking time the Premier has gone nowhere near the question. The question is simple: Is the Premier going to sign off on electricity price rises for everybody in New South Wales? My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question was about the sale of Macquarie Generation, not the rubbish he is talking about.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Premier is answering the question. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That point of order was a bit better; he actually put a bit of effort into that one. Let me paint a picture. Those opposite talk about electricity prices. What did they do to every family and business in this State when they were in government? Electricity prices went up and up and up. Under the management of those opposite that is what happened to prices—they went up. I can see the former energy Minister over there. Over five years electricity prices went up not 5 per cent or 10 per cent or 20 per cent or 30 per cent; they went up by 60 per cent. Electricity prices went up by 60 per cent under those opposite. And yet those opposite want to lecture us about electricity prices.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Murray-Darling will come to order.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was about whether the Premier is going to stop the sale or sign off on increased prices for families using electricity.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite gave the people of New South Wales a price rise of 60 per cent over five years. The Government has taken action to reduce electricity prices. We have removed billions of

dollars of costs. What does that mean for the families and businesses across this State? Electricity prices are going down. That is a case study of a government doing the responsible thing by supporting families and businesses versus those reckless people opposite who made every family and business in this State suffer by their incompetence.

BIOSECURITY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events. How is the Government improving biosecurity protections for our \$12 billion primary industries sector?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his important question. The protection of biosecurity is critical for this State. Members on this side of the House take it very seriously. One would think that the member for Cessnock might be interested in this topic, but he never asks a question on anything to do with primary industries. He is falling behind. As the member for Northern Tablelands said, it is critical that we protect our \$12 billion primary industries sector from pests, diseases and weeds. We need a framework that is effective, efficient and that delivers benefits to the whole of New South Wales. We need an Act that reduces red tape for farmers and industry.

Last May I released a biosecurity strategy to map a clear vision for biosecurity through to 2021. Today I am pleased to announce the next step in the Government's commitment to protecting our primary industries from pests and diseases. Our new, modern biosecurity framework outlines the modern tools and powers that are required to manage pests, diseases, weeds and contaminants in New South Wales. The new framework will underpin new legislation, the New South Wales Biosecurity Act. In recent years there have been a number of biosecurity outbreaks in New South Wales. Pests, viruses and diseases have a devastating impact on our primary industries sector and across our communities. Late last year the highly pathogenic H7 avian influenza broke out on two farms in the State's Central West outside of Young. The outbreak led to the destruction of 400,000 layer hens on one farm and 50,000 on another.

The equine influenza outbreak in 2007 and 2008 affected the movements of every horse in New South Wales and temporarily shut down the racing industry. It was a disaster. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I know that you are interested even if Labor members are not. Country shows, gymkhanas and race meetings were affected. Equine trading sales came to a halt, eventing stopped and pony clubs were shut down temporarily. More recently, Hendra virus killed four horses on the mid North Coast. I recognise the members from the mid North Coast who have been very active on that issue. Infected bats spread the insidious Hendra virus. Once again, I remind horse owners not to feed or water their horses under fruit trees, which is the danger place.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: It is clear that Labor is not interested in biosecurity, but Government members are. I will continue my answer for the benefit of Liberal and Nationals members. Biosecurity emergencies require immediate and decisive action to protect our economy, environment and community. The New South Wales Biosecurity Act will minimise delays and reduce the impact of emergency situations. The Act will reduce red tape. In fact, 11 of the 14 pieces of legislation currently related to biosecurity will be removed by this Act and the remaining three will be reduced significantly. This Act will be a single piece of cohesive, innovative and modern legislation. Much of the existing biosecurity legislation was developed in the first half of the last century. Examples include the Stock Diseases Act 1923, which is no stranger to the member for Mount Druitt, and the Plant Diseases Act 1924, which he also knows well.

Mr Andrew Stoner: He wrote it.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I am not sure if he wrote it, but I know he is aware of it. The new Act will replace layer upon layer of outdated legislation. It is required because it will cut red tape for our farming sector, minimise delays in responding to emergency situations, and maintain our enviable market access and reputation for high-quality, safe and disease-free food and fibre. It will also improve our consistency with national biosecurity arrangements and support a shared responsibility for biosecurity. It does not matter if people are growing crops in Moree or tending a vegetable patch in a Sydney backyard—everyone has a role to play in managing biosecurity threats.

We must be vigilant, keep an eye out for unfamiliar pests and watch out for weeds and diseases. The development of this new biosecurity Act shows that New South Wales is the trailblazing State on this issue. Key components of the new framework include clear roles for industry and the community in preventing, managing and minimising risks of a spread of a serious outbreak and a new high-risk category of pests and diseases, which covers things such as foot and mouth disease, avian influenza, Hendra virus, citrus canker and parthenium weed.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: The framework contains rapid response powers that will enable swift and decisive action in biosecurity emergencies. It provides improved support and recognition of market certification schemes and support for tracing mechanisms, including the National Livestock Identification System. I am sure New South Wales farmers will be happy with that. The new framework is out for public consultation from today until 27 June. I encourage interested stakeholders and particularly farmers and industry to lodge a submission.

ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION

Mr RON HOENIG: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier commit to not use any taxpayer-funded advertising to promote his plans to privatise our electricity network, poles and wires?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Unless I missed something, we said that we would not be taking action on this unless we sought a mandate. Nothing has changed. I do not know who Labor members use as their sources, what they are trying to conjure up or what their conspiracy theory is, but I will say that they need to try a bit harder on their questions. I have started something going on Twitter about titles for Robbo's book. People are submitting more and more titles. The last one, which I liked, was *Saving Private Ryan Park*. That would be a very short book. Since members opposite have asked about electricity, it is worth highlighting once again their deplorable record. They oversaw that 60 per cent soar to the moon. Visitors in the gallery will remember when their bills were going up. Members opposite are the people who let that happen. What did they do about it? They said it was too hard to bring prices down.

Ms Cherie Burton: What have you done as Premier?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Kogarah asks what I have done. Have you read the Australian Energy Regulator [AER] determination?

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: There are two parts to my point of order. The first is—

Mr Brad Hazzard: You can have only one point of order, Charlie Brown.

Mr Paul Lynch: If the bonehead who purports to be the Attorney General would shut up for long enough to let me get my point out he might understand it.

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

Mr Paul Lynch: There are two parts to my point of order. The first is that the Premier is engaging in an unedifying discussion with another member of the House. He should direct his comments through the Chair.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr Paul Lynch: It actually is, Mr Deputy-Speaker. The second part of my point of order is taken under Standing Order 129 because what the Premier is saying has nothing to do with the question he was asked.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Energy overseeing that 60 per cent price increase he was asked, "What would you do to try to take pressure off electricity prices?" He said he switches off the light when leaving a room.

Mr Richard Amery: Do you leave it on?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That's not bad. Remember Frank Sartor? We miss Frank. This was his response on keeping the cost of electricity down: he washes towels less frequently. That was his policy contribution. Mr Primrose in the upper House said he insists family members take shorter showers.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: It is taken under Standing Order 129. The question was about advertising the poles and wires, not what the Minister is referring to.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Premier answered the question in the first 10 seconds of his response. I cannot direct the Premier how to answer the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor's overall response to electricity prices going up was to have less hygiene. The good news for the people of New South Wales is that we on this side have taken this problem seriously. Removing billions of dollars of cost has sent electricity prices right down. Though members on the Opposition side were happy to oversee 60 per cent rises for families and businesses across the State, we have taken prices downwards. That is exactly what a responsible government will do, and we will continue to be proud of our record in that sector.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: I direct a question to the Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health. What action has the Government taken to transform mental health services for the community?

Mr JAI ROWELL: I thank the member for Swansea for this fantastic question. I know that he is a great Blues supporter and that he works very hard for his community. I believe that mental health should be above politics.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! This is a very important issue. The Minister will be heard in silence. I remind members that those previously called to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order.

Mr JAI ROWELL: Together we must make sure that those in need are supported to lead active and healthy lives. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership of the first New South Wales Mental Health Minister, the Hon. Kevin Humphries. His commitment to reforms has left a positive legacy for the people of New South Wales. Since 2011 this Government has increased recurrent expenditure in Mental Health by 17.4 per cent, to a record \$1.45 billion this financial year. This Government has a priority on customer-focused services for mental health consumers. Mental health is a condition that can affect people of all ages—across all communities, at any time. It does not discriminate. Nearly half of all Australians will be affected by mental illness at some stage in their lives. One in five people experience a mental illness in any given year, and an estimated 2.7 million working days are lost annually due to mental illness. It is estimated that by 2023, anxiety and depression will be the second-largest burden of disease in Australia.

We were elected with a mandate to transform mental health services, and that is what we on this side of the House have been doing. Since my appointment, I have seen new infrastructure in Wagga Wagga to expand clinical services for the Riverina through new and improved acute and sub-acute units. I have met with patients in the new state-of-the-art Older Persons Mental Health Unit at St George Hospital, which provides assessment and treatment for people aged more than 65 years. What fantastic work they do. Since March 2011 this Government has undertaken a significant capital works program. More than \$49 million has been allocated for new or expanded services not only in Wagga Wagga and St George but across the length and breadth of New South Wales, whether that is in Liverpool, the Shoalhaven, Blacktown, Nepean, Orange, Hornsby, Goulburn or the Prince of Wales Hospital.

I acknowledge Minister Jillian Skinner who is responsible for modernising health infrastructure across the State. I am so proud to be working alongside the Minister. I have seen the value and impact of the additional resources that this Government has delivered to date. This funding provides world-class mental health services, ensuring that acute and sub-acute mental health delivery is accessible and accountable. The Coalition Government has delivered on its election commitments to establish the Mental Health Commission, review the Mental Health Act and strengthen partnerships with the non-government sector. Our plan to make New South Wales number one again has provided a robust framework for this Government to improve mental health responses. We are focusing on prevention, early intervention and integrated services to address the causes, not just treat the symptoms.

Since early 2012 our New South Wales Mental Health Line has delivered a single statewide telephone service 24/7, staffed by mental health professionals. And it does not stop there. We have also delivered \$3.4 million for child and adolescent mental health services; \$2 million annually in increased funding to Lifeline, and along with the members for Camden and Campbelltown, I am proud to be a Macarthur Lifeline ambassador. We have launched the State's first Eating Disorders Plan, committing \$15.2 million over five years to ensure we treat more people, and committed \$10 million over four years to boost programs to reduce drug and alcohol addiction. The list just goes on and on.

This Government's commitment is to the whole of the State, evident through significant infrastructure investment to strengthen services, not just in metropolitan areas but in rural and regional areas as well. I am proud that the Baird-Stoner Government continues to prioritise those made vulnerable by issues of mental health. But I am most proud of the work that this Government is delivering with non-government organisations for community-based, consumer-focused services, when they are needed and where they can have the greatest impact. We continue to strengthen community-based responses, and together we can make sure the stigma previously associated with mental illness is permanently left in the past. We on this side of the House believe in good governance and outcome delivery for the people of New South Wales. That is what we have been doing for the past three years and it is what we will continue to do.

RESOURCES FOR REGIONS

Mr GREG PIPER: I direct a question to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the Deputy Premier direct Trade and Investment to review Lake Macquarie's exclusion from Resources for Regions funding eligibility given its overwhelming case for inclusion and inconsistencies in the procedures used to consult with councils that frustrated their efforts to contribute to the review of criteria?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie. I acknowledge his efforts, along with those of the members for Swansea and Charlestown, on behalf of their community in the Lake Macquarie area. It is refreshing to get a question about what might or might not be in the budget—in this case, Resources for Regions. All week those opposite missed the opportunity because they were off on their political tangents, instead of prosecuting their case in relation to financial matters such as this. As I noted earlier this week, Resources for Regions was introduced by this Government—after nothing in that space for 16 years from those opposite—to relieve infrastructure constraints and support mining communities throughout New South Wales.

The program is underpinned by an economic assessment that is independently audited. Since introducing the program, this Government has actively sought input from regional stakeholders, including local government, to better refine this economic assessment, so that we can better target this four-year \$160 million program. Following feedback from a range of regional stakeholders and local government bodies, and in line with my response to the member's earlier question on this subject, the latest assessment introduced for the first time a single index of mining affectedness.

The index included four weighted indicators of the direct and indirect impacts of mining. The new index provided an objective and consistent basis for all local government areas in the State to be compared, regardless of the way in which they were impacted by mining activity. Based on the index developed, the Government has resolved to fund ten local government areas that are most affected by mining in addition to Broken Hill, which was included to reflect the economic and social challenges associated with the long duration of mining activity in that city. Unfortunately, Lake Macquarie was ranked thirteenth on this year's index of mining affectedness, based on that multi-criteria analysis undertaken as part of that economic assessment. I have provided a copy to the member—I hope he has received it—of the assessment and its methodology so that he can explain to his community the process that was undertaken.

Mr Greg Piper: It doesn't help.

Mr ANDREW STONER: No, it does not help this year. Unfortunately Lake Macquarie—being ranked thirteenth of the local government areas in the State affected by mining—is not eligible for funding in this year's program. I reiterate that we have used an evidence-based process to determine eligibility for the program. I do not hear congratulations from the member for Cessnock, despite the fact that Cessnock was included in the 11 local government areas—not a word of thanks. One would imagine that the members for Cessnock and Wollongong would be helping to defend the methodology used, given that that economic assessment ensures that their communities are included in this year's program. It is a great program, one that was never delivered by those opposite. Every local government area would like to be included, but a line has to be drawn somewhere, consistent with available funds.

It should be remembered that 11 local government areas will be funded this year—11 more than the former Labor Government funded. I note that the member for Lake Macquarie has had discussions with NSW Trade and Investment on the matter of the economic assessment of mining-affected communities and I assure him that Trade and Investment will continue to assist him with his inquiries. The application process will open shortly for the 2014-15 funding round. I urge interested local government areas and members to contact NSW Trade and Investment.

APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How is the Government encouraging apprentice uptake and supporting apprentices to complete their qualifications?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for his question. Earlier today I had the pleasure of launching a new \$2.4 million scholarship program to assist apprentices who need additional financial support to complete their qualification. The Government is offering 40 scholarships, each worth a maximum of \$15,000 over three years, for apprentices in their first year who are experiencing financial hardship in completing their qualification. The 40 first-year recipients will receive \$5,000 each year for three years. To get the program going, we will also be offering scholarships to 40 second-year and 40 third-year apprentices, worth \$5,000 for each year of study remaining. In total 120 new scholarships will be awarded this year, to a total value of \$600,000. In awarding these scholarships, we will take into account the hardships experienced by the applicants, particularly those students with a disability, Aboriginal apprentices and—I know the Minister for Planning will appreciate this—women in non-traditional trades.

The scholarships are named in honour of the NSW Apprenticeships Ambassador, Bert Evans, AO, in recognition of the many years of outstanding support that he has shown for vocational education and training, and for apprentices in New South Wales. Bert is with us in the gallery today. I thank him for his support and ongoing work on behalf of apprentices in this State. Bert began his career in the manufacturing industry where he worked for 10 years before joining the Metal Trades Industry Association, the most powerful employer body at that time.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Bert also received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Australian Training Awards last year. These scholarships are in addition to the existing NSW Country Apprentice Scholarships program, which supports up to 30 students each year. Almost 80 per cent of Country Apprentice Scholarship holders have completed their apprenticeship, compared to 56 per cent generally. I am proud that the Government will be supporting 150 apprentices each year with a \$3 million total commitment over the next four years, through both the Bert Evans and the NSW Country Apprentice Scholarships.

Apprenticeships and traineeships are also an important feature of the New South Wales training system under Smart and Skilled—which I will come back to in a moment. For young people and older people without qualifications, these reforms provide an incentive to gain their first entry level qualification. The Government has established a cap of just \$2,000 for all apprentice qualifications. This capped fee is for the whole qualification. In most cases it is modestly higher than the current apprentice fee and, in some cases, less. There are also generous fee exemptions and concessions available.

I return to Smart and Skilled. After question time on Tuesday, the shadow Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, put out a press release. Again, this eternal monologue that the Premier is talking about, that you should ask Treasury questions the week before the Budget. I would have thought that, given the previous spelling and grammatical errors, in Ryan Park's office they would be saying: Make sure you do not make any mistakes in the press release. However, Madam Speaker, when I received the press release, in the last sentence there is another grammatical error. But worse than that, in the second paragraph it says, "The Liberals have used an obscure New South Wales Government website to disclose these new fees". The obscure website is the Department of Education and Communities' website.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: It is grossly disorderly of the Minister to refer to you as "Madam Speaker".

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I uphold the point of order. Did the Minister hear that point of order?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Of course I did. The obscure website is the website of the Department of Education and Communities—one of the biggest organisations, not just in New South Wales but Australia with more employees than the Commonwealth Bank and BHP combined.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Not only is this completely tiresome and irrelevant but it breaches Standing Order 73.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I pay the shadow Minister a compliment with respect to apprentices. After saying that apprenticeship fees are going from \$500 to \$2,000, he has finally got it right in the press release. I marked it—the spelling mistake was an error but I have given him a tick for finally getting those figures right. But he goes on to make other mistakes: \$800 million cuts to TAFE—wrong. The TAFE budget has increased. The budget for Vocational Education and Training [VET] in New South Wales under the Liberal-Nationals Government has increased—not by 9 per cent, as I said the other day, but by 11 per cent. Those opposite say that 800 TAFE teachers have been sacked—wrong.

Double student to teacher ratios—wrong, wrong, wrong. I am happy to debate the issue or to answer any questions from the Opposition about our reforms to VET and to TAFE—but those opposite need to get their facts right. I again offer my sincere congratulations and thanks, on behalf of the New South Wales Government, to Bert Evans. I am pleased to have been able to announce the scholarships in recognition of the work of Bert Evans. I congratulate him on his work, although he still works for us in his sort of semi-retirement. I look forward to more years of his work and extend recognition of the great work he has done for this State.

[Question time concluded at 3.20 p.m.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by the Mr Anthony Roberts agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended:

- (1) On Tuesday 17 June 2014, to:
 - (a) provide for the following routine of business prior to 2.15 p.m.:
 - (i) at 12 noon, Speaker takes the chair;
 - (ii) introduction and second reading speech on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills; and
 - (iii) the Speaker to leave the Chair until 2.15 p.m.
 - (b) permit the giving of General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) at 6.50 p.m., or at the conclusion of Government business if earlier.
- (2) On Thursday 19 June 2014 to interrupt the business before the House at 11.00 a.m. to permit the Leader of the Opposition to speak on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills.

VISITORS

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I welcome to the gallery Mr Alex Mitchell, a former President of the New South Wales Press Gallery. Welcome back to the Parliament, which probably has not changed much. It is great to see you.

COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

Chair

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): In accordance with Standing Order 282 (2) I advise the House that on 15 May 2014 Donald Loftus Page was elected Chair of the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission.

PETITIONS

The Deputy-Speaker announced that the following petition signed by more than 10,000 persons was lodged for presentation:

Homeschooling

Petition requesting that the Government improve the homeschooling registration process, received from **Mr Chris Holstein**.

Discussion on petition set down as an order of the day for a future day.

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

Pet Shops

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

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

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**.

Old Sydney Town

Petition calling on the Government to purchase and reopen the Old Sydney Town site, received from **Mr Darren Webber**.

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

Newcastle Central Business District

Petition calling on the Government to retain the height limits and provisions in the current local environmental plan for the Newcastle central business district, and to apply planning principles that respect the form, character and heritage of the city, received from **Ms Sonia Hornery**.

WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Kevin Humphries, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western NSW) [3.25 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I acknowledge in the gallery Mr Mark McKenzie, the Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Irrigators' Council, and Stefanie Schulte, Economic Policy Officer, thank you for being here today, and, of course, Alex Mitchell,

who is still with us and continues to be an enduring supporter of the Parliament, not that he has anything to do with the Water Management Act but it is great to see him here. The Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 is an important, comprehensive package of amendments to the Water Management Act 2000 designed to ease the regulatory burden on water users and help the Government meet challenges in managing the State's water resources that have arisen in recent years. Water management has been and remains a key priority for this Government. Since this Government came to office there has been a great deal of activity in the water space, especially with increased Commonwealth involvement in the Murray-Darling Basin. This Government has stood by rural communities during this time with a commitment to ensure that water management activities in New South Wales achieve triple-bottom-line outcomes.

Ensuring a sustainable balance of economic, social and environmental interests in New South Wales water resources remains a key priority for this Government. We recognise the vital role water plays in driving economic growth, creating strong communities, and providing social, cultural and environmental benefits across New South Wales. Profitable and sustainable water access and use, improved client service and stakeholder engagement and a continuous improvement in knowledge for evidence-based water management decisions all require support from a robust regulatory framework. This bill introduces necessary improvements to the legislative framework for water in New South Wales that will help us deliver these outcomes.

This bill builds on this Government's commitment to achieving genuine sustainability in the water sector by amending the Water Management Act 2000 to facilitate issuing flood plain harvesting licences to increase business certainty for landholders who extract water from flood events; provide security for holders of supplementary water licences and flood plain harvesting licences through enhanced compensation rights; allow landholders increased flexibility to take advantage of their harvestable rights, especially with respect to urban stormwater harvesting; streamline the way that supplementary water is made available to users; clarify the scope of controlled allocation orders; further develop water markets through a new dealing to allow water allocations to be traded for a term of up to 10 years; and streamline licensing and trading processes so that water users' dealings with Government are simpler, easier to understand and more efficient. The amendments reduce red tape by allowing water sharing plans to be consolidated. We urge those in the water sector to engage in the review of the water sharing plans as we speak.

The amendments optimise the setting of storage reserves in dams to ensure equitable, economically efficient sharing of water between high security licences and general security licences. The amendments improve offence provisions and make miscellaneous refinements relating to the conversion of entitlements under the Water Act 1912 to Water Management Act water licences. Regarding peak stakeholders, I acknowledge that the irrigators have been briefed on all of the amendments and have indicated their support. Many of the amendments included in the bill are initiatives proposed by water users, particularly over the past five to 10 years. The bill exemplifies the Government's willingness to fix real world problems faced by the industry and communities throughout the State.

I will provide a brief overview of each significant element of the bill. I turn first to the amendments concerning overland flow water and flood plain harvesting. These amendments clarify that water flowing over the ground, called overland flow, which is not within a watercourse such as a stream or a river, is part of the State's water rights and included within the definition of water source. By defining overland flow water we have ensured that consistent terminology is used across the legislative framework. It is important to have clear and consistent terminology for overland flow water to facilitate the licensing of flood plain harvesting. This terminology will also help the NSW Office of Water to clarify the rights and obligations of urban stormwater harvesting projects through an urban stormwater harvesting policy.

This policy will recognise the investments local councils have made in existing urban stormwater harvesting projects, facilitate new projects to provide additional environmentally friendly water supplies for councils and ensure that the rights of other water users are appropriately considered. The Government looks forward to working closely with local councils and the stormwater industry to achieve these important outcomes. The second set of amendments relates to compensation rights for supplementary water licences in regulated rivers and flood plain harvesting licences. Currently, supplementary licences are an anomaly among major commercial licence categories. Unlike holders of most commercial licences, supplementary water licence holders have no compensation rights if their allocations are reduced because of a change in a water sharing plan.

The bill eliminates this anomaly by extending the compensation rights available under the Act to holders of supplementary water licences in regulated rivers and making the tenure of the licences perpetual. Similarly, the bill also extends existing compensation rights to holders of flood plain harvesting licences.

However, the amendments relating to compensation rights do not extend to supplementary water licences in groundwater sources because these are slowly being phased out as part of a process to reduce total entitlement. This bill also introduces amendments that streamline the way that supplementary water is made available to users. Instead of using ministerial orders and announcements, access to supplementary water will be able to be provided more quickly by just using announcements.

The third set of amendments introduces needed flexibility to the Act's provisions on harvestable rights. The bill will allow for the making of harvestable rights orders to set rules about using a single dam or multiple dams to store both harvestable rights water and licensed water. These amendments will ease the current unnecessary regulatory requirements that prevent landholders from storing harvestable rights water and licensed water in large capacity dams. The harvestable rights amendments will also enable other types of works to be used to capture harvestable rights water, recognising the growing interest in urban stormwater harvesting where dams are not commonly used to capture water.

As I have already said, the bill also includes amendments to facilitate the issuing of flood plain harvesting licences. Currently under the Act, licences can only be issued for a zero volume, for specific purposes, or through a controlled allocation. None of these mechanisms truly suits flood plain harvesting. These amendments will allow regulations to be developed that will prescribe the circumstances in which existing flood plain harvesting activities will give rise to a licence and the terms and conditions of such licences, including their water share component. The regulations will provide a clear framework within which licensing of this important water harvesting activity can proceed.

The fourth set of amendments clarifies that a controlled allocation order may set a minimum price for licences and define the coverage of the order to be part of a water source. Setting a minimum price in a controlled allocation is a way of ensuring that water is allocated only in circumstances where the economic benefit to New South Wales justifies issuing new licences. Defining a controlled allocation order to cover part of a water source allows the order to be tailored more precisely to match water availability to demand. The fifth set of amendments creates a new dealing to enable a licence holder to trade their water allocation over several seasons in one step. Under the proposed dealing, licence holders can transfer their water allocations for up to 10 years. During that time the shares under the licence still remain with the seller. This will make water that is currently under-utilised more easily tradeable.

In keeping with this Government's ongoing commitment to reducing red tape, the bill also proposes a number of amendments to streamline licensing and trading processes. These will simplify processes for licence holders and applicants and reduce the cost associated with the administration of licences by allowing an applicant for a licence or approval to amend or withdraw their application at any time before it is determined, allowing a trade or other dealing to be approved and registered with Land and Property Information in a single step instead of separate steps as is now required, and allowing licences and approvals to take effect immediately instead of after the appeal period. Other streamlining provisions will reduce unnecessary red tape by clarifying when conditions can be imposed on licences and will provide greater flexibility to issue combined approvals. Again, these amendments recognise the concerns of licence holders who have told us that they would prefer more responsive, administratively flexible and streamlined processes for issuing and trading licences.

New provisions will also enable the Minister to refuse the surrender of a water access licence in certain circumstances. This sensible amendment will allow the Minister to ensure that licensees must continue to hold a licence for all of the water that they take. To ensure that no person is disadvantaged by the new streamlining provisions, care has been taken to ensure that they will not reduce the appeal rights of applicants or other interested persons. New rights of appeal have also been created to support the new provisions, where appropriate. An additional set of amendments aimed at reducing red tape relates to consolidation of water sharing plans. When the first water sharing plans were made in 2004, some of those plans covered very small portions of catchments, often imposing elaborate prescriptive rules. Experience with water planning has shown that we can obtain better triple-bottom-line outcomes by planning on a catchment-wide scale with simple, consistent, enforceable rules. These amendments allow those 2004 plans to be consolidated with more recent catchment-wide plans that were developed with the benefit of experience.

The final significant set of amendments relates to the sharing of water between high security and general security licences in regulated rivers. Regulated river water sharing plans currently require water to be set aside within a dam to ensure full or near full water allocations so high security licences can be maintained if there is a repeat of the worst drought on record. This water sharing rule was developed prior to the recent millennium drought. When the millennium drought is taken into account, implementation or implementing this

current water sharing plan rule would result in significant quantities of water being taken out of production and held in reserve in case an equally severe drought occurs. Modelling indicates that the existing rule could reduce general security licence allocations by 8 per cent, on average, and up to 20 per cent in some years.

The amendments proposed in this bill allow for the worst drought that occurred prior to the commencement of each of the current water sharing plans to continue to be used to determine the size of the storage reserve. This will have the effect of maintaining the water shares between the environment, high security licences and general security licences as agreed when the water sharing plans were first developed. In most years general security licences will benefit from these changes. The remainder of the amendments in this bill are directed at ensuring that water licensing allocation and use is carried out in a best practice modern regulatory environment. For this reason, the bill includes a package of new and refined offence provisions. Two metering offences have been changed to remove unnecessary requirements, making all metering offences in the Act consistent.

New offences relating to bore drilling have been created to support a new framework for licensing bore drillers. This new framework will replace the driller's licensing provisions in the Water Act 1912. New offence provisions relating to the taking of water make it an offence for a licence holder to take more than the combined total of water in all water allocation accounts held by the person. The proposed amendments will reduce costly and lengthy investigations which need to disaggregate water taken under the different licences. The bill will also replace un-commenced amendments in the Water Management Amendment Act 2008 to address more scenarios linked to the nomination of water supply works and water tagging zones. A new offence is introduced ensuring that the Minister is informed of works nominated on an interstate equivalent access licence. The bill also includes important provisions to clarify the processes by which certain Water Act 1912 licences were converted to licences under the Water Management Act.

One of these rules relates to situations where a person held a stock and domestic licence under the Water Act which has converted to a Water Management Act licence. This amendment ensures the validity of all such licences in cases where a domestic and stock right also applies. A second rule relating to conversion of licences from the Water Act 1912 allows for reconciliation and validation of water accounts where it was not possible to read meters for all licences precisely at the moment of conversion, and thus account balances were determined after conversion. The amendments confirm existing practices and will not add to or subtract from the existing account balance of any licence holder. In order that the provisions of this bill can be implemented in an orderly fashion, the bill includes savings and transitional provisions to ensure that existing orders and instruments remain valid where appropriate and the amendment provisions apply to existing licences and instruments as appropriate.

I conclude with some general remarks. With the introduction of the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014, the New South Wales Government reaffirms its commitment to balanced water management outcomes on behalf of New South Wales communities, particularly rural communities that rely on safe, secure water supplies. The bill makes improvements in every significant aspect of water management, from planning processes to licensing and trade through to compliance. Although the bill touches on highly complex and technical matters, at its core are simple, consistent principles that inform this Government's approach to water and water management. These amendments promote triple-bottom-line outcomes, reduce red tape and the regulatory burden on water users, promote open markets and free trade in water, so that our water resources can bring the greatest benefit to all residents of New South Wales, and provide the regulatory clarity and stability that is so important to continued investment and growth for water-dependent businesses. I commend the bill to the House.

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

STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Dominic Perrottet, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill—Minister for Finance and Services) [3.43 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The State Revenue Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2014 is part of the Government's ongoing program of maintaining legislation governing taxes administered by the Office of State Revenue. This is the second bill on

State taxes to be dealt with in the current session of Parliament. These taxes operate in the context of continually changing business practices and developments in the law arising from court and tribunal decisions. The Government has an obligation to respond promptly to protect the State's tax revenue and to ensure that tax liabilities can be clearly identified and operate fairly.

Some of the provisions in this bill were removed from the State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 to allow further consultation with industry and professional bodies. The Government is reintroducing some of these provisions where appropriate consultation has occurred. These proposals have been the subject of consultation with the Law Society of NSW, Property Council of Australia, Taxation Institute of Australia and professional accounting bodies. The bill makes amendments relating to duties, land tax and payroll tax. I will deal first with the amendments to the Duties Act 1997.

The first amendment relates to options to purchase land being the right, but not an obligation, to acquire or sell something for a fixed price at some future date. The acquisition of an option by a third party should be subject to transfer duty regardless of the form of the transaction. The bill therefore clarifies that the acquisition of an option by way of nomination or novation is taken to be a transfer of the option. This is consistent with the policy of imposing duty on the change of ownership of options. The bill further provides that, for the purpose of calculating duty, the consideration paid for the transfer of the land includes the value of any consideration paid for the option with a credit for any duty paid on the acquisition of the option.

To prevent the possibility that the same taxpayer is effectively required to pay duty twice when the value of the option is included in the value of the land purchased, the bill also provides the ultimate purchaser with a credit for any duty paid on the acquisition of the option. The bill only applies to options granted and transferred on or after the commencement date of the provisions. The bill includes an amendment to prevent avoidance of duty by ensuring that duty is payable where a lease is novated rather than transferred. The bill provides for \$500 duty to be imposed on declarations of trust by custodians of self-managed superannuation funds holding property on trust for the trustee of a self-managed superannuation fund.

These deeds are executed to comply with requirements of the Australian Taxation Office. Many deeds do not meet the requirements for the duties concession for a resulting trust. This is due to difficulties in establishing that the trustee of the fund provided the purchase monies when funds are provided by the vendor member of the fund as a contribution. This current requirement for the concession will be relaxed. Imposing a fixed charge will reduce administrative costs for the Office of State Revenue. This will be, as we committed to do, another reduction in red tape for taxpayers.

The bill also clarifies the concession for transfers of property from a member of a self-managed superannuation fund to the fund of which they are the member. The amendment specifies that the duty concession will not apply where a transferor holds property in a trust. It will not apply to transfers from members of a super fund unless the fund is to hold the property for the benefit of those members in the same proportion as they held the property immediately prior to the transfer. Consistent with other superannuation concessions a \$500 duty will be imposed.

Another amendment to the Duties Act is an exemption from duty for the transfer of heavy vehicle trailers from other jurisdictions to New South Wales. In the past, duty on new trailers had been a key factor in encouraging heavy vehicle operators to purchase and register their vehicles in other States. Since the abolition of duty on new trailers in October 2012 this trend has started to reverse. However, owners who transfer heavy vehicle trailers to New South Wales from other jurisdictions must show evidence that duty was paid in the other jurisdiction. Heavy vehicle operators that registered trailers in Queensland, for example, where no duty was payable on purchase, have never paid duty on that trailer.

The same applies for vehicles registered under the Federal Interstate Registration Scheme. As a result, an owner who wishes to transfer a heavy vehicle trailer from Queensland to New South Wales would be liable for duty. The bill will exempt transfers of heavy vehicle trailers that have been previously registered in another jurisdiction from paying duty upon establishment in New South Wales if the trailer is registered in the same name. Combined with the duty exemption for new heavy vehicle trailers, the "same owner" duty exemption continues to send the freight industry a strong message that the Government is determined to reduce red tape for New South Wales businesses.

The Land Tax Management Act 1956 contains land value thresholds below which tax is not payable. The general tax-free threshold is \$412,000 and tax is calculated at 1.6 per cent of the taxable land value above

the threshold, plus \$100. The premium rate threshold above which the higher rate of 2 per cent applies is \$2.519 million. The Act also contains provisions that groups companies that are owned or controlled by the same directors or shareholders, or the same beneficiaries in the case of a trustee company. The grouping provisions prevent tax minimisation by providing that a group of companies can only claim one general tax-free threshold and one premium rate threshold. This ensures that the splitting of ownership of multiple parcels of land among companies that are owned or controlled by the same person or persons cannot obtain the benefit of multiple tax-free thresholds.

The amendments in this bill make it clear that companies will not necessarily be grouped when the person who has a controlling interest in each company is acting in the capacity of trustee or nominee. In such cases the companies will be grouped only if the trusts concerned are fixed trusts and those trusts have the same beneficiaries. This is consistent with the interpretation that has been applied to the current provisions by the Chief Commissioner of State Revenue, and the amendments therefore confirm existing assessing practice. The bill makes amendments to the "relevant contracts" provisions of the Payroll Tax Act 2007, which tax remuneration paid to contractors who provide services on a similar basis to ordinary employees but who are regarded at law as independent contractors. The practice of using contractors is often intended to avoid administrative and on-costs associated with long-term employment contracts, including charges and taxes such as payroll tax.

The relevant contracts provisions have applied to payroll tax since 1985 to combat arrangements that avoided payroll tax. There had been at that time a significant growth in three types of arrangements which resulted in the avoidance of payroll tax. First, an employee became an "independent" contractor, but continued to work exclusively for the former employer. For all intents and purposes, the working relationship remained the same. Second, when additional staff were required, "independent" contractors were employed for extended periods to avoid the longer term commitment and cost of permanent employees. The "independent" contractors worked under similar conditions and often alongside permanent employees.

Third, an existing employee formed a private company, sometimes at the insistence of the employer, and the employer contracted with the private company instead of the employee. The private company did not have a payroll tax liability because it only employed one person—the former employee—and therefore its annual wages were below the payroll tax threshold. The employer-employee relationship was effectively severed. Payroll tax liability on payments to the private company as well as to the former employee was avoided entirely.

There are a number of exclusions in the relevant contracts legislation which exempt payments to genuine independent contractors. These exemptions include: contractors who provide services that are ancillary to the supply of goods, contractors whose services are ordinarily required for less than 180 days in a financial year, contractors whose services are provided for no more than 90 days in a financial year, contractors who usually provide services to the public generally, and contractors who employ two or more workers to perform the services.

In addition, there are general exemptions applying to contractors who are owner-drivers, insurance sellers and door-to-door sellers. Contracts under which services are provided by a subcontractor who employs at least two workers to fulfil the contract are excluded from payroll tax liability because the subcontractor is an employer in its own right, not an individual employee disguised as an independent sole trader. This ensures that genuine small businesses do not lose their entitlement to the small business tax-free threshold.

However, an anti-avoidance provision authorises the Chief Commissioner to ignore an arrangement under which a subcontractor provides services using two or more workers if the arrangement was intended to avoid payroll tax. The amendments in this bill extend this anti-avoidance provision so that it can be applied when an employer enters into arrangements to avoid tax using any of the other exemptions in the relevant contracts provisions. This is necessary because of the use of various contrived arrangements that avoid the contractor provisions.

The relevant contracts provisions currently provide an exemption from payroll tax for remuneration paid to an owner-driver for services that are ancillary to the conveyance of goods. The exclusion applies to contracts under which the driver provides a vehicle to transport goods. The reason for the exemption is that a large proportion of the consideration paid to owner-drivers is for the provision of a vehicle and its running costs. The value of the personal services of the driver represents a relatively small proportion of the payments to owner-drivers.

The bill makes it clear that the exemption for owner-drivers is limited to a contract that provides solely for the conveyance of goods, and ancillary services such as loading and unloading the vehicle. The legislation has been administered by the Chief Commissioner on this basis since 1986. However, recent decisions of the New South Wales Supreme Court and Court of Appeal indicate the exemption can be claimed for contracts under which other types of services or other kinds of work are provided. This has opened up significant tax avoidance opportunities.

In an overwhelming proportion of cases, owner-driver contracts relate solely to the provision of the vehicle and ancillary services, including the driver's services in driving the vehicle as well as loading and unloading. Therefore the amendments will not have a significant effect on current industry arrangements, but they will prevent the manipulation of contracts that are not specifically for the conveyance of goods but which may require the incidental use of a vehicle.

A further amendment in relation to relevant contracts will remove the general exemption applying to commissions paid to insurance agents, and instead apply the same exclusions that apply to other types of contracts. This means remuneration paid to insurance agents will be exempt only if the selling agent is a genuine, independent contractor rather than a disguised employee. The exclusion applying to insurance sellers has applied since 1986, and was largely directed at exempting commissions paid to insurance agents who traditionally operated as independent life insurance sellers.

The financial planning market has changed significantly since the exclusion was adopted, mainly due to Commonwealth reforms to the financial services industry. Life insurance policies are now sold by financial planners who also sell other investment products and services, and there are very few sellers of insurance who only sell insurance policies. The current exemption therefore has limited application, and provides an unfair advantage for insurance brokers who use so-called independent subagents and compete with others in the financial services industry. Its removal will therefore restore a level playing field.

The bill also removes the contractor exemption for commissions paid to door-to-door sellers. Like the removal of the general exemption for insurance sellers, this means remuneration paid to door-to-door sellers will be exempt only if the selling agent is a genuine, independent contractor rather than a disguised employee. In the past, door-to-door sellers predominantly sold goods, such as encyclopaedias, and doorknocked residential premises without having made prior contact with the potential consumer.

There have been numerous changes to consumer protection legislation since the exemption was introduced, applying to unsolicited consumer agreements. This has had the effect of extending application of the payroll tax exemption for door-to-door sellers to a broader range of door-to-door sellers who do not make "cold calls" at the consumer's door. As a result, businesses that use sales methods that are not door-to-door sales in the traditional sense may now qualify for the exemption. Such methods include retailers and wholesalers of goods using marketing techniques such as telephone call centres, emails or internet marketing techniques to attract customers. When a customer makes contact, the business sends a salesperson to the customer's premises to provide a quote and enter into a contract at the customer's residence.

Contracts with door-to-door sellers will remain exempt if the salesperson is employed as an "independent" contractor and not as an employee. A 2012 report prepared for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] which provided an analysis of the door-to-door sales industry found that there was an average of around 3,400 individuals engaged as door-to-door sellers at any one time throughout Australia in 2011. Most door-to-door salespeople sell services such as energy, 76 per cent; telecommunications, 10 per cent; and solar panels, 4 per cent. Most sellers use labour hire companies to obtain sales staff, who are employed as independent contractors rather than employees.

Recent audits conducted by the Office of State Revenue have disclosed that a number of payroll taxpayers have failed to pay tax on contract sales staff. These payroll taxpayers claim they are exempt door-to-door sellers, even though in most cases the sales staff concerned do not engage in doorknocking but instead arrange appointments with the initial contact arranged by telephone, email or internet marketing. In most cases the selling agents work wholly or mainly for one employer. This demonstrates that the door-to-door sellers exemption is a potential payroll tax avoidance loophole and unless it is closed off such practices may spread with a potential revenue loss of several million dollars per year. Payroll tax legislation, including the contractor provisions, have been harmonised in all States and Territories except Western Australia. The payroll tax amendments contained in this bill have been developed in conjunction with revenue authorities in other harmonised States and Territories.

The Victorian Payroll Tax Act has already been amended and will take effect from 1 July 2013 to give effect to the changes to the anti-avoidance and owner-driver provisions proposed in this bill. The provisions removing the door-to-door and insurance seller exemptions will take effect on a date to be proclaimed to enable time for employers to be advised and also to allow for commencement of the amendments to be coordinated with other harmonised jurisdictions. This Government introduced the Jobs Action Plan in 2011. The scheme currently provides rebates of up to \$5,000 over two years for employers who take on new employees and increase their total employment. In order to prevent contrived arrangements where rebates could be obtained by transferring employees from one part of a corporate group to another, the Jobs Action Plan legislation prevents an employer from claiming a rebate if the new employee was previously employed by a member of the same group of employers, or the new employee was employed as a result of a takeover of another business or undertaking or a merger with another entity.

The bill relaxes these restrictions in cases where a new employee is appointed by one employer who is eligible to register for the rebate but the employee is transferred to another employer as a result of a takeover or merger or is transferred to another member of the same group. The bill will enable the Chief Commissioner to approve payment of the rebate if the new employer satisfies the rebate criteria and the Chief Commissioner is satisfied that the former employer would have been eligible for the rebate if the employment had continued with that former employer. I commend the bill to the House.

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

RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (VEGETATION CLEARING) BILL 2014

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

Second Reading

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.02 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Australia is one of the most bushfire-prone countries on Earth. With more than 30 million hectares of bushfire-prone land, ranging from forested areas along the coastal strip to expansive grass and scrubland areas west of the Great Dividing Range, New South Wales has its own history of fire. In 2013 New South Wales experienced one of its most challenging bushfire seasons yet. Fires began well before the officially declared bush fire danger period, starting with emergency declarations in early September 2013. Between 1 July 2013 and 31 December 2013 some 5,700 bush and grass fires burnt across the State.

A total of 1,157 of those fires occurred in October alone, resulting in the destruction of almost 7,000 hectares, the loss of 217 residential properties and damage to another 129. There were more than 100 activations of the emergency alert telephone system, resulting in around 485,000 messages being sent to various communities. For the same period 42 total fire bans were declared and 49 emergency declarations were made under section 44 of the Rural Fires Act 1997. On behalf of the New South Wales Government I thank all those involved in the firefighting effort.

The New South Wales Government and our fire services remain committed to protecting life and property from the threat of fire. In November 2013 the New South Wales Government announced a package of measures to streamline hazard reduction processes, strengthen offence provisions and protect emergency services workers. These included the introduction of offence provisions for littering involving cigarettes and matches, including an aggravated offence of littering on days when a total fire ban is in place, and the removal of obstacles to enable home owners to better manage fire risks on their properties. The Government also began to look at ways to allow landowners to undertake other vegetation clearing works to better protect their properties from the threat of bushfire while balancing legitimate environmental objectives.

In response to recent fire events it is proposed that amendments be made to the Rural Fires Act 1997 to allow certain landowners to undertake vegetation clearing work on land situated within what will be known as a "10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement area". Within these areas, clearing and ongoing maintenance of that clearing will be allowed with a minimum of red tape as long as the code of practice is complied with. This will

empower landowners who are taking responsibility for minimising the fuel loads near their homes, which is a key fire prevention goal. The Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service will determine where the 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement areas are and they will be shown on a map published on the NSW Rural Fire Service website.

Landowners will be able to determine whether their property falls within a 10/50 area by accessing a portal on the NSW Rural Fire Service website. This portal, which will launch when the legislation commences, is a user-friendly web interface. Landowners will simply be required to enter their address or lot number into the portal to determine whether the 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement provisions will apply to them. New section 100R (1) of the bill enables an owner of land situated within a 10/50 area to carry out certain vegetation clearing work on that land despite any requirement for approval, consent or other authorisation for the work made by the Native Vegetation Act 2003, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 or any other Act or instrument made under an Act. New section 100R (1) of the bill provides that this work comprises:

- (a) the removal, destruction (by means other than by fire) or pruning of any vegetation (including trees or parts of trees) within 10 metres,
- (b) the removal, destruction (by means other than by fire) or pruning of any vegetation except for trees or parts of trees, within 50 metres of an external wall of a building containing habitable rooms that comprises or is part of residential accommodation or a high risk facility.

Section 100R (2) provides that vegetation clearing work carried out on land pursuant to section 100R (1) must be done in accordance with the requirements of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice. The code of practice, which is being developed by the NSW Rural Fire Service, will guide landowners in the clearing of vegetation on land situated within a 10/50 area. I will discuss the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice in more detail shortly but I want to be clear that the 10/50 rule will not mean a neighbour can come into a garden and cut down a tree just because it is within 50 metres of their house. Section 100R (4) will make it clear that such over-the-fence clearing would require the owner's permission.

The bill also defines what buildings the 10/50 rule will apply to. For the purpose of section 100R residential accommodation is defined as: residential accommodation within the meaning of the Standard Instrument—Principal Local Environmental Plan such as boarding houses, group homes and dwelling houses; and tourist and visitor accommodation within the meaning of the Standard Instrument—Principal Local Environmental Plan. Examples include backpackers' accommodation and bed and breakfasts. Residential accommodation is also defined as caravans installed in caravan parks within the meaning of the Standard Instrument—Principal Local Environmental Plan and manufactured homes installed in manufactured home estates within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1993.

The New South Wales Government also wants to make sure certain important non-residential buildings can easily have vegetation cleared away to protect their occupants, within the 10/50 limits. These are referred to as high-risk facilities and include hospitals, schools and childcare centres. We need to ensure that occupants of these developments have the maximum protection from bushfire attack. Other high-risk facilities such as hotels, motels, retirement villages and group homes are captured by the proposed legislative provisions as they are forms of residential accommodation.

The bill does put some limitations on the 10/50 rule as applied to caravans and manufactured homes. Confining the 10/50 rule to manufactured homes and caravans in the parameters contained in this bill seeks to prevent situations where a person may, for example, move his or her caravan and apply the 10/50 vegetation clearing provisions within the vicinity of where the caravan is placed. The provisions also exclude buildings containing habitable rooms if there has been no development consent or other lawful authority under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 for the use of those rooms for such a purpose.

From a practical perspective, this will mean that a person will have to ensure that he or she knows that the habitable rooms are lawful in order to be able to use section 100R (1) for vegetation clearing purposes. I mentioned that a code of practice will regulate how the system works. Details of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice are contained in new section 100Q proposed by the bill. Section 100Q (1) requires the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service to prepare a 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice for the carrying out of vegetation clearing work on land situated within a 10/50 area pursuant to section 100R.

The 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice must, without limitation, address the following: the type of vegetation that can and cannot be cleared, including the types of trees; the circumstances in which

vegetation should be pruned and not entirely removed; the use of herbicides; the management of soil erosion and landslip risks; the protection of riparian buffer zones; the protection of Aboriginal and other cultural heritage; and the protection of vegetation that the owner of the land on which vegetation clearing work may be carried out is under a legal obligation to preserve by agreement or otherwise.

The Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service may also prescribe in the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice whether particular rooms of a building are or are not habitable and what is, or is not, an external wall of a building, for the purposes of section 100R. The 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice, once developed, will be placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 21 days. At the completion of the public consultation period the code of practice will be reviewed and any relevant amendments made before the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service approves the final code of practice. Section 100Q (2) provides that the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice may be amended by the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service from time to time.

An ongoing public consultation mechanism will be built into the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice in the event that any substantial amendments are required. This will ensure that it remains a robust and relevant document. It is proposed that the code of practice be published in the New South Wales *Government Gazette* and on the Rural Fire Service website. Any owner of land situated within a 10/50 area can be provided with a hard copy of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice on request and free of charge.

The bill makes a range of other amendments to the Rural Fires Act 1997. For example, the bill makes amendments consequent to the enactment of the Government Sector Employment Act 2013. It updates provisions relating to bushfire hazard reduction certificates, such as a requirement to specify the period for which a bushfire hazard reduction certificate operates, and to clarify that such certificates become effective on the date that they are endorsed. The bill also makes consequential amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 to expand the exemptions contained in sections 118A and 118D of that Act provided there is compliance with the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice.

The provisions contained in the Rural Fires Amendment (Vegetation Clearing) Bill 2014 will enable owners of land situated within a 10/50 area to carry out vegetation clearing works without the need for approval, provided they comply with the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice. They provide for greater streamlining and clarification of the requirements for approvals to clear vegetation which may be required under relevant legislation. Most importantly, these reforms will work to protect communities vulnerable to the devastating impacts of fire.

These practical changes have been incredibly well received by many members of the community. Given the timing of the introduction of this bill, the Government will be seeking that the bill be dealt with as a matter of urgency in the other place. This is good reform. It has been called for in the wake of the devastating October fires. It strikes a balance between environmental protection and household property safety. Members should endorse these reforms so that we can get on with the job.

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

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2013-14

Debate resumed from 11 September 2013.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [4.15 p.m.]: I resume my speech on the 2013-14 budget estimates and related papers from the point at which the debate was adjourned almost a year ago. The people of New South Wales at the last election emphatically elected a new Government with a mandate to cut spending and return fiscal responsibility to the financial management of this State. I congratulate the former Treasurer, now the Premier, and his department on doing exactly what was needed and what the people of New South Wales elected this Government to do, and that is to return fiscal responsibility to the financial management of this State. Gone are the bad old days of financially unsustainable programs, such as the Solar Bonus Scheme; gone are the bad old days of failed projects such as the Tcard; and gone are the bad old days of announcing, then axing, then reannouncing projects, wasting billions of dollars unnecessarily, such as the Rozelle to city metro—dollars that would have been better saved for difficult times such as this. This Government has made hard decisions. Those decisions may not have been easy, but they were definitely in the interests of this State.

Managing expenses is important and will go a long way towards repairing the damage that was done to this State by the previous Government. Residents in Smithfield, like residents across New South Wales, will benefit from the investment this Government is making in law and order, health, education, public transport, roads and disability services. But there are other issues besides roads and parks that have been neglected in the Fairfield area of the electorates of Smithfield, Fairfield and Cabramatta. Social housing is a very sensitive and emotionally charged subject, and rightly so. People's living situations is a very serious topic, and is something that the people of New South Wales expect the Government to handle with care and compassion. The average length of time a person in the Fairfield area remains on a waiting list is 17 to 20 years, and that number continues to grow. For 16 years Labor did nothing. It did not build more social housing or did not cater to the needs of these people during such a critical time when they needed the Government more than ever. Labor threw them aside and hit them with a spiralling rise in the cost of living.

We, the Liberal-Nationals, are not like that. We have a sense of compassion and social justice. We do not make decisions based on votes, or to make friends happy; we make decisions based on what is the right thing to do. In the last budget this Government allocated nearly \$18 million for social housing in the Fairfield area. Minister Goward, who was the Minister for Family and Community Services, is one of the best Ministers in this Government. She had one of the most challenging portfolios, which is now the responsibility of Minister Gabrielle Upton. It is a credit to her that she not only rose to meet those challenges but exceeded all expectations. The former Minister also announced a number of other reforms that are having the effect in my electorate of beginning to reduce the long waiting times for people accessing housing assistance.

We are getting this State back on track, and we are doing so within our means. The money we have been allocated in the budget will go a long way towards the provision and upgrade of new and existing accommodation, and improving access to the community. This Government is getting on with the job of building a stronger New South Wales. This budget builds on our first two years in office. This budget is seeking to build for the future of this great State. In this budget the former Treasurer and now the Premier has taken tough and difficult decisions. He has done so in the interests of the people, communities and economy of this State. This budget is about taking control of our finances. The Government has led by example, spending taxpayers' money much more wisely.

Unlike the former Government in its budgets, this Government has been open and transparent in this budget. This is not just what the community expects from its government but it is what the community deserves. The people of this State want to see a strong, prosperous and resilient New South Wales. They want a government that makes decisions in their best interests and that delivers for them. With this budget the Government has delivered for them and has made decisions for a stronger tomorrow. In an uncertain world, these are the right decisions in difficult economic times. I commend the former Treasurer, now Premier, and I commend this Government's third budget to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.20 p.m.]: I speak for Cabramatta in the take-note debate on budget estimates and related papers for the financial year 2013-14. Once again Cabramatta missed out. The shining pearl of south-west Sydney and its fine families and communities have effectively been told by this Government to go it alone. Western Sydney is the engine room of New South Wales, a region that more than 1.5 million people call home. It is where workers front up for work every day, roll up their sleeves and get their jobs done—no complaints, no excuses. They work honestly and with the best intentions towards their employers and their families. These workers and these families deserve the best services that any State government can offer. They put in the hard yards—which has an economic benefit for the entire State—and they have a right to expect their Government to provide the best infrastructure possible.

Why did the Government axe the commuter car park in Cabramatta? In successive budgets this Government has refused to reinstate the Cabramatta commuter car park, which would have helped out parking in the Cabramatta central business district. If the new Premier ever decides to visit Cabramatta—I do not think he has ever been there—he will see that if there is one thing the residents of Cabramatta are crying out for then it is more car parking spaces. That is why the former Labor Government was going to build a commuter car park for the people of Cabramatta; it was included in the budget, the money was there, but the contracts were not signed. That is the only reason that it was not built: The former Coalition Premier stopped it. It was fully funded by Treasury but axed by this Government.

The former Labor Government was committed to the people of Western Sydney; this Government obviously is not. The commuter car park is not the only thing that has been cut. The free Cabramatta shuttle bus No. 88 has also been axed by this uncaring Government. The bus service—which was free for pensioners and

those who are doing it a bit tough—transported residents from Canley Heights to Cabramatta for shopping and for food. Every time I saw the bus it was full of passengers. Yet the Government has taken the axe to it, effectively cutting public transport between two important parts of my electorate. It is okay for the young people—they can be resourceful and find their own means of transportation—but if the elderly and mothers with small children do not have a car then they are being told that it is just too bad, and they just cannot get to Cabramatta. This is a service the community wanted. They fought for it and won it from the former State Labor Government. Now this Coalition Government has taken it away.

In another low blow to my electorate the Government abolished the hugely successful Cabramatta Street Team, which Labor set up in 2001. The Cabramatta Street Team worked closely with local police to help at-risk young people, reconnecting them with their families and helping to prevent crime. Not even our schools are safe from this uncaring Government. Schools in Cabramatta are losing more than \$360,000 in funding. That is \$360,000 being ripped away from the education of our children and our grandchildren—from our future. The following schools face funding cuts: Cabramatta Public School, \$34,595; Cabramatta High School, \$47,100; Cabramatta West Public School, \$47,895; Canley Heights Public School, \$43,629; Canley Vale High School, \$47,520; Canley Vale Public School, \$48,767; Harrington Street Public School, \$8,549; and Lansvale Public School, \$1,993.

The most shameful funding cut of them all is \$12,200 from Les Powell Special School. When you go to that school and see the problems the young kids have it makes you want to cry to know they are having their funds cut by \$12,000. The Minister for Education should have given the school an extra \$12,000 because those little kids deserve every opportunity. When you see those kids you wonder what the hell they have done to deserve the life they are going to lead. There are further funding cuts at Mount Pritchard East Public School, \$22,104; Mount Pritchard Public School, \$42,304; and St Johns Park Public School, my old school, \$3,680—it got nothing, not a drop in the ocean, just a lousy funding cut. The only project with continuing funding from the State Labor Government is the upgrade to Cabramatta High School—and, let us be honest, the work had already commenced when the Coalition came to power so it was not going to stop projects that were half completed.

I acknowledge that there is funding for minor roadworks, such as providing a separate left-turn lane at Elizabeth Drive into North Liverpool Road at Mount Pritchard, as well as some pavement rebuilding on the Hume Highway from Governor Macquarie Drive at Warwick Farm to Junction Street at Lansvale. This Government came to power on a promise to make New South Wales number one again. It has not; it has gone backwards. If it were not for the triple-A credit rating that Labor Government left to this Government, New South Wales would be in dire straits. The shine has definitely worn off, but that does not mean the people of Western Sydney should be shunned and ignored. The Premier has designated himself Minister for Western Sydney, but we are yet to see him in Western Sydney—perhaps he does not know where it is. That title is meaningless unless the Minister goes to Western Sydney and sees how working families need a helping hand.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, Assistant Minister for Health) [4.26 p.m.]: I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to resolution motion of condolence proceeded with.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [4.28 p.m.]: I move:

That this House extends to the family and friends the deep sympathy of members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained by the death, on 20 April 2014, of the Honourable Neville Kenneth Wran, a former Premier of the State.

I offer my condolences on the passing of the Hon. Neville Wran, AC, CNZM, QC. Neville Wran grew up in Balmain in the 1930s and 1940s. Like many of the youth from that time and in that part of Sydney, he was the

son of a seaman and labourer. Nonetheless, his achievements in life were to be mighty. Wran graduated from law at Sydney University and was admitted as a solicitor in 1951. He was then called to the bar in 1957, before becoming a Queen's Counsel in 1968. As members from all sides of this Chamber know, I am not the biggest fan of lawyers. I am therefore glad that Neville Wran saw the light and chose his vocation in politics. Neville Wran's life has left a mighty impression upon politics in this great State. Throughout his Premiership it was obvious that Neville Wran was a man who sought highest office to make a difference, and a difference for the better.

Many of the things that the people of New South Wales take for granted today were accomplished under Neville Wran's leadership. Indeed, so established are his accomplishments that most people would not be able to remember—or imagine—a time without them. They include fully democratising the Legislative Council, developing the Darling Harbour precinct, decriminalising homosexuality, and building the Eastern Suburbs train line. It could be said that one of the most important accomplishments of leadership is to gain the trust of the people one leads.

Neville Wran's Premiership seemed to be the inverse of most premierships. Most leaders come into power on the back of a landslide and then seek to hold on for as many terms as possible, but Neville Wran's Premiership followed a different course. As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, when Neville Wran first came to power it was with a majority of just one seat. However, this majority increased substantially in the elections of 1978 and again in 1981, before Neville Wran again retained power in 1984. This success demonstrates a leader who could gain the public's confidence and take them with him on the journey he set. Members of Parliament would do well to look up to the example of leadership modelled by this great man.

I acknowledge in the gallery today Neville's daughter Harriet Wran; close family friend, John Giannikouris; and the father and veteran of the New South Wales Press Gallery, Alex Mitchell. I extend the sympathies of the Government and of all members of this House for your loss and for the loss of the people of New South Wales. I trust that you take solace in the landmark achievements and the legacy Neville Wran has left. May he rest in peace.

[Business interrupted.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I also extend a warm welcome to the former Deputy Premier, the Hon. Ron Mulock, and to the Hon. Rodney Cavalier, AO.

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

[Business resumed.]

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [4.31 p.m.]: It is with great pride that I speak this afternoon in honour of Neville Kenneth Wran, member for Bass Hill from 1973 to 1986 and the Premier of New South Wales from 1976 to 1986. I acknowledge in the gallery Harriet Wran, the Hon. Ron Mulock and the Hon Rodney Cavalier, AO, who is a good friend of mine. Neville Wran was one of the greatest men Australia has produced. There are children today studying in schools built by the Wran Government. From Shellharbour to Mount Druitt, there are babies being born in hospitals that Neville Wran's Government planned and delivered. Commuters are travelling to and from work on a rail network that Neville Wran's Government conceptualised, extended and electrified. And there are men and women across our State who live with a greater sense of peace and freedom because the Wran Government was ahead of the curve on equal opportunity, anti-discrimination and Aboriginal affairs.

Wran's legacy is a reminder to us all that—however unglamorous the daily work of government—the shrewd, meticulous, far-sighted decisions of a visionary, such as Neville Wran, will live on. They have helped define modern New South Wales; but, more than that, they continue to change the lives of the citizens of this State. Neville Wran governed during exciting times. Intellectual and sophisticated, yet with a hard man's understanding of the people and the political process, he was a Premier perfectly suited to maximising the potential of a Labor Government in New South Wales. As Graham Freudenberg once reflected, "Not to have lived through his era was not to know the possibilities of politics." Wran's genius and the key to his

electoral success was an ability to bring along the person on the street. As Rodney Cavalier has noted, he would regularly pose the immortal question to his Cabinet members, "What's in this for Joe Blow and his missus?"

Far from being lofty and removed from the people, he had the most finely tuned ear in the room. It was an ability that stemmed from his childhood as the son of a seaman and labourer, and from his working-class upbringing in inner-city Paddington and Balmain—which were very different places to what they are today. With his exceptional academic accomplishments, Neville Wran could have pursued a career in any field he chose. After working as a solicitor and then as a Queen's Counsel, he chose politics. Looking at the broad sweep of his career, his political success was remarkable. New South Wales is the better for his decision to pursue a political career.

Neville Wran was elected to Parliament in 1970. He was appointed Leader of the Labor Party in three short years and became Premier of New South Wales. Wran experienced an unparalleled decade of election success—in 1976, 1978, 1981 and 1984. He held the Premiership with margins rarely seen in Australian politics, highlighted by the extraordinary 57.7 per cent primary vote in the immortal Wranslide election of 1978. The slogan of that election was "Wran's our man". As tempted as I am to sing the jingle, it would not be appropriate at this time; but it is a slogan etched in the memory of many and one that could not have been more apt. His face was emblazoned on posters everywhere. Labor won in North Shore electorates, which was previously unheard of, including Willoughby, Manly and Wakehurst. Labor even came within 500 votes of winning the electorate of Vacluse.

Wran's dominance in the Parliament was legendary. He was always ready with a killer punchline or a devastating quip that stopped his opponents in their tracks. In 1976—at a time when, around the country, Labor was cast into the wilderness—Neville Wran brought Labor back. He invigorated the entire Labor movement to the point where he was frequently spoken of as a potential Prime Minister. By the time Neville Wran stepped down in 1986, he was the longest continuously serving New South Wales Premier. Of course, in the final analysis, the accumulation of political success is less important than what one does with it. Neville Wran was in that rare class of leaders who not only govern for their time but also define it. His achievements are the touchstone by which all Labor Governments in New South Wales will be measured. I again quote Rodney Cavalier:

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 legacy includes moving hospital beds from the comparatively well-resourced inner city to outer suburban and rural areas, even at the risk of infuriating the medical profession; the opening of the Eastern Suburbs rail line; the electrification of the Hunter and Illawarra lines; other important investments in trains, buses, ferries and roads; and the refurbishment of so many of Sydney's iconic places. During the Wran era, Macquarie Street was transformed with the opening of both the Mint building and the Hyde Park Barracks to the public. His achievements also included the redevelopment of Darling Harbour and the Stage One completion of one of our nation's greatest creative and scientific facilities: the Powerhouse Museum. For me, one of the greatest Wran legacies is Darling Harbour—a visionary project that created controversy at the time but, like all great visionary projects, now speaks for itself in the way it is regarded by the citizens of New South Wales, by the other citizens of this nation and by the tourists who visit Sydney. It is a place visited on weekends by thousands—a great family place and an iconic Wran legacy.

At a time of new social movements and rapid change, the Wran Government never sought to stand in the way of that change. Indeed, many have said that it stood at the crest of the change, introducing new anti-discrimination laws, establishing the Equal Opportunity Tribunal and decriminalising homosexuality. I note that this week is the thirtieth anniversary of that legislation. Neville Wran was so passionate about ending discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation that he introduced a private member's bill on the issue—a rare and courageous move for a Premier. It was a rare move by a man who stood by his convictions. Under Wran, the State's first ever Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was created and defining land rights legislation was passed by this Parliament.

In so many ways, Wran's decade in power fostered a new sense of inclusion for people on the margins of society—those left broken and forgotten by so many for so long through the political processes. And even today the people of those diverse communities may not know the powerful difference that Wran's advocacy made to their lives. On the environment, 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 Neville Wran's

leadership that the Gondwana rainforests gained world heritage listing. Equally important were Neville's reforms to improve the quality of our political processes: turning the Legislative Council from a fiefdom into a democracy, instituting four-year fixed terms, and establishing new disclosure rules and a pecuniary interests register for members of Parliament.

On that point I pause to reflect that after what we have seen play out in this State recently, and as we debate integrity, pecuniary interests and a range of other issues, today we honour the foresight of the man who put in place new disclosure rules for pecuniary interest declarations. In later life Neville served with energy and distinction in a variety of roles across the worlds of government and business, including as National President of the Labor Party and Chairman of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation [CSIRO]. We pause here today to honour a legend, an icon—certainly an icon of the Labor Party—and I refer to my dealings with Neville Wran much earlier in my life and prior to assuming this great position. Neville Wran's interactions within the Labor Party were a demonstration of how much he loved the Labor Party.

Neville Wran would attend fundraising events in a local branch somewhere or a local RSL. Someone who was a great icon was humble enough to sit with branch members and treat them with honour and respect. When I was young, aged about 25 or 26, I had the opportunity to sit next to that icon at a Labor Party dinner. Neville Wran sat next to me and introduced himself to me. I thought it was a great tribute to the character of the man that this icon felt that he should still introduce himself at a Labor Party function. At that time I said to him, "You hardly need to introduce yourself to anyone in this room as Neville Wran because you are so well known."

Later on when I became leader I found myself bumping into Neville at a range of different functions. I would go up to him and introduce myself. He said, "I know who you are. You don't need to introduce yourself." I reminded him of that earlier story. Subsequently when we would pass each other it became banter that he and I shared, and I will treasure this forever. He would come up and say, "Hello, I'm Neville Wran" and I would say, "Hello, I'm John Robertson". It was a great sign of the man that he had humility, regardless of his status and the regard with which he was held within the party. But he was prepared to give back to the party that he had led with such honour and integrity and for which he had delivered so much. For me, to aspire to be anywhere near as good as Neville Wran is the best that I can do because without doubt, as I said, Neville Wran set the standard for Labor leaders.

It is about not just success but being prepared to go out there and use the position of Premier in a way that delivers for people, that ensures that you take people with you, and being prepared to be visionary—to ensure that you use the position to improve the State regardless of what the immediate effects might be, whether it be criticism in the media or elsewhere. I also recollect being at home when my father came home from the Australian Labor Party [ALP] conference and told me that Neville Wran had announced at the conference that he was resigning. I have subsequently heard the footage of the day Neville announced in the Sydney Town Hall that he was resigning and the calls from the Labor Party conference of, "No", "No", "No." Another great thing about Neville Wran was that he knew when it was time to go. He knew his time had come and it was time to go. I think that is another great trait in politics.

Far too often we see people who do not or cannot make that decision at an appropriate time and at a time of their choosing. The public has now farewelled Neville Wran in a moving ceremony at Sydney Town Hall—the site of so many of the legendary speeches and stoushes that defined Neville's career. There could have been no greater place to farewell a man with such commitment to the Labor Party—a place with so much history. As he had farewelled Labor once, we had the opportunity then to farewell him on what I described on the day as the "hallowed turf of the Sydney Town Hall"—somewhere that means much to those of us on this side of the House.

We mourned alongside Neville's wife, Jill, his five children and the many people in the gallery who loved him. Neville lived to the ripe old age of 87. But as we were told at his funeral, dementia taunted and frustrated him to the end. It was the cruellest of fates for one whose tongue was so acid and whose mind so sharp. But in the end, for all of us, our time inevitably comes. Political careers are transient. But in the final analysis, we can look at Neville Wran's record and say that he left New South Wales far stronger and a better place to live. He loved the Labor Party. But his career in politics was one of true service to the people. On behalf of the entire Labor Party I say today that we are so proud of Neville Wran, so proud to have had a leader with such capacity, intellect, drive and integrity. We will do our best to continue the legacy of one of Labor's finest leaders—a man who was nothing less than the architect of modern New South Wales.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [4.47 p.m.]: Like the Leader of the Opposition, one of my enduring political memories is of the footage and audio of Neville announcing his resignation at the Australian

Labor Party annual conference. There was then a moment's silence to allow the significance of the announcement to sink in, and then cries of "No", "No", "No" from the delegates. The spontaneous outpouring of warmth and affection for our Premier from our party was deeply moving then and now. The Leader of the Opposition has already spoken to this motion and outlined Neville's achievements together with a comprehensive and impressive catalogue of those nuts and bolts matters to which as Premier he needed to attend over a record period.

I will seek to outline what I believe were the most significant personal qualities of one of the great leaders of our time. Leadership is lonely. Ultimately, only one person is responsible for the decisions of a leader, and that pressure necessarily forces a leader to find his or her true self. Politics has no shortage of people seeking to enlarge their credentials, their working class background, their business successes or, indeed, their intellect. And that affect is part of the theatre of our calling. But Neville was different. It was not affect for Neville. He was the genuine article on any measure. Born and raised in working class Balmain, Neville rose to the top of his field in law—an outstanding achievement by itself and one that he was entitled to be satisfied with and draw a line under. Instead, his sense of social justice drew him to politics where he became a towering political figure. His attributes were so substantial that he was recognised as leadership material across both factions and, thus, a record tenure was commenced. It is worth noting the astute eye and ear of brother Ducker in that process.

Post-politics Neville crafted a very successful business career. So he was top of the class in law, business and politics—an unparalleled trifecta. Neville had it all. He was handsome, urbane and had a powerful intellect and powers of persuasion to match. He possessed a herculean work effort, on which Rodney touched in his remarks on the day of the funeral. But Neville had also the unerring instinct to charm as required or, on occasions, get out the cold steel. He was a great communicator and was as comfortable having a cold beer with the locals as he was having a discussion with world leaders. Ultimately, Neville oozed class. His journey from Balmain to the leadership of the State shone a light for generations of political activists. His dignity and resolve allowed him to rise above the ruck of political and media tumult.

The guts and integrity he showed in standing aside for the period during which he was investigated could have been a blight on his career. Instead, it highlighted the qualities of a man who was prepared to back the twin pillars of his integrity and confidence in the quality of our legal institutions. Neville was vindicated in a manner unlike any other leader. It is worth imagining how the media and our political parties might deal with such a circumstance today. Instead, Neville's stature and grace were such that the attempts to tear him down served only to highlight the substance of his person and the quality of his leadership. Neville always was generous with his advice. A famous line to me when I was a junior Minister was, "You've got to keep Treasury on tap, not on top." I remember picking his brains on any number of occasions. One day over a cup of tea he raised with me a business matter and concluded, "You know, I've still got to earn a bob."

Deeply impressive to those with whom he dealt was that he always had an eye for an opportunity and an astuteness about what was going on in the landscape. His State funeral was a tribal occasion: 1,500 true believers, and some not-so-true believers, packed into our home stadium—the Sydney Town Hall. The Australian Labor Party A-grade was on display: Keating, Carr and Cavalier, and stirring oratories delivered by each and every speaker made all of us in Labor grow an inch taller. His funeral was a powerful reminder that a united and purposeful Labor Party is the greatest force for good that our State or nation can have. In his passing Neville led us to that inescapable conclusion, and we thank him for his central role in making it so.

Finally, of all the speeches that day I make special mention of Jill's remarks. She gave us an eloquent, gutsy and privileged insight into the man she loved—an insight only she could have provided. We are all the richer for it and we thank her. To Neville's family, I offer our deep and sincere condolences. It must be very difficult to reconcile the grief of your personal loss with your pride in Neville's achievements, which are blazoned across the sky daily by occasions such as this. We thank you too for so selflessly sharing Neville's love, time and efforts with our State. Vale, Neville Kenneth Wran.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.53 p.m.]: To members on both sides of the House, to Harriet and our distinguished guests, it is with great pleasure that I say a few words—perhaps more than a few—on the life of Neville Wran. Many times in recent weeks I have sat with pen and paper, or behind the typewriter, to start to write this speech about Neville Wran for this condolence motion. So much material is available: speeches in *Hansard* by him and others, and a number of books but, regrettably, not by Neville himself. Then there were the tributes at his funeral service at Sydney Town Hall on 1 May—a significant date in the history of Neville—by Paul Keating, Rodney Cavalier, Justice Kirby and Bob Carr, added to by the

personal, emotionally charged and moving tributes by Kim, Hugo, Harriet, who is in the gallery, and, of course, Jill. In other words, drawing from all those avenues it should be easy for me to make a speech about Neville—but it is not.

Neville Wran made such an impact on our State, on politics and on so many people that it is difficult for me to find where to start, what aspect of his life to highlight in the middle and how to round up from comments about this fellow. At the Town Hall service one could see so many people who served with Neville in Caucus and in Cabinet—I noticed Rodney Cavalier and, of course, former Deputy Premier Ron Mulock. They were all at this particular event along with others from the law and business. Not by a long shot was I a central figure in any of Neville's roles, but I always will remember with great pride that I served in this Parliament in the Labor Caucus for nearly three years as a member of Parliament during Mr Neville Wran's last period as Premier of our State.

Like so many thousands of Labor members who were drawn to the party by the presence of E. G. Whitlam, the excitement of his reform program, the frustration of the establishment's campaign against him and his Government, and the anger at the unfair dismissal from office of him and his Government, I was shattered by the events of 11 November 1975 and the subsequent election loss a month later. Following the landslide election defeat of the Whitlam Government I returned to duty after election day to Parramatta police station. Once there I had to suffer the bragging of those Liberal voters delighted at the defeat of the Whitlam Government, with one confidently declaring, "Well, Dick, you will never see another Labor Government anywhere for 30 years, so get used to it."

Fortunately, things had been happening in New South Wales, perhaps under the shadow of those events in Canberra. In 1973 the Labor Caucus, by the closest of margins, elected Neville Wran as its leader. By the time the State election was called on 1 May—that date again—1976, just months after Whitlam's defeat, I was a humble member of the Rooty Hill branch of the party. My hope was that our new leader would at least take us close to restoring some respectability to Labor's vote. After the poll, days passed and newspapers reported on the progressive counts in seats such as Ashfield, Blue Mountains and Hurstville, to name just a few. Anxious moments passed as the count swung back and forth with some newspapers predicting the election could go either way, until that wonderful headline I remember reading at a Parramatta newsagency, "It's Labor." Members of Parliament can only imagine what that result meant for the Labor Party and its supporters. Of course, Liberals were still confident: "A one-seat majority, surely they won't last long."

The history of Wran's Government has been referred to already: Wranslides in 1978 and 1981, and even a 17-seat win in 1984, no losses, not even a by-election—of course, I am happy about that because I was a by-election winner. Along the way, seats held by Liberal leaders were lost to Labor candidates: Peter Coleman, the Leader of the Opposition, in the 1978 election—the first Wranslide—and Bruce McDonald, the then Leader of the Opposition, at the 1981 election. A very interesting quirk of all this is that a fellow by the name of Eddie Britt beat an up-and-coming Liberal Party candidate in the seat of Willoughby—Nick Greiner, who, of course, later became Premier of New South Wales. Incredibly, Nick Greiner's loss to Labor's Eddie Britt in a seat such as Willoughby was on the strength of Wran's popularity and acceptance by a broad part of the community.

Walking into this Chamber through that door to be sworn in on 1 November 1983, along with Bob Carr, Andrew Refshauge and Brian Langton, I must admit to being somewhat overawed as I walked past Premier Wran and Ministers like Ferguson, Hills, Brereton, Walker, Mulock, Stewart and Anderson, to name but a few. It was a formidable line-up. I had no sooner found a seat when Wran made a statement that the Minister for Corrective Services, Rex Jackson, had resigned. This very room was in uproar. Even though questions by the Opposition were designed to add weight to an impression of corruption—everyone should read the *Hansard* of that day—the Premier answered them, corrected the assumptions contained therein and counterattacked his detractors. Some weeks later I moved to behind where the Premier now sits and for the rest of his term as Premier I often bragged I had the best seat in Sydney to see a master at work, as Bob Carr described it yesterday.

I will not repeat some of the often described traits of Neville Wran, but I will give an example behind some of the descriptions published about him. It was correctly said that Neville Wran had his ear to the person in the street, the common touch, and that the Government's decisions and Ministers' decisions should have a positive impact on the average Joe in the street and his missus—he used those words, or words like them, at different times and in different ways, but they all meant the same thing.

A good example was once relayed to me by David Hill. When head of StateRail he once gave a presentation to Premier Wran, driven by Treasury figures, that the cost of running the railways was getting out

of hand. I think it was one of those lovely figures like the railways were losing \$1 million a day, or something like that. David Hill said he presented the figures, having worked on them for days beforehand, and suggested how to bring down the costs et cetera. After a while, having heard all the figures, Neville apparently turned to him and said, and these are not his exact words, "Take all that stuff out, David. Get them to work on time and home in time for tea"—expletives deleted!

Of course, Hill was talking to a Premier who came to office with a transport policy formulated by Peter Cox, a former shadow Minister, which resulted in an immediate 20 per cent drop in rail fares and a five-year \$5 billion rail upgrade of the Sydney network, eventually leading to the completion of the eastern suburbs railway, the quadruplication of the western rail lines, which go through my electorate these days, and the introduction of the XPT country rail service, to name but a few.

Another example is close to the hearts of all members of this Chamber. In 1984—Ron and Rodney might remember this day—a caucus meeting was being held on the eighth floor, just near the lifts, when a couple of members asked questions of Neville about the need for more staff in their electorate offices. I thought at the time that this would go nowhere: extra staff for each member of Parliament? What would Treasury say? What would the Parliament's budget be? When the members raised the point, Wran stood up and I thought someone was going to get a serve. Wran did not suggest that he would set up an inquiry, or check with Treasury or the Speaker, but just said, "I accept that, and a second staff member will be provided to every electorate office."

He virtually bounced down to his seat and then jumped up again straight away. I thought he was going to change his mind. He said, "There are two provisos: the person employed must be a person returning to work after long-term unemployment or, alternatively, must be a school leaver." The result of that statement was that on 1 February 1985 all electorate offices were allowed to employ what was then called an electorate assistant. In my case the staff member was a 16-year-old school leaver, Leisa Smith, who is now Mrs Cabban, and she still works in my office today. That was a decision by the Premier, based on a couple of questions and his answer in caucus, which resulted in an issue that affected other people—that is, those returning from long-term unemployment and school leavers. I said to the Remuneration Tribunal that was the last time that an electorate office has had a full-time employee added to their staff. At least one of my staff members says, "Thank you very much" and my community thanks him for those extra resources for our electorate office.

Neville was never good at remembering names. When I came into this place I was wearing glasses and so was John Aquilina. In those days, believe it or not—no jokes—I had dark hair and so did John Aquilina. Not long after I became a member, John Avery became the Commissioner of Police and I was a former policeman. It was all too much for Neville, so for about a year he called me John. I kept reminding him that he was referring to the wrong king. I said, "Richard, Premier". He said, "Of course, of course." After a while he gave up and just like many members called me "Son". After about 1½ years I was very proud when he said to me, "G'day, Richard"—I went home feeling pretty good.

Many have spoken of Neville Wran's frequent use of language—a PhD in profanity, according to Paul Keating. Whilst that is true people should not think that Wran was an aggressive, foul-mouthed leader who threw his weight around and made people feel uncomfortable. I always observed when he was talking to people he had a friendly demeanour, even was fatherly on occasions, with his well-known colourful outburst reserved for describing some event or person that annoyed him. Neville was fairly tall, not as tall as Lang or Whitlam, but when he walked into a room, no matter how many people were in it—whether they were members of the royal family, Government members or Prime Ministers—everyone knew he was there.

His voice was not as strong, I suppose, as that of Bob Carr or Gough Whitlam, as it was affected by much surgery and he developed his trademark croaky voice. We know what question time is like in this place, but when he spoke everybody heard him. There are many ways to describe it better but he just had that presence. I had more to do with Neville after he left office, and I am pleased that John Robertson, the Leader of the Labor Party, has recognised that. Always a Labor man, he would accept invitations to Labor dinners and receive debutantes at the Chifley FEC Ball and at the Rooty Hill RSL Club. I was as proud as punch when Jill recognised Rooty Hill at the Town Hall service only a few weeks ago. On many other occasions he supported candidates and attended fundraising dinners. Even when he was a successful businessman he offered up his time to support Labor candidates and campaigns. Certainly he was a true Labor man, and a man of history and fairness.

I will refer to fairness—and I ask members of the Liberal Party in this House to please be tolerant. If there was a Liberal in the room, and he was wishing someone a Merry Christmas, he would take a bit of skin

off. I have read the bound copy of *Hansard* that contains Neville's last speech in this Parliament on 1 May 1986. I presume he knew it was his last time in the House and he spoke on a special adjournment about 10 years of a Labor Government. He spoke with pride about matters that our Leader and former Premier have also spoken about this afternoon. I will read the speech to show his further strength and calibre. He said:

... that 1st May is not only the tenth anniversary of our Government's first election—the first of four and the first of many more—it is also an anniversary in the history, if it can be dignified by so noble a word, of the Liberal Party of New South Wales. Twenty-one years ago, on 1st May, 1965, the Askin Government was elected, ending almost a quarter of a century of being in Opposition. Where is there any evidence on the part of members opposite of their pride in that event, which, for good or ill, is obviously an event of significance in their past? But they do not want to know about it, any more than they want to know anything about their own last Government which went down to ignominious defeat ten years ago today.

It is certainly not part of my role to defend the late Sir Robert Askin or his Government. On the contrary, we have had to try to clear up the mess he and his successors left, and we have done so. I have at least to say that he has been posthumously assailed and vilified in a quite cowardly way, not least from sources which, when he lived, were in his pocket. Yet, his heirs and successors, these posturing, phoney pygmies opposite trying to fill his shoes, say not one word in defence, not one word of protest. They cannot run fast enough to distance themselves from their own people—their friends, their interests, their policies and their record. It has been left to his former car driver to say a single word in defence of the man whom the Liberal Party, the Fairfax organization and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, among others, presented to the people of New South Wales year in and year out, election after election, as the hero and saviour of the conservative establishment for more than a decade.

It shows that he believed that Sir Robert Askin, a Liberal opponent, who has been brought into disrepute, was unfairly treated in death. That says a lot about Neville Wran. There has been some reference to the 1986 Labor conference when Wran announced his retirement. When I returned home that weekend, I made a note in my notebook. I was attending a conference where I thought the biggest issue of the day would be that Dorothy Isaksen was going to move a motion abolishing the Labor women's conference. I was to speak on the education debate and the need for senior high schools in the area, about which Ron Mulock knows a lot. Surprisingly for me, that was not the biggest story of the weekend. I went to a Chinese dinner with my delegates and Roger Price, a Federal member, and made these comments a day or so later:

We had to be back on stage by 2.30 p.m. as Neville Wran, the Premier of NSW, was addressing the conference.

I made sure we were punctual. I would not like to be late for his speech.

We all assembled on the stage and waited for the announcement of the arrival of the Premier.

As we sat down on the stage, all the State MPs were starting to assemble when Bob Carr, looking stunned, said, "I've just heard a bombshell."

I thought, at first, that he meant that the Premier was going to make some grand announcement concerning a public works or policy decision.

I asked what it was. He said, "The Premier is going to announce his retirement for next month."

Please excuse me while I read what I wrote down:

I thought—bullshit. You hear some beauties around the State conference but that one took the cake.

It is not really a prophetic comment.

But the rumours spread and quite a few said the story was correct.

The Premier walked into the conference, with his wife Jill, led by Steve Loosely on to the stage.

After the usual introduction, the Premier began his speech—in fine form as usual.

We all just sat there hanging on every word. I turned to Bob Carr and looked at him and said, "It can't be true."

But it was. The Premier said he was retiring on the 4th July 1986.

There was a roar of, "No! No!" from the audience. I couldn't prevent the chill running down my back or the tight feeling in my throat—

—which I am getting at the moment.

As the Premier went on, his voice breaking with emotion from time to time, he made a lighthearted crack about his future: "I'm not old enough to be an elder nor dead enough to be a statesman."

That gave the conference the opportunity to applaud—everyone stood and applauded—and applauded. It seemed like forever.

I cannot describe the atmosphere—sad, shocked and stunned. Ken Booth looked very distressed. Jim Kaldis was crying. I've never seen or felt anything like that.

As he left the stage to a standing ovation I looked and mentally recorded the scene—the whole audience standing, thundering to enthusiastic applause.

Neville Wran walking slowly out of the hall, down the aisle for the last time as the Premier of New South Wales. As he made his way through to the back of the hall, occasionally shaking a hand here and there, I knew then that that was a scene that I will never forget.

Harriet, it was a privilege to be a member of Parliament with a such a great man. He will always be remembered. Of course, he will always be a significant part of the history of New South Wales. Vale, Neville Wran.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [5.13 p.m.]: I join with other members and pay tribute to Neville Wran, a great Labor legend. I express my condolences to his family and friends. I acknowledge his daughter Harriet, former Deputy Premier Ron Mulock and former Minister Rodney Cavalier, who are in the gallery. I did not share the history and time with Neville Wran that my colleague the member for Mount Druitt did. He has delivered a remarkable address. Hearing his immediate account of that extraordinary day in Town Hall has given all of us a thrill and a shiver. Thank you for sharing it with us.

Much has already been said about the remarkable achievements of Neville Wran. I will not repeat them, other than to say that Neville Wran's reforming agenda changed New South Wales immeasurably for the better. He was so many things: an intelligent reformer, an energetic campaigner, a true leader who had the common touch, a fearsome speaker who dominated the Chamber, a Balmain boy who never forgot his roots and strived to make life better for those who struggled. I joined the Labor Party towards the tail end of Neville's premiership. Young Labor activists were in awe of Neville's towering presence in the party and a little bit scared of the great man. It was only in later years, when I was a member of Parliament, that I had personal contact with Neville. I remember that he was always courteous and thoughtful towards me, willing to give his time and support, and at key points in my political life Neville provided insightful and valuable advice.

Today I will talk about Neville's legacy for women in New South Wales. Women of my generation, who came of political age during the Wran era, have much to be grateful for as a result of the reforms that were implemented by Neville Wran and his government. Michael Kirby, the former High Court judge, described it best when he spoke of Wran civilising leadership. I have heard others say that Wran gave them the best years of their working life. Helen L'Orange and Jozefa Sobski described those years when they said:

... there was a belief in the possibility of social reform and making strides towards achieving equality of the sexes and raising the status and standing of women.

There are many reforms that contributed to this environment. The Women's Coordination Unit was established in the Premier's department and many other agencies followed suit. In 1976 the Women's Advisory Council was established and, in 1977, the Anti-Discrimination Act was passed, giving legal sanction to pursue discriminatory practices and seek redress and reform. This was followed by legislative changes introducing equal employment opportunity. There was significant law reform on sexual assault and domestic violence. The Child Protection Council was established. Sexual assault centres were opened in hospitals. The number of refuges for women increased from three to 46.

New South Wales had Australia's largest program of Government-funded long day care centres. After-school hour centres were opened up schools and girls' education became a focus. Girls were encouraged to take on non-traditional trades at TAFE. I remember this clearly. When I was in year 10, a TAFE employee came to my all-girls high school to talk about the importance of a career in trade. So inspired was I that went home and told my parents that I would be leaving school at the end of year 10 to become a panel beater. They were less impressed with this aspect of the Wran-era reforms. Hence, I did not become a panel beater. I still regret that decision in some ways.

In part, many of these reforms were the result of strong community campaigns and the efforts and influence of the Women's Electoral Lobby was critical. However, the personal commitment of Neville Wran and his leadership made these changes possible. While Neville is often called a pragmatist, which he was, he also championed significant change for the benefit of all women in a society that was still very sexist. In the 1970s the *Sydney Morning Herald* had separate employment advertisements for men and women. Women were barred from all sorts of jobs, including mining and construction jobs and sports coaching.

Women could not drink in public bars and they could not get a loan without a male guarantor. Sexual harassment at work was commonplace. Most sexual assaults went unreported and the few that were reported rarely resulted in a conviction. It was a different era, yet Wran used his political skills, his personal conviction and his great capacity to get the timing right to ensure that New South Wales, for a time, led Australia in its approach to women. I, like so many women, have been a beneficiary of these reforms, which broadened my aspirations and profoundly enhanced my opportunities and life choices. In paying tribute to this great man today I wanted to ensure that this area of his work, amongst so many others, also gets the recognition it deserves.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [5.18 p.m.]: I speak to the condolence motion for Neville Wran. I did not know him so well personally as many of the other speakers. It has been a humbling experience to listen to this condolence motion and all the contributions at Neville Wran's State funeral. I make a contribution to this condolence motion out of respect for and great appreciation of Neville Wran. I say to his colleagues, his family and his friends that he was an absolute giant. I have come more to that realisation in the last couple of weeks than ever before. Today I speak about my connection as a recipient of Neville Wran's leadership, particularly while he was Premier, not as a member of Parliament, but as president of the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group [AECG]. I was also a bureaucrat within the Department of Education, as Mr Mulock and Mr Cavalier may remember, when Neville Wran was the Premier. I want to speak about that legacy as very few members have spoken about it.

My role as president of the AECG brought me close to politics and politicians and perhaps lifted the veil off the mystery surrounding politics. It was also the time that a little seed was planted in me that perhaps one day I could sit in this place as a member of Parliament. That was a very enlightening experience for me and I shall explain why. When I was president of the New South Wales AECG, Neville Wran was Premier and Minister Mulock and Minister Cavalier were two of the then Ministers. Part of my responsibility as president of this peak body in New South Wales was to meet on a monthly basis with Ministers of the day.

Aboriginal education grew and flourished under the leadership of Premier Wran and his Ministers. New South Wales led the way in Aboriginal education. Indeed, not only was the Land Council established under Neville Wran's leadership, so too was the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group established at the time. The group began as an advisory body within the Department of Education and, in keeping with its aim of self-determination, became a peak independent Aboriginal organisation, working with Ministers like Minister Mulock and Minister Cavalier. The group established the first mandatory Aboriginal education policy in this country and developed a leading curriculum to ensure that every child in this State left school knowing about the truth of this country. All this came about during the era of Neville Wran. We did extraordinary things during this exciting time.

I served as a member of the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board, also established under the leadership of Neville Wran. I was very involved in the Aboriginal political struggle when the New South Wales land rights legislation came about. In 1983, the day the legislation was being passed by the Parliament, I was not in this place but outside on Macquarie Street protesting about the legislation. However, in hindsight I should state that the legislation, particularly the model of the legislation, was nothing short of brilliant. It was based on 7.5 per cent of New South Wales land tax, which underpinned the funding for land rights legislation in New South Wales as recommended by the Keane report. It is the only model in this country with such a financial arrangement. The member for Marrickville spoke about Neville Wran advancing women's issues in this State and referred to comments from Helen L'Orange and Jozefa Sobski. In the document Helen and Jozefa put together after Neville's death they stated:

He changed NSW for the better for all women and NSW led Australia in this program of social reform.

He also led it in Aboriginal education. I refer also to Neville Wran's leadership in the Aboriginal space. It strikes me that Neville Wran and his government understood something really important. He understood that infrastructure is not just about buildings, roads and what people can see. He understood that infrastructure is a social issue as well. Social infrastructure and building that social infrastructure are as important to a State's wellbeing as building those roads and bridges. We all remember Keating's speech in 1992 in Redfern. I remember being present on the day and thinking I cannot believe that the Prime Minister of this country is saying these things.

I have come across a speech that Neville Wran gave to the Cathedral Luncheon Club at St Andrew's Chapter House on 14 August 1981, a gig I do not think I will ever get to do. I want to remind members about the condition of Aboriginal people and, indeed, that the World Council of Churches had just brought down a report

on the condition of Australian Aborigines. Neville Wran's comments were astounding for those times; they were a mark of the man and re-enforce the comments people have made about him. Apparently he had a crack at the Queensland Premier but in his speech Neville Wran stated:

It may well be, as the Premier of Queensland said, that the report "Obviously contains nothing new".

And more shame on us all, if that is true.

What is new about the report is that it puts the cause of justice for Aboriginal Australians fairly and squarely on the international agenda.

We can no longer expect that the international community, particularly the region in which we live, will continue to ignore the condition of the Australian Aborigines or regard it as a matter of purely domestic concern.

And beyond question more than any other matter the condition of our Aboriginal people will be the thing by which this generation of Australians will be judged.

And a nation which perpetrates the degradation, dispossession, disease and infant mortality such as presently exists among our Aboriginal people, will be judged very harshly indeed, and deserves so to be judged.

The report by the World Council of Churches is especially critical of Western Australia and Queensland.

But the record in New South Wales is hardly less shameful.

He then quotes from the report but finishes by saying these words:

It is plain from this report, as from the report of the World Council of Churches, that if Australia's reputation is to be saved, if reparation is ever to be made for one of the great wrongs in human history, and if a measure of justice is to be done for our Aborigines, then New South Wales, where the conquest and dispossession began, must take new initiatives and assume new responsibilities.

He went on to say—and this is the visionary bit:

But these reports—the New South Wales parliamentary report and the World Council of Churches study—make it clear that land rights is a crucial element, perhaps THE crucial element, in the process of restoration, reparation and reconciliation.

Where are we today? In conclusion, I once again pay my respects to his family, colleagues and friends. I thank Neville Wran and the men and women who worked for him for their vision in many things that we enjoy today. As the Leader of the Opposition said, Neville Wran showed remarkable political bravery and vision. We should always remember his lessons and teachings.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! As the member for Wollongong I extend my condolence to Neville Wran's family. I also reiterate the comments of the member for Canterbury and the member for Marrickville. I was at the conference when Neville announced his pending retirement. Neville opened up opportunities and possibilities that never existed for people such as women in Aboriginal communities. This is a sad day and many of us owe Neville Wran great thanks.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [5.30 p.m.]: Tonight I pay tribute to former Premier Neville Wran. Neville Wran was a trailblazer in politics. As one of our longest serving Premiers he served this great State with distinction. Much has been said about the decade in which he strode through the corridors of this Parliament and how he dominated the floor of the bearpit in one of the toughest Houses of Parliament in the Australian Commonwealth. Neville Wran dominated the Parliament of this State with skill and courage. He was not one for holding on to political office for the sake of it. As the Leader of the Opposition said, he confirmed that when he decided to retire from public life at a time of his choosing. Not many political leaders in this country have achieved that.

Tonight I will place in *Hansard* just what the Wran Government meant to the Illawarra region, which I am very proud to represent along with my colleagues. The Wran Government provided many services and much infrastructure in the Illawarra, including the multipurpose berth at Port Kembla. Whilst we are all very proud of the growth of the port, it should be remembered that we are building on Neville Wran's legacy. He built the coal loader and the grain terminal. He started the Maldon to Dombarton rail line in 1983, and had it not been for the election of the Greiner Liberal Government in 1988 that rail line could have been completed. It could have been completed if Nick Greiner had not cancelled the line, which he now expressly regrets doing, and if it had not been for the stroke of a pen wielded by the Premier's father, Bruce Baird, and the advice of his then chief of staff, former Premier Barry O'Farrell.

The Maldon to Dombarton rail line is probably the most politically cursed infrastructure project in this country. It was started by a Labor Government and has always been stopped by a Liberal Government. It was started again by a Federal Labor Government, through the dedicated commitment of my parliamentary colleagues Sharon Bird and Stephen Jones. But progress once again stopped with the election of a Liberal Federal Government. The Wran Government built roads, including the F6 to Yallah in my electorate, bypassing the Princes Highway through Dapto. The Wran Government started the old northern distributor, which was recently renamed Memorial Drive, in the electorate of the member for Keira.

BlueScope Steel continues to exist at Port Kembla. It provides many jobs to local constituents because of the foresight of Bob Hawke and Neville Wran in developing the Steel Plan in 1984. The Wran Government also electrified the South Coast railway line. The State Office Block in Wollongong was built by the Wran Government. The components of the Sydney Harbour Tunnel were constructed in the Illawarra, another Wran initiative. Neville Wran cared about jobs in the Illawarra and the provision of services to our community. I will also mention one other important service he provided in my electorate.

In 1986 the Wran Government committed to building the Shellharbour Hospital. His commitment, provided during the Kiama by-election, was honoured in full. He opened the Shellharbour Hospital and what used to be known as the Shellharbour Square Shopping Centre on Lake Entrance Road. Just as we have built on Wran's legacy for the port of Port Kembla, we should be building on his legacy for Shellharbour Hospital. In just a few short weeks the Treasurer will hand down his budget. I hope that it will contain a clear plan for the \$300 million in funding required to upgrade Shellharbour Hospital to become the southern Illawarra's new metropolitan health service. Neville Wran's legacy is a proud one for the New South Wales Labor Party. His legacy is profound across this State, and nowhere more so than in the Illawarra.

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Planning, and Minister for Women) [5.35 p.m.]: I commence my brief tribute to Neville Wran by acknowledging the presence in the gallery of his family and friends. I hope that the words of admiration and affection expressed in this condolence motion will be a source of comfort to them. In the 1980s Neville Wran was a towering figure—a man who brought vaudeville to New South Wales politics and public life and who clearly dominated this Chamber and defined the State in his day. I always thought it was pity that he was so tribally Australian Labor Party because, with a few tweaks here and there, he could have been a very good Liberal premier.

Before coming to this place I was a journalist. On one occasion, in a private conversation as we together lamented the Fraser years of lost opportunity, Neville Wran said to me that Malcolm Fraser's biggest mistake had been not to take on the unions and to reset Australia's industrial and, therefore, economic landscape. At the time I was very naive about politics and I expressed my surprise that he would have wanted such a thing. He replied, ignoring my point, "That's what Liberal governments can do because Labor governments can't." It was a very early lesson for me in the realities and complexities of combining ideology with politics and then with government. It was probably at that point that I came to understand the meaning of realpolitik.

I first met Neville Wran in 1983. It was a few months after the conclusion of the royal commission conducted by then Chief Justice Sir Laurence Street, which I had covered as a journalist. Members will recall that the royal commission followed a *Four Corners* program. The ABC had been unrelentingly tough on Neville Wran and we were certainly not in favour at the Wran court. As a consequence the then Premier's personal rating was low and his government was clearly in serious trouble. Neville Wran, uncharacteristically, had resorted to silence. Over that summer I was presenting 2BL's morning show on what is now known as ABC 702. It was an exciting summer for a rookie presenter. After a couple of weeks Neville Wran's press secretary, whose name I have forgotten—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Brian Dale.

Ms PRU GOWARD: No, after him. My producer, Ian McNamara, and I were absolutely stunned. Neville Wran had requested a meeting with me in the Premier's office. The Premier was not exactly on the phone—to adapt a very famous phrase at the time—but it was near enough. The meeting, of course, was a "charm fest". He smiled that big, stiff smile and his eyes twinkled. We talked for an hour or so about his dreams for Sydney, his views on government, the royal commission and many questions about my life. He never acknowledged how personally hurt he felt and he never asked for an easy time. He never ruled anything out, although he declined to comment on those many characters who emerged from the royal commission as public, even notorious, figures.

At that meeting Neville agreed to come into the William Street studio for a live, personal interview for as long as I liked. It was an incredible coup for the program. It was his first interview after the royal commission. I was besieged by the entire ABC who were coaching me and preparing me for questions. Neville Wran ensured it was great radio—some members may have heard it replayed when his death was announced. Undoubtedly it helped to restore his fortunes, and it certainly did not hurt my career. I did an interview with Nick Greiner after that so the ABC achieved its balance. They were obviously very different interviews. That was almost 28 years ago. Barely did we meet again until I first came into this place as a green politician in 2007. Apparently he was often in the building and he recognised me immediately, although he was clearly already frail.

He told me to fight, that I had to enjoy the fight: "Step into them", he said. "Relish the bear pit, go for it." I think he liked a fight and, as Paul Keating observed at his funeral, he got bored when there was not one. Like Margaret Thatcher, Neville Wran was finally struck by dementia. Ironically he finished his days in a special facility where I understand another great, clever and charming man, Sir Laurence Street, his former inquisitor, also lives. Dementia strikes randomly and cruelly; it is unforgiving and unrelenting; it is a reminder to all of us great or small of our fragility and our vulnerability.

I thank Neville Wran for his contribution to New South Wales, his deep love for the State and for Sydney. "Not a bad old town", he once said to me. I thank him for the example he set to generations of politicians in this place. He would say the stakes of government are high. The public interest is immense. This is a mighty State and it therefore behoves each of us to fight for what we believe is right for New South Wales as hard and as fearlessly as our hearts and minds allow. That is what he taught me, that politics is a great fight but it is one that must be had if we are to truly serve those who elected us to this place.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.40 p.m.]: As other members of this House have expressed their condolences on the passing of the late Neville Wran I will not give the House a biography or history lesson detailing and chronicling Neville's life. I am honoured to represent part of Bass Hill, which is in the State electorate of Fairfield. During my travels for the 2011 election campaign I discovered while doorknocking how his legacy still lives on in Bass Hill. I will focus my contribution on the life of Neville Wran through the eyes of a young Italo-Australian boy. As a young boy growing up in the electorate of Drummoyne during the 1970s and 1980s the first Premier I ever met was Neville Wran. I remember standing in awe of Neville and wondering why someone who was so important would take the time to visit our small migrant community.

However, it was not just once or twice that I met Neville. He would frequently visit the various cultural community events that took place and he would blend in like one of our own, as my late grandfather used to say. I recall meeting Neville Wran for the first time with my grandparents and parents at the APIA Club for a local Italian community function. We were introduced to Neville through our local member, the late Michael Maher. At the age of seven it was a truly memorable experience. I recall seeing Neville there in his blue pinstripe suit speaking to my grandparents and parents but then turning to me, reaching out with his right hand, leaning over and saying in Italian, "Mi chiamo Neville Wran", my name is Neville Wran. I was impressed, let me tell you.

I saw Neville again and again and spoke to him on several occasions at the Feast of Saint Joseph in Leichhardt, Saint Fiacres church, my parents' parish, and the blessing of the fishing fleet on Sydney Harbour. In my inaugural speech I acknowledged Neville Wran as someone I looked up to and was inspired by as a young child. Neville Wran was a man who was always seen in my community engaging with local residents alongside the local members, the late Michael Maher and the former Speaker of this place, John Murray. Following Neville Wran's resignation as Premier in 1986, when I was in year nine, I felt disappointed and saddened as I knew that the State had just suffered a great loss. It speaks volumes of Neville to see how in touch he was with the multicultural community that I lived in. The Italian community loved him and he loved the Italian community.

It was no coincidence, given Neville's involvement with a number of multicultural and diverse communities, that he went on to set up the Ethnic Affairs Commission and subsequently introduced the Anti-Discrimination Act. It was a decade of politics which contributed to major reform in the great State of New South Wales. It was fitting for Neville Wran to receive a State funeral and it was great to see members from all sides of the political spectrum present to honour a remarkable man. I would like to say thank you to all members of this House who attended on the day to show respect to Neville and his family. On behalf of my family and the Italian community I pass on sincerest condolences to his wife, Jill, and to his wonderful family at this difficult time. As a raging Balmain boy myself I say those wonderful words, "Balmain boys don't cry", but if you did when Neville passed you would be forgiven. Vale Neville Wran.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [5.45 p.m.]: Neville Wran was the greatest political leader in my lifetime. I met him in November 1975 when I first got involved with the Labor Party after the sacking of the Whitlam Government. Neville was in Wagga Wagga for a by-election that was to take place a couple of weeks before the Federal election. In a town that was a conservative bastion Neville attended a hall that was packed with people ready to heckle the Leader of Opposition as he advocated the election of a then Labor mayor of Wagga Wagga whom he had recruited to run in the by-election.

From the time Neville began to speak you could hear a pin drop in the room. He captured and maintained the attention of the large audience and inspired everyone in the room. Six months later he was to become Premier of New South Wales. That was only a short time after a devastating loss by the Labor Party in 1975. All those who have contributed to this debate have referred to the history of Neville's service and the "Wranslide". In 1977 there was another devastating loss by the Australian Labor Party nationally and the party was on its knees. Yet Neville was able, six months after the 1975 loss, to bring the Labor Party out of the wilderness into government in New South Wales.

Shortly after my election to this House I received a note. My local newspaper had written a story and flatteringly placed my photograph next to a photograph of Neville Wran. A note arrived dated 4 September 2012. It said, "Great victory. Great story. Neville Wran." It was given to me by Brian Dale and Brian said to me as he handed me the framed article, "Ron, this will be the last thing that Neville will ever write." When he handed me that signed note it was the saddest thing that I have experienced because it was Neville Wran who inspired me to be part of the political process. It was his Government that touched every citizen of New South Wales.

When Neville Wran took on the leadership of the Labor Party he said that this was his "one shot at the locker". This eminent, successful, highly reputable Queen's Counsel was prepared to come into this House, take on the Labor Party leadership and give it one shot. If he did not get there he was going to go back to the bar and continue to earn the fortune that he was earning before he became a member of the House. That says everything about this great man. He was prepared to offer himself to the people of New South Wales and he was doing so for no purpose other than what he fundamentally believed in. That was the hallmark of his Government: it did not matter how seemingly unpopular the cause was, he did what he believed to be right.

He changed the entire public transport system and every bus in the Sydney metropolitan area. He enacted the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. He took on the entire medical profession when he closed Crown Street Women's Hospital and St Margaret's Hospital in the eastern suburbs and said, "I'm going to increase hospital beds in Western Sydney." When you look at Westmead Hospital you should imagine Neville Wran's face on it. He was a passionate civil libertarian and would not budge on law reform issues. He believed in the doctrine of the separation of powers. When it was suggested to him by Treasury boffins that the Government Insurance Office, which provided money to people who became paraplegic as a result of car accidents, was not sustainable he said he would not reform the Government Insurance Office because he would not take money away from the poor and disabled. He was courageous.

The House might remember that during the days of the Wran Government there was not just one tabloid newspaper per day, there were three. There was the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*. Everything that the State Government did was subject to scrutiny by the popular press. Despite that, every time there was criticism of his Government he did not beat the law-and-order drum or come running into this House cravenly trying to adopt mandatory sentencing legislation. He was a Labor leader who stood his ground come what may, based on his fundamental beliefs. If I learned anything from Neville Wran it is this: If you are a government of substance, if you are a government of merit, if you stand your ground on what you believe and if you articulate what you believe, then ultimately those views will flow through to the community.

In fact, one has only to look at the election results of Neville Wran to see the proof of that. He never lost an election and he never lost a by-election. It indicates that the philosophy that covered his period of government was right. The other thing about Neville Wran that struck me, as I was giving thought to this debate tonight, was his loyalty. Never was there a man more loyal to his friends. After Lionel Murphy's conviction was quashed by the Court of Criminal Appeal and a new trial ordered, the conservative establishment attacked Lionel Murphy, as this House might remember, from the time of his appointment to the High Court. Neville Wran was an eminent Queen's Counsel and someone who knew the law extremely well. He stood up and said, "I have a deep-seated belief in Lionel Murphy's innocence."

When Neville Wran made that statement he knew what he was saying and he knew the consequences of what he was saying, but he never stepped back from it. Such was his fundamental belief. He was prepared to put

himself on the line to stand up for what he believed was right. This State has lost a giant. This State has lost a role model. So many Labor governments throughout Australia, at both State and Federal level, followed his model. This State and this country have lost a giant who touched the lives of everybody in this State. I will go to my grave with his legacy at the forefront of my mind. I extend to Neville's family and to his close friends my deepest and most heartfelt condolences. Vale, Neville Wran.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I would like to acknowledge the life of Neville Wran and share some memories I have. I used to be a stock and station agent. When Neville was in Sydney having his nodules removed from his throat I was in Brisbane having the nodules removed from my throat. I remember the specialist up there saying, "Well, you're just a stock and station agent and you're going alright, and so is the Premier of New South Wales." I always remembered him in that context. In about 2005 or 2006 Neville Wran was involved with Tryton Industries, which had an interest in Lismore at the council's recycling facilities. They were developing a worm farm there. Neville came up to inspect the premises and I had the pleasure of picking him up and going on the visit with him. I spent a lovely day with him. I spoke to him about our operations and we were on the same page.

When we got to the depot the young lady said, "Mr George, I know you are here to see so and so." I said, "Yes, and I have Mr Wran with me." She said, "Mr Wran?" I went on to explain that Mr Wran was a former Premier of New South Wales. Neville said to me, "Don't worry, she probably was not even born when I was Premier." He said that often happened to him—younger people did not realise who he was because they probably were not even born when he was Premier. He enjoyed his time in Lismore and I certainly enjoyed spending the day with him. He stressed to me that in politics it is very important to realise when it is time to go. No-one can beat time—he said it was important to remember that. I am sure I speak on behalf of everyone here in offering my condolences and prayers to Harriet and the rest of the family of Neville Wran.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

[The Deputy-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) left the chair at 5.56 p.m. The House resumed at 6.05 p.m.]

Pursuant to resolution community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

SUTHERLAND SHIRE MAYORAL DEBUTANTE CHARITY BALL

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.07 p.m.]: The Sutherland Shire Mayoral Debutante Charity Ball will be held on Saturday 19 July 2014 to raise funds for the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation. The foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with deductible gift recipient status. It was established in September 2007. It raises both funds for and awareness of the vital work of medical researchers at St George and Sutherland hospitals, which are two of Australia's leading teaching hospitals. The foundation's philosophy has been to prioritise promising young researchers about to embark on a research career or those emerging researchers who are on the cusp of securing more substantial external competitive funding. Of a total of 18 grant recipients since 2008, two are very early doctoral scholars, 14 are early career researchers and only two are considered to be mid-career. I commend the work of the foundation and I look forward to attending the charity ball.

FAIRFIELD FOOD SERVICES FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [6.08 p.m.]: On 23 May Fairfield Food Services celebrated 50 years of service to the local community. For many years the service was called Meals on Wheels. I recently visited the service to present staff and volunteers with a certificate of appreciation and to tour the kitchen. As someone who has lived and worked in the Fairfield area for decades, I have seen firsthand the joy that the staff and volunteers bring to vulnerable people—the frail, elderly and disabled. Without this vital service it would be impossible for many of our residents to live independently in their own homes and community. Every year Fairfield Food Services provides more than 100,000 meals to more than 250 clients. On behalf of the Cabramatta electorate,

I thank Fairfield Food Services staff and volunteers for the food they provide and the care, companionship and friendship they offer to those who need it most in our community. I congratulate Fairfield Food Services on its fiftieth anniversary and wish it the best for the next 50 years.

IVY AND ROSE FLOWERS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [6.09 p.m.]: Ivy and Rose Flowers is a successful small business established in 2012 at Frenchs Forest in my electorate of Davidson. Amanda Zanchi is the proud Aboriginal business owner who provides retail flowers as well as a cards and giftware range. The business is certified by Supply Nation as a 100 per cent Indigenous-owned business. Earlier this month, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and I visited Ivy and Rose Flowers. This was as part of a government campaign aimed at helping Aboriginal small business owners across New South Wales through the Small Biz Connect program. We were impressed with this wonderful small business, which has developed a strong reputation in the local community. Amanda's establishment is a shining example not only for Aboriginal business but also for all small businesses. Ivy and Rose Flowers has received some impressive acknowledgements, including the Precedent Productions Local Business Award for Most Outstanding Florist on the Northern Beaches in 2013 and as a finalist in the Australian Small Business Champion Awards 2014.

MULTICULTURAL DISABILITY ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.10 p.m.]: On 9 April 2014 I was honoured to attend the official opening of the new premises of the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW Incorporated at Hutchinson Street, Granville. The association has worked hard over the past 19 years providing support services to people with a disability from multicultural backgrounds in Western Sydney. The opening ceremony was attended by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC, CVO, and the Hon. Barbara Perry, MP, Federal and State representatives, association clients and people from the wider community. I congratulate the association on its outstanding refurbishment of the historic site, also known as the old Granville Police Station, and for converting it into a modern centre for the delivery of disability support services to multicultural communities in Western Sydney.

RAUL VELLANI, NEW SOUTH WALES LIONS YOUTH OF THE YEAR

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.11 p.m.]: I congratulate Raul Vellani, the captain of Normanhurst Boys High School, on his incredible achievement of becoming the New South Wales Lions Youth of the Year. After several levels of competition, Raul beat his opponents at the State final at Nambucca Heads to become the New South Wales Lions Youth of the Year, winning not only the overall prize but also the public speaking trophy. Unfortunately, Raul was recently beaten at the national competition in Tamworth, but he did an outstanding job representing New South Wales. The Lions Youth of the Year Quest has been running for 50 years. It is not simply a public speaking contest; it is also designed to find students with extraordinary leadership, personal development and community service skills. They are all qualities that Raul possesses in abundance.

Raul is a brilliant student with a remarkable intellect and has a real "X" factor with an exceptional disposition. When Raul was only five, his father gave him a small magic kit that ignited his passion for magic. Raul does a great deal of magic at charity events and believes that it has given him the edge with his public speaking because it has helped him to become very comfortable speaking on a stage using a microphone. Coincidentally, Raul and the other secondary student leaders from Hornsby joined me for lunch today and sat in on question time. I congratulate Raul on what he has achieved. I know that he has a very bright future.

RABITAH INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.12 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to an event held on Friday 16 May 2014 to celebrate the eighth anniversary of *Rabitah International* held at Punchbowl. A plethora of elected representatives from Federal, State and local governments attended, along with many community organisations, including the Islamic Council of NSW, Affinity Intercultural Foundation, Galaxy Foundation, Amity College, the United Muslims Women's Association and the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network, among many others. Various diplomatic representatives also attended. *Rabitah International* is a bilingual periodical magazine published in English and Urdu, and it is particularly important for the Indian-Pakistani community. I specifically acknowledge the managing editor, Munir Mohammad; Mohammad Ali, the president of Rabitah Community Services; and Zawar Hussain, the secretary of Rabitah Community Services.

PENRITH POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [6.12 p.m.]: On 14 May I had the pleasure of attending the annual Penrith Police Officer of the Year Awards at Penrith Panthers Leagues Club. Ten finalists were honoured for their outstanding dedication to serving the people of New South Wales and making our community safer. They included roster team Noel Smith and Senior Constable Mark Hirning, Senior Constable Donna Tricot, Probationary Constable Sarah Snowden, constables Christopher Hannon and Kyel McGarry, Detective Senior Constable Joanne Travers, detective sergeants Cheryl Cook and Andrew Clarke, Sergeant Michael Cotton and Leading Senior Constable Christopher Miller.

I congratulate Senior Constable Donna Tricot, who was awarded the 2013 Penrith Police Officer of the Year Award. I congratulate the roster team comprising Noel Smith and Senior Constable Mark Hirning, who received the Vocational Excellence Award 2013. I thank Penrith Valley, Penrith and Nepean Rotary clubs for coordinating the awards. I extend my special thanks to sponsors Penrith Panthers, Penrith RSL, Westfield Penrith, the Log Cabin, McDonalds, Penrith City Council, Police Bank, Penrith City Gazette, Little and Rabie Betta Electrical, Jim Aitken and Partners, and Penrith Press.

VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AWARDS 2014

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.13 p.m.]: Last week I was pleased to attend the 2014 Volunteer Community Participation Awards organised by The Factory Community Centre and the Redfern and Waterloo Neighbourhood Advisory Boards Events Group. The awards ceremony provided the community with an opportunity to thank the outstanding volunteers in the Redfern and Waterloo communities. More than 120 individual volunteers and community groups were acknowledged and congratulated with certificates of appreciation. I was honoured to present awards to many of our local heroes and to thank each of them for their hard work and dedication to our local community.

The volunteers who received awards at the ceremony are the backbone of our community. They make invaluable contributions and add richness to our area. I pay tribute to the organisations, groups and public housing tenant representatives who received awards and sincerely thank the organisers of the ceremony, who strive to acknowledge the work of our volunteers. I know our volunteers do not undertake their work to receive recognition; however, it is important for them to know that the community appreciates their tireless efforts.

MAITLAND ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland) [6.14 p.m.]: This week I was delighted to visit the Hunter River Community School at Metford and Ashtonfield Public School in my electorate of Maitland to deliver much-deserved good news to both schools. The Hunter River Community School holds a special place in my heart. It is the flagship of special needs education in New South Wales. I was happy to present school captains Janelle Wragg and Clay Andrew with a \$15,000 cheque, which the school will use to build a sensory garden that will be tailored to the needs of the school's students. The sensory garden will focus on texture, sound and scent. Ian Hughes is a standout principal and he leads a wonderful team. I congratulate him on his 20 years of service to special needs education. I visited Ashtonfield Public School to award a grant for \$3,500 for a program titled "From Kitchen to the chicken to the egg to Kitchen Waste", which I signed off on when I was Minister. I am delighted to see this wonderful project come to life led by the enthusiastic teachers and students.

FAIRFIELD LAW EXPO

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [6.15 p.m.]: On 13 May I attended the Fairfield Law Expo organised by the Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, the Department of Attorney General and Justice, and the NSW Police Force as part of Law Week. Law Week is about bringing the law to the community by providing people with a chance to access legal services and to learn more about how the law works. Every one of us will at some point in our lives have to deal with a legal matter. The quality of the legal advice we receive is extremely important to our prospects of success. There was something for everyone at the expo as hundreds of people from different ethnic backgrounds listened to the experts. There were stalls with interpreters on hand to help pass on the knowledge in other languages. I thank the organisers and sponsors for staging this great and successful community event.

BARBARA WISEMANTEL, McLEAN CARE RESIDENTIAL CENTRE VOLUNTEER

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [6.16 p.m.]: I commend Inverell local Barbara Wisemantel, who has been recognised with a State award for her many years of volunteering at McLean Care

Residential Centre in Inverell. Barbara attended the Aged and Community Services Association annual conference in Sydney last week where she finished third in the New South Wales 2014 Aged Care Awards for Excellence for her countless volunteering hours and commitment to the centre. She is McLean's longest-serving volunteer. Among her many duties, Barbara provides very welcome massages to the high-care residents. Since its inception in 1953, McLean Care has grown to become one of the largest providers of aged care and community care services in the New England and North West regions. It is dedicated to providing care, support and housing options to enable individuals to remain part of their communities and live a lifestyle of their choice. Barbara is an important part of the Inverell community and I commend her for her tireless efforts to provide support and care for the residents.

JEWISH LAG BAOMER

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [6.17 p.m.]: On Sunday 18 May I was pleased to take part in the Jewish Lag BaOmer celebrations and parade. It was a great opportunity to gather with members of my local community to celebrate diversity, freedom and tolerance. The electorate of Vaucluse is home to a broad range of Jewish groups and residents who enrich our community. The Lag BaOmer parade has grown to encompass not only those of the Jewish faith and tradition but also all those who value multiculturalism, religious freedom and tolerance, as demonstrated by the wide range of people attending this year. I commend Rabbi Elimelech Levy, director of Chabad Youth NSW, for organising the wonderful and successful event.

MR AND MRS ROSSITER SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

MR AND MRS GRAY FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [6.18 p.m.]: I congratulate Mr James and Mrs Margaret Ormond Rossiter of Ramsgate Beach on the occasion of their diamond wedding anniversary, which they celebrated on 3 April. I wish them good health and happiness on this special occasion and for many happy celebrations to come. I also congratulate Mr Donald Charles and Mrs Tohe Alice Gray of Rockdale on the celebration of their golden wedding anniversary on 16 May 2014. I wish them well on their special occasion and extend my best wishes to them for a bright and happy future.

TRIBUTE TO COLIN CONDON

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [6.18 p.m.]: I congratulate Colin Condon of Bomaderry, who recently celebrated 50 years with Roads and Maritime Services. Described by his colleagues as a gentleman, Colin is a grader operator who has overseen many changes in the Shoalhaven. Mr Condon started work on 20 April 1964 earning £17 a fortnight. He recently recalled the work on the old Nowra Bridge where barriers were put in place for three months and traffic was made to flow in one lane using a give-way sign. From using the old Adams grader to his favourite model, the 1980 John Deere, Mr Condon has seen it all. Now with 50 years of experience and memories, Colin and his wife of 20 years, Beverly, have plans to travel around Western Australia. I congratulate Colin on his wonderful achievement and thank him for his service to our local community.

OCCULI KENNELS BEST OF BREED

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.19 p.m.]: I congratulate Carol and Don Mahoney from Occuli Kennels in Molong, who recently took out Best of Breed award at the Sydney Royal Easter Show with their cocker spaniel Gunwise Midnight Rendezvous, known as Dylan to his friends. The two-year-old, who was bred from a dual Australian-South African champion, showed a promising start, winning classes in show at only nine months of age. Dylan was also shortlisted to the final eight gundogs. Congratulations to the great Don Mahoney, who makes a valuable part-time contribution to our electorate office, and to Carol and Dylan.

CHARLES DALEY ACT OF BRAVERY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [6.19 p.m.]: I wish to recognise a quick-thinking 15-year-old student from Roseville with a sound knowledge of cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR], who earlier this year saved a sick man on a train at Roseville Station. Charles Daley, who was waiting for his train to school, stayed calm and helped the man regain consciousness and waited until paramedics arrived. Charles completed his Surf Rescue Certificate and recently received his CPR bronze medallion as a cadet with the Long Reef Surf Life

Saving Club. Charles kept quiet about the events until members of the public rang his school to commend Charles on his actions. His parents, the president of the Long Reef Surf Life Saving Club, and the general public are very proud of him. The sick man he helped is very grateful.

Community recognition statements concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JOYCE STEVENS

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [6.20 p.m.]: I pay tribute to Joyce Stevens, a long-time resident of my electorate, who died on 6 May 2014 at the age of 87. I express my condolences to Joyce's children, Jennifer and James, her partner, Margo, and her family and friends. Joyce Stevens was a truly remarkable woman, who in 1996 was awarded an Order of Australia for service to social justice for women as an activist and a writer. Joyce was born in Cullen Bullen in 1928. Her father was a railway fettler and a staunch unionist. Her mother was a nurse who was active in the Rail Union's Women's Auxiliary, the Communist Party of Australia and the Union of Australian Women. This was the Depression era; the family was desperately poor, like so many others, and Joyce absorbed her mother's progressive politics. At a young age Joyce developed a strong commitment to social justice and human rights. She was active in the Eureka Youth League and later, like her mother, joined the Communist Party of Australia. These are the historical facts of Joyce's life, but they in no way define the person who Joyce was.

I first met Joyce when I was a young woman involved in the union movement, and Joyce would give talks about the history of women's struggle for equal pay and justice. I remember her as a somewhat stern woman—she was a powerful speaker and what made her speeches come alive were her personal experiences of some of the best and worst times in our history. Joyce was active from the beginning of the women's liberation movement in Sydney in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and as Judy Munday said at her service:

At that time there was no sex discrimination or equal opportunity or sexual harassment legislation, there were no women's health centres or refuges, domestic violence was a taboo subject, abortion was illegal and women were paid less than men.

She describes Joyce's involvement as being:

... like a force of nature in this new movement for the liberation of women. She was enormously energetic, inspired and inspiring.

Joyce achieved much in this time—she was involved in the establishment of Women's Liberation House, she was instrumental in organising forums to advocate for women's needs such as women's refuges, and she was part of setting up Leichhardt Women's Health Centre. Joyce initiated a register of women in non-traditional jobs and was active in advocating on behalf of public housing tenants and for the expansion of public housing. Joyce was a gifted writer who helped produce the feminist newspapers *MeJane* and *Scarlet Woman*, and also wrote a number of books about the history of the women's movement. While she wrote a number of scholarly works, perhaps she is best known for penning "Because We're Women" for International Women's Day in 1975. It still resonates with women today.

In this day and age when women have occupied the highest levels of political office, when the rights and needs of women are firmly part of the political agenda and when young women have opportunities almost unimaginable even 30 years ago, it is too easy to forget the heavy lifting of women such as Joyce Stevens to gain this progress. My aspirations, opportunities and life choices have been profoundly enhanced because of feminism and the women's movement. And while we have not achieved full equality, for most of my adult life I have benefited because others have fought for antidiscrimination legislation, equal employment opportunities, equal pay, quality child care and greater career opportunities for women.

Many women were a part of these campaigns, but Joyce Stevens was in the vanguard—in the early days agitating, educating and organising, helping set up the services women needed and then later mentoring other women and chronicling women's history through her written work. I pay tribute to Joyce Stevens—a feminist, a social justice campaigner, a writer, a mother and a grandmother. Joyce used her time on this planet to make a difference, to make the world a better place. She achieved that and I express my deep sympathy to her family and her friends. I pay tribute to this remarkable woman who was a long-time resident of my electorate. I recognise all her achievements in her remarkable life.

HUME COAL PROJECT

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, Assistant Minister for Health) [6.25 p.m.]: Tonight I stand up for the people of the Southern Highlands community and voice their concerns about the Hume Coal project. In this Chamber I have raised matters of concern for my community many times, such as stopping coal seam gas mining in Wollondilly's water catchment areas. I make no apology for standing up for my community. It is clear to me that the vast majority of the community do not support the POSCO project. This sentiment is echoed across the highlands, with community members voicing their concerns. For the record, I am not against coalmining. It is about getting the balance right and working with the community as opposed to against the community. POSCO has embarked on a lengthy court battle over access agreements and land rights, and prominent and well-respected media identity Alan Jones, AO, has weighed into the matter. Mr Jones wrote recently to POSCO's managing director, Mr Soo Cheol Shin, and said:

Dear Mr Shin

Thank you for your note. The substance of it suggests, with respect, that you don't know much about what's going on. I regard the whole Hume Coal project as disgraceful, un-Australian and one of the worst aspects of commercial vandalism I have seen. And while ever there is energy available to me and the vehicle in which to be able to express my views, I will comprehensively continue to do what I'm doing.

The Hume Coal project has no place in the Southern Highlands. The ridiculous comment that POSCO prides itself on forging strong links in the communities in which it operates is, with respect Mr Shin, rubbish. I don't know who you feel welcomed by in Australia but you are certainly unwelcome in the Southern Highlands. You are vandals and there's no way of escaping that conclusion. And if you don't want to be referred to in that way, then you must change your behaviour.

Why don't you appear, for example, at our sold-out luncheon in the Southern Highlands on Thursday the 3rd of April where we're going to raise money for two elderly people, Margaret and Ross Alexander. They have a beautiful property in the Southern Highlands which they built themselves while living in a caravan and a shed. They run cattle. They've been blocking Carter's Lane which, I might add, Ross and Margaret own. They did it for seven months last year.

Your outfit took the Alexanders to court to remove the blockade and gain access to what was theirs. This was because another occupant of the lane entered into an access agreement with POSCO. He accepted \$20,000 for four exploration holes. I suppose you can always buy people off. I'm sure he regrets what he did. Roads, trucks, bulldozers, drilling rigs. And you're talking about strong links in the communities. You have to be joking.

The Alexanders lost the case, even though they have a covenant over their land, and many others in the area, which says it's to be used only for agricultural purposes, not industrial. The Mining Act apparently gazumps everything. But does it matter. If your company had any morality it would understand the right of the Alexanders to their property.

But while they were in court, and before any judgment could be handed down, your company sent letters to the Alexanders and the other two property owners in Carter's Lane, demanding access to their land for exploration. What is that behaviour if not vandalism? If not bastardry?

By the way, I have no strong personal connection to the Southern Highlands. I have a property at Fitzroy Falls which has nothing to do with my views. The views I'm expressing in relation to the Southern Highlands I'm expressing in relation to Gloucester and Casino and Narrabri.

You say you have every confidence that your project team will develop a proposal that meets the objectives and unlocks new opportunities. The language is jargon.

Come to the luncheon for the Alexanders. Let the people see who you are. You're responsible for an arbitrator being appointed so the Alexanders have to go through a whole land access arbitration mess, all without the help of a lawyer because POSCO has denied them legal representation in the arbitration process. What are you people on about?

And all the costs from the court case have been awarded against Ross and Margaret ... And these people are crippled financially. Well done. No surprise that Minter Ellison represented POSCO in the court case. The Alexanders have stuck their necks out for a principle and on behalf of the rest of the Sutton Forrest community, so the supporters are going to be there on Thursday, rolling up their sleeves.

The Alexanders are beautiful people. They came to the aid of a homeless local when he died. They organised the funeral. They paid for the wake. The alternative was a pauper's burial. They did it because it was the right thing to do. And then Hume Coal comes in. They want a blockade removed, they believe they should remove it. They go to court, Hume Coal, wonderful stuff. Wonderful citizens.

All this nonsense that you go on about, about the fact that you feel welcomed in Australia and we're a successful and cohesive multicultural society, there's no cohesion at Sutton Forest. You are loathed by the people down there.

The letter continued:

Well if you think you can get away with this sort of stuff here, you'll need to think again. While the Alexanders were in court, even though they have a covenant over their land which says it's only to be used for agricultural purposes, not industrial, while

the Alexanders were in court and before any judgment had been handed down, POSCO sent letters to the Alexanders and the other two property owners in Carters Lane demanding access to their land for exploration. What kind of people are we dealing with. And now an arbitrator has been appointed so the Alexanders have to go through the whole land access mess again, without the help of a lawyer, because POSCO denies them legal representation in the arbitration process. All court costs awarded against the people who own the land. You must be proud of yourself. Even though these people have a covenant over the land which says it can only be used for agricultural purposes, not industrial.

The letter continued later:

So Mr Chin, if I have to lead the fight against this outrageous behaviour, I'm happy to nail my colours to the mast. As I said, you're welcome at the lunch. I hope you will have the courage to show your face.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Jones AO

PS If any of the above is incorrect, then I'm happy to be corrected.

I share the concern of Mr Jones. The treatment of the local community, in particular Mr and Mrs Alexander, is unacceptable. I thank Mr Jones for his defence of the Southern Highlands community. He has always been an unfaltering defender of the common good and I join him in my objection to the Hume Cole project's treatment of the local community. I inform the House that POSCO did not turn up to the lunch.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF POLICING PROGRAM

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.30 p.m.]: I inform the House of an event I attended last night, the Community Awareness of Policing Program. This program was developed by the NSW Police Force Customer Service Program and was launched in 2010. The tenth instalment of the program commenced on 8 May 2014. The program is designed to provide an opportunity for prominent community members, such as civic and religious leaders, business luminaries and cultural identities, to gain a unique and greater knowledge and understanding of what a police officer's job entails. It also helps to strengthen relations between the community and the NSW Police Force. I was fortunate to be able to attend the dinner at the end of the four-day course, which was conducted one day a month. Deputy Commissioner Catherine Burn was there.

I was fortunate enough to meet a number of participants, including Sheikh Hassan Elsetohy, Chief Executive Officer of Muslim Aid Australia; Rebecca Macken, Principal Policy Officer, Police and Emergency Management, Department of Premier and Cabinet; Glen Powell, Community Organiser, Sydney Alliance; Daniel Sutton, Senior Journalist, Network Ten; and Elizabeth Tydd, NSW Information and Privacy Commissioner. I was very impressed by what they learned during the course. As I said, the program is designed to provide an opportunity for prominent community members to gain a unique and greater understanding of the police officer's job. Participants have already visited the Marine Area Command, the Public Order and Riot Squad, the NSW Police Force Academy in Goulburn, police headquarters and Parramatta Local Area Command.

Participants experienced a range of different aspects of everyday police work, including marine search and rescue, driver training and road safety strategies, victim identification, criminal investigation and weapons training. They also witnessed demonstrations by the Tactical Operations Unit, Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics and Dog and Ballistics units. I spoke after the dinner to a large number of religious and community leaders who gave me their very valuable insight into the difficult and rewarding job that the hardworking men and women of the NSW Police Force do. I related my experiences of going out in different general duty cars and Highway Patrol vehicles, as well as accompanying police on night shifts at Kings Cross and so on. I said that being a politician and lawmaker gives you that valuable insight.

I was very impressed with the professionalism of senior officers, particularly of Deputy Commissioner Catherine Burn, and the whole executive in initiating such an important program to show community leaders all of the different aspects of the duties of those hardworking men and women of the NSW Police Force. In turn, whether they were journalists, religious leaders or community leaders, they assured me that they would take back the valuable information they had gleaned to their wider communities. A successful part of the program is explaining to and informing our wider community of the great work done by the NSW Police Force, as well as the difficulties that officers face and the variety of skills that they acquire by engaging with the community. This is about support but, more importantly, it is about the giving of information.

Many communities, particularly multicultural communities, have various concerns about seeing people in uniforms and problems in their home countries. But this program is playing a big part in breaking down

barriers by informing community leaders and having them become the policeman's friend. I was impressed, particularly by the sheikh, who spoke very highly not only of the police, the people he had met and the information he had gleaned, but also of his opportunity to mix with others who were part of the program. There was a mixture of cultures and a mixture of ideas. All walked away saying how impressive and hardworking are the men and women of the NSW Police Force. I think this program, in its tenth year, is worthy of continuing. I would like every member of Parliament to go through it because I think that would give them a greater understanding of what occurs on the streets and the difficulties that police deal with. Perhaps we would make even better laws here.

TURKEY MINE EXPLOSION

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.35 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the tragedy that has recently struck the Unal family. They have lost a relative in the awful disaster that is the mining tragedy at Soma in Turkey. The Unal family are long-term residents of the Liverpool area. Their son, Ali, is someone I recognise from Turkish community events. Husband and wife Mahmut and Elif Unal came from Soma to Australia many years ago. Mahmut, when in Turkey, worked in the Soma mine for a number of years before he came to this country. He worked there for about a year after he and Elif were married in 1965. Elif worried every day during that year about whether Mahmut would come home. He did, thankfully. But recently several hundred miners did not, in a tragedy that has reverberated through the Turkish and wider community.

One of those who is now confirmed to be dead was Elif Unal's brother-in-law's nephew. He was 26 years of age and the father of two children. He was sufficiently injured that identification could be made only by way of his tattoos. This death has severely impacted Mrs Elif Unal in particular. I visited the family on Saturday 17 May to offer my condolences. Mrs Unal had recently spent some time in hospital, provoked in part by this tragic news. Mr and Mrs Unal's daughter was coincidentally in Turkey and with the family while this event occurred, making the family's connection even more intense. There is no doubting the magnitude of this event. According to official reports, more than 300 miners were killed in the disaster.

The disaster seems to have occurred when an explosion sent carbon monoxide gas into the underground coalmine's tunnels. There were 787 miners reported to be underground. It is believed many died from carbon monoxide poisoning and suffocation, although some were so badly injured, such as Mrs Unal's relative, that facial identification was not possible. Others are reported to require identification by DNA testing. Rescue operations ended on Saturday 17 May. There has been widespread anger in Turkey at the deaths, with demonstrations and media reports of rioting. There are claims of safety violations and the absence of a safety chamber, a new one still currently being built. There has been criticism of the authorities. I note that a significant number of people have now been detained and some arrested.

Coalmining of course has often been associated with injury, death and disaster. That demands constant vigilance. It also breeds a collective sense among underground miners throughout the world. Historian E P Thompson, writing of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century England, quoted sources noting the terrible nature of the work of a pitman, and noted there were few old miners. Cole and Postgate in the 1940s referred to the "evil reputation" of the coal industry for workers. Unions in Australia have always fought for better safety standards.

Robin Gollan's great work *The Coal Miners of New South Wales* is replete with references to the union's work in that regard. Jim Comerford's *Lockout*, the history of the mine lockout in 1929-1930 which saw strikers gunned down in this country, wrote of the important role of Jack Baddeley and Albert Willis in the 1920s—former miners who became members of Parliament and played a significant role in mining legislation. Tony Maher of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, in a book *Back at the Coalface, Volume 2*, which is the Australian Coal Miners Oral History, wrote about Malcolm Lay, who for years was a district check inspector, and said this:

It is beyond question that many miners are alive today because of the work of Malcolm and the union's dedicated Check Inspectors. For Malcolm and men like him, Mine Safety Regulations were not set down in black and white—they were written in the blood of workmates. Interviewed for this book, Malcolm observed "nothing can approach the sight of mourners standing by an open grave—lost and bewildered and white with sorrow."

That sense of sorrow is shared by the relatives and surviving co-workers of dead miners, no matter in which country they worked. Australian mineworkers supported the international call for decisive action to tighten mine safety following the Soma tragedy. They supported the call of IndustriALL for the Turkish Government to ratify

International Labour Organization Convention 176 on Safety and Health in Mines. Both Turkish and Australian coalminers are affiliates with IndustriALL. Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union Mining and Energy General Secretary Andrew Vickers said:

This horrifying accident is the ghastly result of sloppy safety practices.

He noted that neither Turkey nor Australia had ratified International Labour Convention 167. He said:

In Australia, decades of union campaigning has meant that we have safety standards in mining recognised as the best in the world.

IndustriALL Global Union Assistant General Secretary, Kemal Özkan, who is himself Turkish, said at the Soma mine:

A safe mine, where employers are sincere about monitoring and reporting hazards, will never trap and kill its workers. The responsibility for the lives of mineworkers lies with the government and the employer. Action and investment is needed to ensure that this will never happen again and we will campaign hard to make sure that action is taken.

IndustriALL described the death of miners at Soma as murder. I restate my condolences to the Unal family. I also thank the Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance—an umbrella organisation representing more than 120 Turkish Australian associations—for the role they played in supporting the Unal family.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai) [6.40 p.m.]: This is National Reconciliation Week. Yesterday, as I was heading north across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, I noticed that both the Australian and Aboriginal flags were flying side by side, the Aboriginal flag replacing the usual New South Wales flag this week. It was a powerful symbol of what reconciliation is all about: recognition of the First Australians and ensuring they are able to take full advantage of the opportunity-laden society in which we live. The two flags reminded me that, just as the structure from which the flags were flying had brought people together in 1932, reconciliation is also about bridging the divide within our wider community.

I tweeted a photo of the two flags flying and suggested it become a permanent feature on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. As usual there were one or two negative comments which, frankly, just underscored some of the difficulties faced in trying to achieve reconciliation. However, the overwhelming response was positive, highlighting again what I believe to be the common desire across the community to accord our Aboriginal brothers and sisters their proper recognition and to close the terrible gap that currently exists between the life experiences and opportunities of Australian Aborigines and those of the rest of the Australian community. While the sight of the Australian and Aboriginal flags might be dismissed by some as mere symbolism, the fact is that symbolism is important and has always been important in securing progress.

The sight of an estimated 300,000 Australians walking across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of reconciliation in 2000 was a powerful symbol of the desire of the Australian community to right past wrongs. My regret has always been that the then Federal Government left it to its successors to issue the apology to Aboriginal Australians for past injustices—an apology that, in addition to being long overdue, was always needed as a precursor for genuine reconciliation. I also regret the disservice that lack of action did to a Liberal Party that had presided over the 1967 referendum that removed provisions from the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Aboriginal people, a Liberal Party that supported the election of the first Aboriginal Australians Neville Bonner and Ken Wyatt to the Senate and the House of Representatives, and a Liberal Party that had enacted the nation's first land rights legislation.

We live in the nation's most culturally diverse State. It is a State and city in which people have come from around the world to seek opportunities and better lives. Every day we meet people who epitomise the best this nation has on offer to those who are prepared to seize opportunities and to work hard. Yet when it comes to this nation's original citizens there is much more to be done. Regrettably, the evil of racism is still evident within our society, and Aboriginal people confront it far too often. That is another reason for my determined opposition to the proposed changes to the Federal Racial Discrimination Act. Frederick Tobin may be a nutcase, but he is a nutcase who would not have been prosecuted if the proposed changes were enacted. Giving a green light to bigotry, intentionally or otherwise, is not going to advance the cause for reconciliation.

In this city, where Aboriginal dispossession began, we owe it to ourselves and to Aboriginal citizens to seek real reconciliation, and to acknowledge and seek to share in the heritage of a people who represent the

oldest continuous surviving culture on this planet. I congratulate the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on his statement on reconciliation earlier this week. I commend the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government for its determined and dedicated efforts to practically and measurably "close the gap", and especially for the Connected Communities initiative, which seeks to improve educational outcomes by better involving Aboriginal communities with local schools. But more is required.

Tonight at the historic SCG, the Sydney Swans and Geelong Cats will compete on a ground marked with the letter "R", the symbol of the Recognise campaign that seeks constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians. I applaud the Australian Football League for undertaking the initiative. Recognise is a campaign that I strongly support, and I suppose that is the real intent of National Reconciliation Week. It is a time for individual Australians to reflect on reconciliation and to take their own action, as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs urged us to do earlier in the week. Individual action does work.

I have recounted in the House previously the story of how a remarkable constituent of mine, Faith Sandler, along with others, convinced the Liberal-Nationals governments in the mid-1960s to hold the 1967 referendum. As much as I might wish that governments always lead the way, at times government requires prodding by citizens, as Faith Sandler did and as her fellow campaigner and poet, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, did. I conclude by quoting one of Oodgeroo Noonuccal's stanzas from *Son of Mine*:

I could tell you of heartbreak, hatred blind,
I could tell of crimes that shame mankind,
Of brutal wrong and deeds malign,
Of rape and murder, son of mine,
But I will tell instead of brave and fine,
When lives of black and white entwine,
And men in brotherhood combine—
This would I tell you, son of mine.

That is the message of National Reconciliation Week.

CORAKI HEALTH SERVICES

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [6.45 p.m.]: Tonight I reaffirm my commitment to the people of Coraki and Mid Richmond that I will fight for the return of medical services to Coraki. I first raised the issue of reopening Campbell Hospital in February 2012, not long after I was elected. At that stage it had been closed for some time due to storm damage, and assessments were being made to determine the cost of reopening the hospital. The community fought a hard campaign to keep their hospital open; it was built by the community and has served Coraki and the surrounding region for well more than a century.

The importance of Campbell Hospital to Coraki and surrounds has been demonstrated to me time and time again when organisations such as the Save the Hospital Committee, the Campbell Hospital Auxiliary and the Rural Transaction Centre, as well as hundreds of residents who have been without access to local hospital services, have attended community rallies and meetings to save their hospital. These meetings were very passionate and individual community members have been prepared to make financial contributions to keep their hospital open; they have literally put their money where their mouth is—and this is a disadvantaged community. The message from the community has always been that they want their hospital reopened, with the return of all services.

In the intervening period, the local health district board commissioned a structural engineer's report on the damage to Campbell Hospital and the cost of fixing it. That report determined that the cost of repairs was too great for the services that were being provided by the hospital and it recommended that a clinical services plan be prepared to determine the best options for the delivery of health services to Coraki and surrounds. There was widespread community consultation and direct community involvement in the preparation of the clinical services plan. Ultimately it was determined that the best option for health service delivery in Coraki was the development of a HealthOne service, which will work to provide integrated and comprehensive primary health care, prevent illness and reduce the risk and impact of disease. A HealthOne team works with general practice to assist patients to manage their chronic disease.

The Coraki and Surrounds Clinical Services Plan was endorsed by the Northern NSW Local Hospital District Board on 26 September 2012. Health Projects International was appointed on 22 February last year to conduct a site master plan study and project brief—essentially, a feasibility study—for the proposed establishment of a HealthOne-type facility on the site. A steering committee was also established to oversee and

manage this process. A value management study was held on 18 June 2013 and the preferred option was the establishment of a new HealthOne facility on a greenfield part of the site where the old chief executive officer's residence is.

The final project brief was approved by the local hospital district board in November 2013, with the preferred option being to construct a new HealthOne facility at an estimated capital cost of \$4 million. The existing hospital site would be sold, but the conference centre would be retained as a community asset. The financial impact statement detailing recurrent costs was completed and a request for funding was submitted to the Ministry of Health earlier this year. The community has been very patient and I share their concerns that efforts to progress a new HealthOne facility have stalled. To use the community's words: I implore the Minister and Treasury to take on board this disadvantaged community's concerns about such an incredible reduction in health services.

Coraki is a rural town, with high-risk health users, including many aged people and children, and a high Indigenous population, most of whom suffer from lack of access to transport. Many people have moved to the township particularly to access the health services that were available here and the stripping back of service access has affected our local economy and real estate values, in addition to endangering our health. I am the voice of this disadvantaged community and I want the HealthOne clinic built as soon as physically possible. I want the money for the clinic to be in this budget. I want the return of health services to Coraki to be this Government's high priority. I will continue to fight to keep the Coraki HealthOne service on the Government's radar.

WAGGA WAGGA ELECTORATE GOVERNOR VISIT

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.49 p.m.]: On Tuesday 27 May I had the great honour and privilege of hosting Her Excellency Professor the Hon. Marie Bashir, AC, CVO, in the Wagga Wagga electorate for what will be her final visit in her official capacity as Governor of New South Wales. Our Governor is respected and loved throughout the community. I took the opportunity to escort her to parts of the electorate that she had not visited before. In my electorate we have been blessed to have the Governor share her presence on many occasions—probably more in my electorate than any other. She made a promise about three years ago to visit Brungle Public School, an Indigenous school in the shire of Tumut and one I am proud of. When I told her about the achievements of the students and teachers at Brungle, the Governor insisted on visiting and finally an opportunity arose.

We were met by Jennifer Lawlor, the principal of the Brungle Public School, and Miss Jade Bellchambers, the school captain. We were greeted with a traditional Wiradjuri Elder welcome by the elders and the students. Presentations were made by: Wiradjuri elders Auntie Marg Berg, Auntie Sonia Piper and Auntie Phyllis Freeman; Mr Geoff Naylor, retired principal of Brungle school; Mr Jim Roworth, relieving director of Public School Cootamundra Group, Department of Education and Communities; and Mr Steve Bellchambers, Parents and Citizens president of Brungle Public School. We had a morning tea with the community. The students performed and took the Governor on a tour of the school. The Governor enjoyed her time there so much that it took all I knew to move our entourage on to the next appointment.

A mayoral welcome was awaiting the Governor at the Batlow Literary Institute Hall. The Mayor of Tumut, Councillor Trina Thompson, greeted the Governor, along with Mr Allan Tonkin, Facilitating Director, Acting General Manager and Director Corporate Services. An official welcome was given, with a smoking ceremony performed by Aboriginal elders Uncle Pat Connolly, Uncle Lenny Connolly and Uncle Shane Harrington. The national anthem was performed by the St Mary's and Batlow Technology school choirs and there were a number of speeches. Mr Phil Barton, the Tumut Shire Citizen of the Year, spoke on behalf of the community.

The community of Batlow came out in droves. The magnificent manner in which they decorated the hall with local produce was a credit to the community. I took the opportunity to have the Governor present a new set of mayoral chains. In 1932 the mayoral chains of Tumut shire were stolen and were never replaced. I had obtained some chains and asked the Governor whether she would present them to the mayor. That was a great success. Councillors told me that they had wished they had a set of chains so that the mayor could have greeted the Governor—the first such visit to Batlow—in the mayoral regalia. That problem has now been fixed.

We then departed for the Batlow Multi-purpose Service [MPS]. It is about five years since it was opened. We were met by Susan Weisser, the Chief Executive of the Murrumbidgee Local Health District. Today

Ms Weisser retires so she was able to finish on a high by greeting the Governor, together with Maria Roche, the Acting Rural Group Manager for the Murrumbidgee Local Health District, and Lorraine O'Sullivan and Allison Dennis, who took the Governor on a tour. We went to Adelong, where we visited the Adelong museum and were met by community representatives. We then departed for Wagga Wagga, where the Governor was the guest at the Wagga Women's Health Centre Fundraising Dinner. About 26 people were in attendance and \$40,000 was raised, bringing a total for the Women's Health Centre fundraising campaign to \$500,000—a great achievement.

Everyone appreciated the fact that the Governor had given her time to help a cause that is dear to her heart and mine. The people at the dinner in Wagga Wagga were at a function never to be repeated. It was the last official function for a Governor who has given herself and her time to the community. I pay my respects to our Governor. When she retires I hope we will have the opportunity to say some kind words and to be presented to her in this place. The Governor's visit was a successful event. She is an inspiring woman who finally got the opportunity to visit the towns in my electorate that she had not been able to visit during her time as Governor. I thank everyone involved in what was a wonderful tour.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garry Edwards): The Governor is indeed a national treasurer.

DAPTO RESPITE CENTRE

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [6.54 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House concerns about the future of the Dapto Respite Centre, which is located in my electorate. Five such respite centres are under review by the Government across New South Wales. Disability workers and carers are worried about the status of this Government review. In early April this year the Public Service Association of New South Wales held a stop-work meeting outside the Dapto Respite Centre—together with many carers and families—to highlight their concerns over the future of the Dapto Respite Centre. On 3 April the *Illawarra Mercury* provided an insight into the importance of the centre to local families with children with a disability. It interviewed a couple who use the centre and said:

Twice-monthly respite has made all the difference to Penrose parents Monique and David Headington and their 16-year-old daughter Keira, who has limited communication skills due to a chromosome deletion.

Mrs Headington said:

She's able to have a fun time with like-minded friends and it's a chance for us to get our energy levels back up.

Keira has three siblings and it's also a chance for them to spend some quality time with mum and dad because when Keira is home she needs constant attention.

I don't know what we'd do without that break—it's something you need to stay happy and relaxed and provide a calm environment for your children.

In another case Koonwarra mother Sonia Facey sent a video essay of her autistic son, Nathan, to local and State politicians as part of a personal campaign to keep the Dapto Respite Centre open. She has started a petition that I have offered to table in this place. On 10 April she told the *Illawarra Mercury*:

We have had access to that respite for two years and it's so important for my husband and me to get that break, and to be able to spend more time with our two eldest sons.

I don't have anyone else I can rely on—I have no family in the Illawarra—and I cannot just book in a babysitter, he needs special attention and care.

I made a representation to the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra on behalf of the families of the Dapto Respite Centre. He has indicated to me—and in similar terms to the local Illawarra media—that the purpose of the review was to provide a range of flexible respite options, in conjunction with non-government organisations. I sent Sonia Facey a copy of the Minister's response to my representation early last week and I asked her to consider it. She replied by email that, despite the Minister's response, her concerns remain that the Government has not assured families and carers about the future of the Dapto Respite Centre. The Government must assure constituents and others using the four respite service centres that they will remain open. I have called upon the Minister to release the review his department is undertaking. I repeat that call this evening.

KIAMA STUDENT LEADERS FORUM

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [6.59 p.m.]: This week I was pleased to host the fourth annual Kiama Students Leaders Forum in Parliament House with students from seven schools across my electorate, including

Albion Park High School, Kiama High School, Bomaderry High School, St John's Catholic High School, Oak Flats High School, Shoalhaven Anglican School and Nowra Anglican College. I acknowledge each of the 26 students who attended and represented their school communities with such pride and distinction. Starting with my old high school, Bomaderry High School, I acknowledge Francesca Banks, Jed Neilson, Patrick Jones, Claire Thompson and teacher Jack Hinde; from Nowra Anglican College, Aliessa Bailey, Clancy Carr, Henry Morgan and Tahlia Urquhart-Jack; from Shoalhaven Anglican School, Teganne Villers, Keeley Stretton, Emma Warn, Sebastian Ward and Principal Larrae Sampson; from Kiama High School, Ben McAlister, Merize Ban Der Merwe, Dylan McGillivray and Imogen Bakewell; from Albion Park High School, Taylor Garner, Julian Lorenson, Ashley Hunt, Brittany Luland and teacher Cassie Horton; from St John's Catholic High School, Kristina Komadina, Jordan Milanos, Brittany Perry, Kevin Tran and teacher Melanie Hook; and from Oak Flats High School, Liam McCormack and Nathan Windram.

The Premier attended during the lunch break and spoke to the students. The Premier had a strong but important message: Sometimes you are the one who can make a difference, and it is important to stand up and be counted when the call comes. I also thank the President of the Legislative Council, the Hon. Don Harwin, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra, the Hon. John Ajaka, for coming to the forum and speaking with students. Some of the key issues raised during the policy discussion related to P-plate driver regulations—and, not surprisingly, calling for changes in that regard—public transport, youth homelessness, mental health, youth unemployment and job pathway programs in regional New South Wales.

I was pleased to see the students debate all these topics in the context of "if you were Premier for a day". Any of these students could be Premier as they engaged on very serious issues and current affairs with great empathy, concern and intelligence. I would like to continue to host the School Leaders Forum in this place in the future because I fundamentally understand the importance of listening to our young people, giving them a voice in government and developing the next generation of leaders. The students learn about the history of our great democracy, about how government works and how they too can become our next generation of community leaders. Author and lecturer Alfie Kohn was once quoted as saying:

Students should not only be trained to live in a democracy when they grow up; they should have the chance to live in one today.

I remember being involved in such things as the Youth Parliament when I was a high school student. I often wondered whether politicians cared about the views and issues that young people have. I want all young people in my electorate to know that I am deeply concerned about their views, as well as ensuring a strong and prosperous future for all young people in my electorate. In my inaugural speech in this place I said:

The challenge to leaders is to create more leaders—and not more followers.

That is easy to say but more difficult to do. Hence I hold this Student Leaders Forum as an opportunity to develop leadership skills and engage with young people in our community. I assure all of those who participated in this forum that I will take up the issues they raised and ensure that their voices are heard at the heart of government. But this is far from where my commitment to young people ends. Every year I have nominated young people from across my electorate to serve in the YMCA New South Wales Youth Parliament. I acknowledge Jackson Calverley, Riley Richardson and Brianna Macey, who have participated in that role with great promise and distinction.

I also thank and congratulate each of the talented students who participated in the 2014 Kiama Students Leaders Forum. It was a great success. They each represented their schools extremely well, and I look forward to hosting the event again next year. As I said, I was particularly pleased with the quality of debate, the discussion, the questions, and the interest in topics that ranged across the political spectrum. This was not about a political sales pitch but encouraging young people to tell us what they thought was important, what issues they believe were essential to the development and future growth of our communities and what issues they wanted to see front and centre on the agenda. That is why I devoted that day to them and in this Parliament. They enjoyed a tour of the place, meeting Ministers, including the Premier, and I thank them for attending, as well as coming to question time, which for many was the highlight of the event.

I also thank most sincerely a member of my staff who has organised this event three years running, Mr Paul Ell. He has worked for me since 2011 and is the President of the Shoalhaven Young Liberals and is a former President of the University of Wollongong Liberal Club. He has worked and fought for everything he has ever had in his life. He was dux of Shoalhaven High School and is studying commerce and law at the

University of Wollongong. I am proud of the efforts he is investing on behalf of our community. I also thank Kaylee Cross who volunteered to run the event on the day. It was wonderful to meet her and see her engage with students. I commend all the student leaders who participated. They certainly are the leaders of tomorrow.

CABRAMATTA ELECTORATE BUDDHIST COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [7.03 p.m.]: In May I took part in one of the most important occasions for Sydney's Chinese Buddhist community: the celebration of the birth of the Lord Buddha, which happened some 2,600 years ago. I was fortunate to attend three birthday celebrations in my electorate, one at the Bonnyrigg Temple, one at Freedom Plaza and one at the Phuoc Hue Temple. The Cabramatta electorate is certainly a hub for the Sydney Buddhist community. That is a pretty big deal considering that in Australia there are more than 350,000 Buddhists and many of them live in my electorate. That is why we have so many Buddhist temples in the area—at last count I think I had about 20 temples.

Buddhism was founded by the Lord Buddha who was named Siddhartha Gotama at birth. He was born into a royal family in what is now Nepal. At 29 years of age he realised that wealth did not guarantee happiness. He then spent six years studying religions and philosophies of the day until he found what Buddhists call enlightenment. He then spent the rest of his life teaching the principles of Buddhism. On Buddha's birthday we were reminded of his teachings through one of the most beautiful religious ceremonies, the bathing of the Buddha, which I have taken part in on many occasions over the years. The ceremony involves kneeling in front of a bathing pond covered with flowers filled with scented blessed water and at the centre a statue of an infant Buddha.

The statue of Buddha has his right forefinger pointed upwards and the left forefinger directed downwards. People taking part in the ceremony use a small ladle to pour perfumed water over the right shoulder of the statue three times. To me, the words that accompany this ceremony sum up what it is all about. With the first wash, you say, "May I eliminate all evil thoughts"; during the second wash you say, "May I cultivate good deeds", and on the third wash you say, "May I help save all living things." These are valuable lessons from the Lord Buddha that are still relevant today and resonate for all people, not just Buddhists.

The Buddha bathing ceremony has such wonderful and rich symbolism with the purifying water, the incense, flowers and prayers. Legend is that when the Lord Buddha was born the sky was clear and sunny, flowers bloomed, birds were singing and dragons appeared spurring pure water that bathed the newborn baby. Seven lotus flowers bloomed beneath his feet as he walked. The Lord Buddha pointed one finger to the ground and one to the sky and said, "In the heaven above and earth below, I vow to liberate all who suffer in these three realms." As someone who has represented the area for many years I can say with authority that the Buddhist festivals and ceremonies have really enriched and blessed Cabramatta.

Several other major Buddhist events are celebrated in the area, including Honour the Ancestors, the Ploughing Festival and the Buddhist New Year. These wonderful events are organised by several community organisations. I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the organisers of the Buddha Bathing events, the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society, Prajna Monastery Australia and the Phuoc Hue Temple. I congratulate Mr James Chan, Chairman of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society, and Mr Vincent Kong, President of the Chinese Buddhist Society.

MOOREBANK INTERMODAL TERMINAL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [7.08 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of members an important matter for my local community, and on which I have spoken previously in the House. I am talking about the proposed Moorebank intermodal terminal. The concerns I mentioned previously are still relevant today. I remain concerned about air pollution and the health effects that might be caused, the extra trucks and traffic that will be added to our local roads, and the noise and light spills that may result from the intermodal terminal. I have argued since before I became a State member that Moorebank is not the right place for an intermodal terminal due to the hardship it will place on local residents. I will continue arguing against Moorebank as the location and will do everything I can to ensure that should it go ahead the impact on residents is as minimal as possible.

As I have mentioned previously, the residents of Moorebank, Wattle Grove, Casula and surrounding suburbs are concerned about the proximity of houses to the intermodal site. The closest house is only 490 metres away from the intermodal location. We live in the lowest point of the Sydney Basin and we do not get the coastal breezes to sweep away pollution. We already have the highest asthma rates in Sydney, and I am

concerned about what additional pollution will cause. Also of concern to residents are the 19 childcare centres and 10 schools that are in a 2.5-kilometre radius from the intermodal site. I can only imagine how the noise, pollution and added traffic around the area will affect children at these facilities on a daily basis. This does not even taken into account the 11,000 additional truck movements around the area, as well as the added numbers of cars for workers. This number of vehicles near education centres worries me tremendously, especially given the number of children hit by cars recently, including one on National Walk to School Day.

The additional trucks on our roads also will impede Liverpool Hospital—an extremely busy hospital that is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. It would be crazy to make the road congestion difficult for ambulances or locals needing help. As mentioned, I have raised this issue in Parliament on a number of occasions. I have written numerous letters regarding my objection to the location of the intermodal terminal. I have also met with a number of Ministers, publicised my fight in newsletters and display a sign against the Moorebank Intermodal Terminal in my office window. Furthermore, I am collecting signatures from local residents against situating the intermodal at Moorebank. When people moved into the suburbs of Casula, Moorebank, Wattle Grove, Hammondville and Holsworthy there was no discussion about an intermodal ever being built in the area. The real community that has built up in the area will be disrupted and affected by the impact of any intermodal.

This is particularly true of Wattle Grove, which was a recent land release by the Federal Government—the very body pushing for this development that will detrimentally impact the amenity of local residents. I, like the New South Wales Government, understand the need for an intermodal capacity to achieve a more sustainable container transport system. This Government is a strong advocate for building an intermodal precinct as it is an important component to advance our goal to double the proportion of container freight moved by rail through New South Wales ports by 2020. While I agree with this proposal, I know that Moorebank is not the correct site and suggest again that Badgerys Creek and Eastern Creek should be investigated further.

Unfortunately, the Federal Government has decided that Moorebank is the correct location to build the intermodal. Subject to planning and environmental approvals, and the timely relocation of the affected defence facilities and units, the Moorebank intermodal terminal is expected to start port shuttle in 2018. I am joined by the Federal member for Hughes, Craig Kelly, Liverpool City Council mayor and councillors, and many community members in fighting the development of this facility. We are not fooled by the furphy that it may bring jobs to the local area. More jobs would have been created had the location reverted to the previous intended use as a business and technology park.

Should the development proceed, I call on the Government to do everything possible to lessen the impact of the intermodal by ensuring that the supporting road infrastructure is in place before the intermodal is operational, and that affected local residents are properly consulted throughout the whole process. At the Community Cabinet held in Casula in April concerned citizens asked a number of questions about the impact of the intermodal on the local area. The response from the former Premier and the Minister for Roads and Freight was that the State Government would do all it could to ensure that the infrastructure is in place prior to the intermodal accepting containers. Whilst I ask the new Premier to uphold this commitment, I do not think anyone can predict or afford the level of needed infrastructure. I also do not believe the risks are worth the gain in using the location. I join with my community to continue to loudly argue that this development should not proceed. I ask my colleagues to join me in this fight.

BOARDING HOUSES

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [7.13 p.m.]: Today I speak about an important issue not only for my electorate but also for electorates across Sydney: inappropriate overdevelopment and, more importantly, boarding houses. I have a long and proud history of fighting against inappropriate overdevelopment, having served as a councillor on Kogarah City Council for over eight years and now as a State member of Parliament for the Oatley electorate. This week the Land and Environment Court approved a boarding house development application at 14 Cook Street, Mortdale. I do not support the construction of boarding houses in Mortdale or any part of my electorate. Many local residents have expressed concerns regarding this proposed project, particularly given that the area comprises mostly one- and two-storey single brick homes. The Affordable Housing Act was implemented under the previous Labor Government and planning Minister Frank Sartor and enabled boarding houses to be built 800 metres in walking distance of a public entrance of a railway station.

My electorate has seven railway stations: Hurstville, Penshurst, Mortdale, Oatley, Beverly Hills, Narwee and Riverwood. The Act also enables boarding houses to be built near—400 metres to be exact—a

major road, bus stop or bus interchange. My electorate's major roads are Forest Road, Railway Parade, Morts Road, Penshurst Street, Belmore Road, Stoney Creek Road, Hillcrest Avenue and Rosa Street, to name a few, not to mention the bus services. About two-thirds of the Oatley electorate map would be highlighted as affected areas under the provisions of the relevant Act. The Act also allows boarding houses to be built without consideration of parking requirements or the potential impact on the amenity of the local area. If it did, this development application at 14 Cook Street, Mortdale, would have been rejected by the Land and Environment Court. This process needs to stop now. We do not need this inappropriate overdevelopment in residential areas; it can ruin the village atmosphere of our local suburbs.

I wrote to Hurstville City Council and the previous Minister for Planning demanding something be done immediately. I congratulate the council on its action, particularly mayor Jack Jacovou, councillor Con Hindi and general manager Victor Lampe, and on taking up this issue with the Department of Planning. I have written to the newly appointed Minister for Planning, the Hon. Pru Goward, requesting that her department continue working with Hurstville City Council to ensure limitations and restrictions apply to prevent the building of boarding houses. If necessary, restricting them to just the Hurstville central business district would be a satisfactory compromise. We need to save our streets and suburbs from inappropriate overdevelopment. I ask the department to continue to work with local residents and council to ensure this issue is stopped as soon as possible. Already, Hurstville City Council has rejected a number of applications for boarding houses in areas such as Peakhurst and Narwee, and I support it in taking that step. My message is simple: we do not want this inappropriate overdevelopment in our backyard. Enough is enough.

FAIRFIELD CITY LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [7.16 p.m.]: On 14 May I attended the 2014 Fairfield City Local Business Awards presentation at Club Marconi in my electorate of Smithfield. The event marked the thirty-second anniversary of these awards, which were the vision of Steve Loe, who founded Precedent Productions in 1982. I take this opportunity to thank Steve Loe for his contribution to support local businesses in Fairfield over the past 32 years. It is noteworthy that 9,721 businesses were nominated this year in 24 different categories. The awards are essential to the Fairfield community because they offer residents a meaningful way to show their support and appreciation to businesses that offer exceptional services and products to their local community.

Without doubt, local businesses are the backbone of our successful local economy, as they generate employment for thousands of local residents, provide services and drive the local economy to support the country's broader economic development. I take great pleasure in commending all Fairfield Local Business Awards finalists. To be nominated and acknowledged for offering excellent services and products is a great achievement, personally and professionally. I congratulate all the winners in each of the 24 categories of the competition, but particularly the winners of the Business Person of the Year, George Roumanous from Century 21 Bonnyrigg, and the Business of the Year, Fred's One Stop Shopping.

Again, I congratulate the organiser, Precedent Productions, and the sponsors. The publicity generated from the competition provides local businesses with wonderful exposure in the community. This type of support for local business is more important than ever, especially considering that data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Census on Population and Housing showed that in 2011 almost 50 per cent of Fairfield residents travelled outside the area for work. Next year I would love even more local businesses in Fairfield participating in the annual local business awards and, more importantly, achieving personal and professional success in sustaining and growing their businesses.

In saying so I should acknowledge that the majority of them are family-based businesses operated by a husband and wife and their children. They work hard, mostly seven days a week. They take no holidays and they mortgage their family houses in order to refinance their businesses. They give it their absolute all when it comes to building a business, and for this I support them and wish them well. I encourage all levels of government to do everything they can to help our local businesses stay competitive, given that they employ more than seven million Australians or, in other words, more than 60 per cent of our workforce. I commend the media partner *Fairfield City Champion* on promoting, advertising and collecting the votes for the entrants received from the community. On a final note, I thank the major sponsor, Club Marconi, particularly its President Vince Foti, for its generosity and professionalism in hosting the event year after year. I hope to see the event hosted there once again next year. I thank all those involved for their support.

DAVIDSON ELECTORATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [7.20 p.m.]: Community Service Awards recognise people throughout New South Wales who have substantially contributed to improving the quality of life of members of their community. The two Community Service Award recipients in my electorate for 2014 are Bill Hardman and Don Wormald. William "Bill" Hardman, a veteran of the 1960s Indonesian confrontation, was first elected to the committee of Forestville RSL Sub-Branch in 2002. In 2003 he was appointed honorary secretary and in 2004 was elected president, a position he still holds. His committee is considered to be among the best across many areas of New South Wales within the Returned Services League [RSL].

As a qualified accountant with extensive business experience, including in the finance sector, Bill's emphasis on proper corporate governance is considered a key to his leadership success. In 2005 he became a delegate to the Northern Beaches District Council of the RSL. In 2007 he became vice-president and then, following restructuring in 2008, was elected president for a three-year term. He then continued to serve as vice-president for three years before once again taking over the role of president in March this year. In 2008 he became a member of the State council and took an active role in the finance, audit and risk management and agenda committees.

Bill has played a significant role in championing reforms on the RSL's district and State councils. In 2008 he was also appointed to the board of RSL LifeCare, which operates a number of villages in New South Wales, including the War Vets at Collaroy. He served on the audit and finance and residents' services committees for the three years of his appointment. Now a life member of the Returned and Services League [RSL] of Australia, Bill continues to perform outstanding work with the RSL and, through it, for the broader community. I was very pleased to recently present him with his award at the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Forestville Sub-Branch.

Don Wormald, the other Community Services Award recipient, has been at the forefront of graffiti removal since well before the New South Wales Government's first official Graffiti Action Day in May 2010. Don's vision and ongoing commitment to removing unsightly graffiti, particularly on Sydney's North Shore, has been a major influence on the growing success of the graffiti removal program. Through Don's drive and the support of community groups such as Rotary, as well as businesses including Dulux, last year's Graffiti Removal Day, as it is now known, was the most successful to date.

More than 200 sites from Bondi to Broken Hill were cleaned by almost 1,100 volunteers. More than 50 local councils were involved and more than 23,000 square metres of graffiti were cleaned, saving the community an estimated \$1.5 million. Don has been a key figure in the instigation and success of the program. His ongoing involvement helps position it for even greater expansion and the provision of cleaner environments for even more communities. Again, I congratulate both Bill and Don on their Community Service Awards and thank them for their significant contributions to our local community.

FEDERAL BUDGET

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [7.24 p.m.]: The 2014 Federal budget is so out of line, so regressive, so blatantly inequitable that even our Liberal Premier described its measures as a "kick in the guts". It is clear that most Australians now understand that the burden of spending cuts, benefit changes and tax increases in the budget will be imposed on the sick, pensioners, the young, sole parents and others who are least able to afford them. The Greens are committed to blocking these budget measures in the Federal Senate. We will block these measures because we want an Australia that is kind and takes care of its sick and disadvantaged, instead of kicking them out into the street. We will block these measures because we believe that at a time when Australia is feeling the impact of climate change it is immensely self-destructive to ignore the imperative to convert to renewable energy.

The Greens have a vision for a more liveable, sustainable community that supports future generations and the planet. We want an accessible higher education system that will enrich us all as a nation. We know that the budget will hit hardest those most vulnerable people in our society. My electorate is diverse, but people share many similar concerns about public transport, public education, climate change and urban planning. The budget is a slap to their faces, since it completely ignores many of those concerns. New South Wales now faces funding cuts of \$2 billion to services, including the all-important health and education budgets. That means less money for public schools and the promised Gonski reforms, less money for families, a boost for the filthy, coal-fired powered energy sector and a nod to big developers to continue making profits at the community's expense.

This budget means less money for public transport infrastructure, which Sydney desperately needs to make it more liveable. The Federal Government has ruled out investing in public transport, yet more and more money is available for tollways, like the loan of \$ billion to fast-track the WestConnex tollway, which means more congestion, more traffic, more inducement of traffic and, of course, more pollution. This budget means the most disadvantaged people in my community will be further marginalised and left out in the cold. The 2011 census shows that 12 per cent of people in the Glebe, Forest Lodge and Camperdown areas of my community live in public housing.

Public housing residents are often stigmatised as people who are looking for a handout. Nothing could be further from the truth. People who live in public housing are there through a series of hardships that anyone would find hard to endure. They are often making the best of terrible circumstances and should be applauded for being brave in the face of adversity. For many, a \$7 co-payment for a visit to their general practitioner and the additional \$5 charge on prescriptions does not seem significant. But for low-income families struggling to support their kids, like many of the neighbourhoods in my electorate where 10 per cent of households earn less than \$600 a week, \$7 can be significant.

Under this budget, planning for a school excursion to the museum, school uniforms and supplies that need to be bought and the weekly grocery bills become more stressful than ever. Under this budget there will be no school kids' bonus to lend a hand and there will be less assistance to meet the rising costs of child care. If a person is unemployed and under 30 years of age and is excluded from receiving unemployment benefits for six months, what is the future for that young person and their family? My electorate has the highest number of working women in the State and, for them, the costs of running budgets for families are real.

Young people who leave school are finding it tougher to get into the workforce. They now will be further disadvantaged by a six-month delay in receiving Newstart allowances to assist in their search at the same time as options for skills learning at TAFE are being slashed and TAFE fees are being increased. Meanwhile, the deregulation of university fees will deter some of our brightest students or saddle them with huge debts; many of them will turn their backs on going to university at all. Besides destroying universal health care, penalising youth for their inexperience, and the assault on public education, the Liberal Federal Government is spending \$245 million on school chaplains. Many school counsellors will be losing their jobs because they are not religious.

Not one cent of that money can be spent on secular counsellors. According to an Essential Report this week, this spending is supported by only 5 per cent of Australians. It is a use of public money to push a religious agenda in our public schools that is not supported by the public. But this slash-and-burn budget reaches further than any we have ever seen in its raw ideology and embrace of neo-conservative ideals that most Australians want nothing to do with. No-one in our community will be unscathed if these budget measures are allowed to pass. The Greens will do all they can to oppose them. I am holding a public meeting in my community next Tuesday at Glebe Public School to bring people together to raise our voices against this unfair, regressive budget.

NEWCASTLE TRANSPLANT GROUP

MARIE ADAMS, AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS AWARD

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [7.29 p.m.]: I acknowledge two recent events that are relevant to my electorate. First, a function held by the Newcastle Transplant Group; secondly, the recent recognition of years of outstanding volunteering by one of my constituents, Mrs Marie Adams. On the evening of Saturday 17 May I was pleased to attend the Newcastle Transplant Group's trivia fundraiser. This is the second year that the event has been held and it was attended by 150-odd people. It is a pleasure to note that close to \$5,000 was raised on the night. The funds will go towards purchasing much-needed equipment for the John Hunter Hospital Transplant Unit. The Newcastle Transplant Group has raised thousands of dollars over the past 13 years for the transplant unit. In this time, it has purchased equipment for the unit such as a bladder scanner, ice machines and several sets of scales.

This equipment is welcomed by those who are receiving lifesaving transplants at John Hunter Hospital. Several of the attendees at the fundraising event have undergone successful lung, heart and kidney transplants. It was wonderful to see the benefits of those procedures firsthand and the smiles on the patients' faces. One attendee had undergone a successful double lung transplant and her health has improved to such an extent that

she has recently given birth. Hearing success stories such as these is always inspiring. I congratulate my good friends Jenny and Alex Gaudron as well as the Newcastle Transplant Group on their outstanding fundraising efforts.

I now speak of one of my local residents, Mrs Marie Adams, who was recently recognised by the Australian Red Cross with a Distinguished Service Award for 35 years of service to the Belmont branch. Marie has devoted her energy to 24 years in the executive roles of president, secretary and treasurer. In addition, she has provided guidance and leadership to 12 other Red Cross branches. Marie prepared and distributed Red Cross Trauma Teddies in one of her volunteering roles. These much-loved teddies have brought comfort to many extremely ill children and are a special initiative of the Red Cross. Marie's Red Cross peers have described her as someone who embodies dedication, loyalty and commitment to the Australian Red Cross. People such as Marie are the fabric of communities and I am proud to acknowledge her achievements and recognise her outstanding volunteer efforts. I heartily congratulate Marie on her many years of volunteering and service to the community.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [7.33 p.m.]: Australia is a country of great diversity. We can see it in the faces of the people we work with, in the restaurants that line the main streets of our towns, and in the variety of religious and cultural events that are celebrated around the country, such as Chinese New Year, Diwali, Hanukkah, Ramadan and Christmas, to name a few. However, the treatment of the Aboriginal peoples in this country is a chilling reminder that tolerance has not always been embraced. Similarly, the Cronulla riots remind us how quickly all that we have achieved can be put at risk. The proposed amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act were put forward on the basis that the current wording of section 18C inappropriately constrains our freedom of speech. Section 18C makes it unlawful to commit an act in public that is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people if the act is done because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of the other person.

There is no doubt that freedom of speech plays an important role in our democracy. It ensures that when we go to the ballot box we make informed decisions about who we vote for. Freedom of speech is necessary so that communities can debate political ideas and individuals can have a say on decisions that affect them. Section 18C ensures that everyone has a role to play. However, a flourishing society requires more than freedom of speech. It requires security, stability, a just legal system and a vibrant economy. That is why freedom of speech is not absolute. In this country it is criminal to disclose secrets that risk the lives of Australian soldiers. Likewise, it is a crime for corporate executives to disclose market-sensitive information to their mates. The law protects us from slander and it protects privileged comments made to our lawyers.

As a society we recognise that these restrictions do not hurt our democracy or way of life. Indeed, we understand that they are necessary to maintain it. Laws against hate speech are no less necessary because racism and bigotry tear at the heart of our social fabric. Racism and bigotry leave people feeling exiled in their own home. They do not improve the quality of public debate nor do they assist us with the wise completion of a ballot paper. Racism and bigotry are insidious; they attack people because of their identity and their heritage. They imply that a person is inferior. They are hurtful and divisive and can lead to individuals and communities feeling unwanted, undervalued and second class.

Racist and bigoted comments today can also revive memories of past wrongs. Unfortunately, few ethnic groups have been spared the pain of racially justified persecution. Examples such as slavery in the United States and the Holocaust are well known. In recent times the world has witnessed genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda. In North Korea persecution is justified by racial supremacy. We have built a vibrant, rich and diverse society, which is not focused on the differences between us but is founded on the strengths that our differences afford us. Section 18C stands not as a threat to freedom of speech but as a protector of the purpose that freedom serves and as a guard to an achievement that is exceptional in this time and rare in times past.

ANNE-LOUISE O'CONNOR, KIAMA WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [7.37 p.m.], by leave: On Wednesday 23 April 2014 I was pleased to present Anne-Louise O'Connor of Shoalhaven Heads with her 2014 Kiama Electorate Woman of the Year Award. She has received greetings and good wishes from local mayor Joanna Gash and the Minister for Women, the Hon. Pru Goward. Anne-Louise, like much of my own family, was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and with her father, who served in the British Forces, lived in various parts of England before being sent to boarding school in Abingdon, Berkshire. She spent her holidays in Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex. After leaving school she trained as a Norland Nanny. In 1968 she was one of the last of the ten-pound Poms.

Having never worked in an office before, Anne-Louise's first job in Australia was working in a souvenir shop in Pitt Street selling kangaroos and boomerangs to the Americans who were in Sydney on rest and recreation. After this job she worked for various organisations, including as a receptionist at the Institute of Engineers where she learned the ropes of working in an office and assisted in the publication of the monthly newsletter. In 1972 Anne-Louise joined an advertising agency, starting as a receptionist before being promoted to assistant to the media manager. After five years in Australia she decided to apply for dual citizenship. On her return to England in 1975 she met her mother for the first time since she was five years of age.

When she returned to Sydney in 1978 Anne-Louise obtained a job with Ogilvy and Mather, an advertising agency. She remained with that company for six years during which time she was promoted to media manager of the direct response division, media manager of the rural division and finally group head in the retail division. Anne-Louise moved to Sudler and Hennessey as media manager specialising in health care and rural areas. She worked there for eight years before joining Hammond and Thackeray—now the Healthy Thinking Group—where she has been media manager for 20 years, looking after the company's media in Sydney and Melbourne.

Anne-Louise married John in October 1987 and the couple have two children who live in Brisbane. In 1999 they moved to Shoalhaven Heads, which they stumbled upon one weekend while staying in Gerringong and where they decided to buy a block of land and build. It was a huge move, as not only did they not know a soul in the area neither knew what work they would do once they moved down there from Sydney. However, things worked out, as John found a job almost straightaway and Anne-Louise's advertising agency decided to retain her as media manager on a consultancy basis. Anne-Louise joined the Shoalhaven Heads Rural Fire Brigade, helping the brigade with fundraising and later publicity. She was also secretary for a year and was very involved in the 2001-02 bushfires, spending three weeks assisting in the Nowra Fire Control Centre. She joined the Shoalhaven Heads Evening VIEW Club and it was not long before she was elected publicity officer and then president, a role she has held for the past three years.

In addition, Anne-Louise has been publicity officer for the Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum since its inception in 2003 and secretary of the Shoalhaven Heads Chamber of Commerce and Tourism since 2006, during which time she has assisted in putting together the Shoalhaven Heads village brochure. In 2004 Anne-Louise started the *Heads News*, a newsletter produced by a local for the locals. This is a monthly newsletter that averages 32 pages a month. It is put together in its entirety by Anne-Louise; she does the layout and assists advertisers with creating their advertisements. The advertising pays for the printing and distribution but the advertisers are not charged for preparing their advertisements.

Anne-Louise was very humbled to receive her Kiama Woman of the Year Award. She is a credit to our region, a well-liked and respected member of the Shoalhaven Heads community and somebody who has made a lasting contribution. I thank Anne-Louise for the tremendous work she continues to do for our local community. There is no doubt that many women around the community deserve recognition. Past recipients of the award have included Lorraine Montgomery, a former national president of VIEW Club, who comes from Shoalhaven Heads, and Sandra McCarthy, a former mayor of Kiama—in fact, the longest serving mayor of Kiama. We now can add Anne-Louise O'Connor, who is in very sound, sensible and solid company.

I have known Anne-Louise for many years. She is a dedicated community servant and will do anything for anyone who seeks her assistance. I am proud that she has been recognised for her years of service to Shoalhaven Heads. This award is long overdue. She is a great inspiration not just to her community and to women. Regardless of her gender, Ann-Louise deserves recognition for her extraordinary contribution to her entire community. I hope this award serves to encourage other like-minded people to roll up their sleeves, get involved and ensure that their communities are stronger and better places as a result of their remarkable and consistent contribution. I commend all recipients of the Woman of the Year awards no matter their electorate, but I am delighted to know that I have the best one in Shoalhaven Heads in the Kiama electorate. Congratulations to Anne-Louise O'Connor.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.42 p.m. until
Tuesday 17 June 2014 at 12 noon.**
