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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 19 June 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.

ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BILL 2014

TRADE AND INVESTMENT CLUSTER GOVERNANCE (AMENDMENT AND REPEAL) BILL 2014

Messages received from the Legislative Council returning the bills without amendment.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

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

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 May 2014.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [10.07 a.m.]: I commenced my contribution on the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Bill 2014, and cognate bill, on 29 May 2014 but due to time limits the debate had to be adjourned shortly before I concluded my contribution. These are private members' bills that were introduced by the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, the member for Blacktown. I shall now conclude my contribution with a couple of points.

The Government's position on the bills can best be summed up in two ways. The first relates to the words of one Nationals member, the member for Murray-Darling, who said that he supported the contents of the bills but would not vote for them because the bills have been introduced by the Labor Party. At least he was honest enough to outline the Government's position. No member of any political party in this country could find anything in these bills that is objectionable. The second relates to the lack of action by the Government. Since this matter has been debated in the community, the Government has still done nothing to close the money-laundering slush funds that are the subject of such derision and criticism in the media and that have been outlined in the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

There are two points that sum up the Government's response to this situation: the member for Murray-Darling agrees with the content of the bills, but for political reasons will not support them; and the inaction by a Government that has been criticised at every turn about the money-laundering slush funds that it still refuses to close. The question has to be asked: Why is that so? I commend the bills to the House and congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for introducing them. I urge every member to support these bills.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [10.09 a.m.]: I make a brief contribution to this critically important debate on the Constitution Amendment (Disclosures by Members) Bill 2014, which is cognate with the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Bill 2014. I proudly support this bill introduced by the Leader of the Opposition and I commend him for doing what those on the other side of this Chamber should be doing yet have failed to do: provide leadership to New South Wales by doing what is needed to clean up politics in this State.

The people of New South Wales want something done now. They are tired of seeing the parade of politicians one after another before the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. The aim of this bill is to help restore some public faith in the political process. Under this bill every member of the New South Wales Parliament must declare their taxable income, including investments, outside business interests and trusts. They must also declare the pecuniary interests of their spouses and dependants and they must declare if any family members hold contracts with the New South Wales Government. I fully support this bill, because I want my community to know that they can have faith in me to represent their interests in Parliament.

I hope those on the other side of this Chamber will do the right thing and support this bill. These provisions already apply to me and my colleagues but it is important that the public knows that every member of Parliament follows the same open and transparent standard. It is not acceptable that the public have so little trust in their representatives in Parliament. That is not what the democratic process is about. These bills propose that the standards that my colleagues and I follow, as recommended by ICAC in its report, "Reducing the opportunities and incentives for corruption in the State's management of coal resources", be extended to all members. The report states:

The Commission supports expanding the Register of Disclosure to include spouses-partners and dependent children. The benefits of expanding the register include added transparency, minimising perceptions of members avoiding scrutiny and dealing with the potential for family interests to influence decision making.

This standard being proposed today by Labor brings New South Wales into line with other jurisdictions, including the Commonwealth, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. If the Premier does not support this bill and does not step up to reform political donation his credibility will not just be seriously compromised, it will be lost never to be recovered. I commend the bills to the House.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [10.12 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Baulkham Hills, Macquarie Fields, Epping, Cessnock, Coffs Harbour, Toongabbie, Murray-Darling, Mount Druitt and Cabramatta for their contributions on these important bills that call for open, honest and accountable Government. I am very disappointed that the Government has indicated it will vote against this bill today. In fact, given what we have seen from this Government it is a disgrace. The Government of New South Wales is in crisis. It has lost a Premier to a scandal, it has lost a Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier to a scandal, a finance Minister to a scandal, and an energy Minister to a scandal. There have been two Cabinet reshuffles in just eight months.

There are widespread allegations of corrupt and illegal fundraising practices within the Liberal Party. The people of this State have rightly lost confidence in this Government. They are disillusioned and it is time to restore public trust in the New South Wales political system. That is why we expected the Government to support this new legislation. These bills will make it compulsory for every member of the New South Wales Parliament to declare their taxable income, including investments, trusts and outside business interests, the pecuniary interests of their spouse and any dependants, and any contracts held by family members with the New South Wales Government. The new legislation empowers the ICAC to issue corruption findings relating to serious breaches of the New South Wales Ministerial Code of Conduct.

Since the introduction of these bills in May the Premier has adopted a small part of Labor's new standard. Just days after I introduced these bills into the Parliament the Government was suddenly inspired to act by introducing the policy of publication of Ministers' diaries and trying to pass it off as the Premier's idea. The Premier's commitment to quarterly public release of Ministers' diaries is only a very small step towards increasing transparency and accountability. The Premier's policy is a watered-down version of Labor's policy. These bills, and Labor, will require all Ministers to publish monthly an online diary of all meetings, phone conversations or other interactions with lobbyists, private companies or members of Parliament relating to commercial transactions or decisions.

I will not tolerate corruption. I will always be a strong advocate for any legislation that strengthens our State's anticorruption framework. In February last year I announced a new standards package and this bill builds on the measures I have already implemented on my own front bench. It is time to set a new standard for every member of this Parliament. It is time for the people of New South Wales to have confidence in this place and all of us elected to it. Labor has listened to the message of the 2011 election. In February last year I announced a new standard, a comprehensive set of reforms. It is now time for the Government to show that they too are serious about stamping out corruption once and for all.

The Premier has said he would not take a piecemeal approach to restoring trust, transparency and accountability to New South Wales politics. Today he and the Government have a chance to get it right, a

chance to show the people of New South Wales that they can trust their elected members of this Parliament, a chance to show the people of New South Wales that we are here to serve the community and not ourselves. It is our duty to restore trust and confidence to the New South Wales Parliament and that duty belongs to all of us. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.

Division called for and, pursuant to standing orders, deferred.

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

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 May 2014.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [10.16 a.m.]: I proudly speak on the Health Services Amendment (Guaranteeing Free Public Hospital Services) Bill 2014. I commend the Leader of the Opposition for introducing this bill to the House and doing what the Premier should be doing, defending the people of New South Wales against Prime Minister Tony Abbott's vicious budget and protecting Medicare. This bill seeks to amend section 75 of the Health Services Act 1997 to prevent a patient in a public hospital from being charged for any health service which is currently free of charge.

The bill 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 a fee. Labor is introducing this bill because the Premier has not. Labor is introducing this bill because the Premier cannot stand up for the people of New South Wales against his friend Tony Abbott. Labor is introducing this bill because the Liberals cannot be trusted to keep access to hospitals free. Labor is introducing this bill because the community wants a guarantee that access to public hospitals will remain free.

I can tell members that the Liberal Party's general practitioner tax of \$7 for every visit to the doctor and to hospital emergency departments is causing a lot of anxiety for families in my electorate of Cabramatta. I hear it from parents at every local school I visit. I hear it from people who visit my office. I hear it from people I speak to on the street. Cabramatta is one of the communities that will be most affected by the Liberals' ruthless demolishing of universal healthcare for all Australians and the decimation of Medicare. Medicare is central to our universal healthcare system. It is about ensuring that no matter how much money you have you are guaranteed care when you get sick. Since its creation by the Whitlam Labor Government in 1975 our citizens have come to value Medicare and what it stands for.

Cabramatta has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country and we have a lot of families struggling to pay the rent and put food on the table. We have a lot of families with young children and we have a lot of older people with chronic health issues. These are the most vulnerable groups in our community and they are facing fierce attacks from Tony Abbott. Why are we surprised? Let us not forget that it was the Fraser Liberal Government that all but dismantled Medicare. It reduced medical benefits and restricted bulk billing, free hospital and medical care for people with Pensioner Health Benefits cards and those judged to be socially disadvantaged. Thankfully, the Hawke Labor Government overturned the Liberal Government's changes and reintroduced the original Medicare model, and that is what we have kept—until now.

Health groups have universally condemned Tony Abbott's general practitioner tax. The Australian Medical Association says it would deter people from seeing their general practitioner, which could endanger lives. It would lead to fewer general practitioner visits for preventative services such as childhood immunisation or cancer screening. The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association said that co-payments would provide limited financial savings with the burden instead being shifted to emergency departments. Our hospitals are under enough pressure. My nearest hospitals—Liverpool and Fairfield hospitals—are still reeling from Mike Baird's \$3 billion cuts across the health system, and with the State budget's \$554 million Health budget black hole our hospitals will come to a standstill.

How will they cope with an influx of patients who cannot afford to see their general practitioner? Of course, the Liberals' answer is to charge a tax on people who seek treatment in emergency departments. I cannot overstate just how dangerous imposing this tax would be to millions of Australians. Cabramatta has many

people who are struggling to put enough money together to feed their kids, and a hospital tax could put lives at risk. It is horrible to think that parents may need to weigh up saving money for groceries and paying bills against taking a child to hospital for a stomach ache that could turn out to be a burst appendix, or a rash that could turn out to be meningococcal, or a severe asthma attack. Let us face it, a visit to the local emergency department will mean follow-up medications, specialist visits and medical tests. This will now all cost a lot more money that families cannot afford.

The Australian Medical Association and the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association describe a hospital tax as unworkable. It is not the job of nurses, doctors and surgeons to demand cash before treating someone in pain or whose life may be hanging in the balance. It would cost more to collect the tax and to deal with its administration than the revenue it would bring to government coffers. I fully support this bill because we cannot trust Mike Baird to stand up to Tony Abbott. Mike Baird will not go against his surfing mate Tony for the sake of the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs Roza Sage: You cannot be serious.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) [10.22 a.m.]: As my colleague the member for Blue Mountains said, the member for Cabramatta cannot be serious. This bill is nothing but a political stunt. As Minister for Health I advised the House the day following the Federal budget I have totally ruled out charging patient fees for hospital emergency department services. I said that no service would be cut, that the State Government would increase the Health budget and that no co-payment would be charged for attendance at an emergency department. The State budget handed down on Tuesday demonstrates that the Government is delivering on its promises with a 5.2 per cent increase in the Health budget. That is a \$929 million increase giving a total budget of nearly \$20 billion.

This bill is nothing but a nonsensical Labor stunt. Even worse, it applies to all services provided by public hospitals, not only emergency department services. The bill provides that no fee is to be charged for any health service provided to a patient by a public hospital that was under any such agreement required to be provided free of charge as at 29 May 2014. That extends beyond emergency department services and is likely to have perhaps unintended consequences—perhaps not—for other services now delivered in public hospitals. The National Health Reform Agreement was signed in 2011, when the Federal Labor Government was in office. That agreement enshrines the Medicare principles. However, it also permits the charging of fees for services provided to public patients in agreed circumstances, particularly non-admitted patients. This bill rules out charging for non-admitted patients.

That is extraordinary, especially on the part of the shadow Minister for Health, who was a Parliamentary Secretary for Health in the Labor Government. He clearly does not know what he is talking about. This bill will prevent any further variation of these provisions without legislative amendment. The Government is committed to putting patients first by ensuring that the right care is provided at the right time and in the right place. The Government's focus is on reform and innovation to drive whole-of-system integration. As new models of care are developed, particularly for those with chronic illnesses, more care will be delivered in the community. The Government's \$120 million four-year integrated strategy announced in March is an example of that. This strategy will drive whole-of-system integration by breaking down barriers and removing structural impediments to providing patient-centred care, increasing local decision-making and continuing innovation and reform to build sustainability. This bill will remove flexibility to negotiate changes—

Dr Andrew McDonald: It will not.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This bill will remove flexibility to negotiate changes to charging arrangements no matter how reasonable they may be, particularly with regard to new models of care driven by clinical practice and technological changes over time. For these reasons this bill cannot be supported. It is nothing but a political stunt.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cabramatta was heard in absolute silence. The member for Macquarie Fields will cease interjecting.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: As the shadow Minister knows, this bill has been introduced in an attempt to suggest that the Government will charge a co-payment for attendance at emergency departments. The Government has no such intention. I completely ruled it out on the record and that has been reinforced by Premier Baird and Treasurer Constance.

[*Interruption*]

The SPEAKER: Order! I will remove the member for Macquarie Fields from the Chamber if he interjects again.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: It is already enshrined in the Health Services Act. The Opposition does not understand the existing legislation. The Government opposes this bill.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [10.27 a.m.]: Obviously the Opposition supports the Health Services Amendment (Guaranteeing Free Hospital Services) Bill 2014. I will address the Minister's contribution shortly. I have been interested to hear the contributions to this debate that have dealt with the history of the Medicare system, how it works in our public hospitals and so on. For the record, the national health insurance scheme is a Labor policy that goes back to the early 1970s when the Whitlam Government introduced Medibank. On its election in 1975, the Fraser Government moved to abolish Medibank and established the Medibank Private insurance scheme. It had all of the infrastructure in place and it had to do something with it, so Medibank Private opened for business as an insurance company on 1 October 1976. Fortunately, Medicare was re-established by the Hawke Labor Government and it is now enshrined because no Coalition Government has ever said that it will abolish it.

We are now witnessing Medicare's death by a thousand cuts with the Abbott Government making changes that are designed to make it unsustainable. The background to this bill is the recent Federal budget, which imposes a co-payment to be collected by general practitioners from public patients who would previously have been bulk-billed. What will happen as a result of people going to their general practitioner [GP] and finding out they have to pay \$7? The pressure will then shift to accident and emergency departments. This has happened in the past when there have been changes to charges by GPs: pressure has shifted to hospital accident and emergency departments. I ask the Minister to take note of the situation and over the months ahead. She will see waiting times at accident and emergency start to skyrocket as more and more people are diverted away from their GPs.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: It has not even gone through the Senate yet. This will happen next year.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Of course, we are hoping the Senate will save us. We are asking the Senate to save us.

Pursuant to standing orders business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

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

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS) BILL 2014

Second Reading

[*Deferred division.*]

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will now proceed with the deferred division on the question: That these bills be now read a second time.

The House divided.

Ayes, 21

Mr Barr	Ms Hornery	Mr Robertson
Ms Burney	Mr Lynch	Ms Watson
Ms Burton	Dr McDonald	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

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

Pairs

Mr Collier	Mr Ayres
Mr Mihailuk	Mr Hazzard
Ms Tebbut	Mr Piccoli

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA MEMORY WALK

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I remind members of the morning tea being held to support the Alzheimer's Australia memory walk campaign.

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

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [10.47 a.m.]: As I was saying earlier, over the past couple of decades a fee had been charged in accident and emergency departments. The fee was charged to stop patients drifting from general practitioners to accident and emergency departments. The Minister for Health has said that she totally rules out any fee being charged in accident and emergency departments, but I note that she did not follow up that statement with the words "no ifs, no buts", which generally follows the broken promises of Coalition spokespeople over the last few years.

The Minister is hoping that the Senate will save the Liberals from themselves and will block the legislation; we all hope that happens. But clearly the impact of an extra fee on general practitioner services, particularly in electorates such as mine, will cause people to drift towards accident and emergency departments. Waiting times will blow out and that will put pressure not only on the health system but on the government of the day. The Minister was at pains to say that this legislation will reduce any ability for flexibility—"flexibility" is a lovely word. Let us look at the flexible way this matter has been addressed by the Government. I refer to *Hansard* in this place on 14 May 2014. The Premier—he used almost the same words as the Minister used today—said:

We will be ruling that out ...

However, two days later, when standing with the Prime Minister, the Premier said:

We will be considering and obviously watching events as they unfold.

He was obviously talking about the situation in the Senate and what will happen to accident and emergency departments once a general practitioner [GP] levy was introduced. The Premier continued:

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 is what the Premier said at a media conference with Tony Abbott on 16 May 2014. At the very least it is fair to us to say that the Government has been inconsistent. Why is the Minister ruling it out today, as the Premier did on 14 May, only to introduce several qualifications two days later? Clearly, this is major issue running into a State election that is only nine months away. Ruling out the introduction of a \$7 at the GP level before the State election and before it goes through the Senate is a sensible political position for the Government, the Minister and the Premier to take. Let us get this issue resolved before the election in terms of what the State Government will do, get it resolved before we know what the Senate might or might not do, get it resolved before the State election, and get it resolved before the introduction of the \$7 fee, which will take effect as a result of the Federal budget.

This legislation cuts off the State Government's options. If this bill were to become law, the State Government would be unable, without changing the legislation, to introduce a \$7 fee at accident and emergency departments if there was a problem with those departments and flexibility in funding arrangements was required. I think the public would want that. I know the constituents in my electorate and similar electorates would want that. In conclusion, the bill is fairly self-explanatory. As I said, the Government is being dishonest in this debate. Take the words of the Premier only two days apart—a clear statement that the Government would be ruling out the \$7 fee, repeated by the Minister for Health, only to provide a waffling response in the presence of the Prime Minister, saying that the State Government would have to discuss the issue and monitor all the impacts of the \$7 levy when it takes effect next year. As I said, that will be next year after the Senate has made a decision and, conveniently for the Government, after the State election. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [10.52 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak in favour of this bill. The history of billing for health services has been an ongoing saga for more than 100 years. Prior to the introduction of Medicare, or Medibank as it then was, in 1975, there was no universal health care, which meant that people had to pay to see a doctor and if they were unable to pay they would go to hospital outpatients or be admitted as a public patient. Universal health insurance meant that doctors were not paid by hospitals; they saw public patients in hospitals for no charge as so-called honorary medical officers and at the same time billed private patients. By 1974 it was clear that this system was not working; there were major problems with access to health care.

The development worldwide of universal health care found that it provided not only superior care but also more cost-effective care. For that reason, despite the opposition of the then conservative parties, universal health care was introduced. The consequence of not introducing universal health care can easily be seen in the United States of America which has extraordinarily high health care costs, does not service a large proportion of patients, and has life expectancies at the bottom end of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]. The fact that the opposition of the Australian Dental Association at the time was too much to introduce universal dental care is something that we see today. Indeed, all one has to do is look at the dental health of Australians to see what would happen had the conservative parties succeeded in opposing universal health care in those days. For dental care we have a highly expensive, unregulated private system that works extremely well for those who can pay. However, for those who cannot pay, there is major difficulty in accessing dental care and many poor people have extremely poor dental health.

Mrs Roza Sage: What nonsense.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: As the member for Blue Mountains would know, one can tell someone's income simply by looking in their mouth. I am pleased to talk to this bill. When Medicare was introduced the agreement was that hospitals run by the States—the New South Wales Government owns the hospitals—would charge patients Medicare, they would continue to run honorary medical services at that time and the Federal Government would look after out-of-hospital care. Since then there have been enormous changes to the New South Wales health system. The first one was the effective disappearance of public hospital free-to-service outpatients. These still exist in some areas, but as a general rule most of them were closed at the time. As the

Minister for Health would know, anybody who has a child needing an outpatient appointment at a major children's hospital, which is free, has virtually no chance of getting an appointment, or if they do so it will require a GP referral so that the person can be bulk-billed.

For many years there has been a tendency towards extensive shifting of costs between the Commonwealth and the State, so there is a co-payment for many services currently run by public hospitals. There is a bulk-billing arrangement whereby a private GP referral to a named doctor can be billable under Medicare. This is further complicated by the fact that what is an inpatient and what is an outpatient has also changed considerably. For example, people with pneumonia used to be treated as an inpatient for four or five days. Today a healthy person with pneumonia has an intravenous cannula inserted, is given a daily antibiotic, is sent home with the cannula in situ, is treated as an outpatient or as a private referred non-inpatient and at this stage also receives a bill. These bills to Medicare are free to public patients. There is no co-payment for this bill. This latest introduction by the Federal Coalition Government, against the wishes, I am sure, of the health Minister—I wish the health Minister would put her views on the co-payment on the record yet again—

Mrs Jillian Skinner: I already have. You don't listen.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Yet again the Minister for Health has interjected. I hope she will place on record her opinion on what a GP co-payment would mean for patients in general practice and also in the hospital system.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: There is no co-payment in hospitals.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The Minister has yet to be completely clear on whether she supports a co-payment for general practice patients in general practice. She has yet to say whether she believes that the introduction of a co-payment for general practitioner patients in general practice, not in hospitals—

Mrs Jillian Skinner: We manage hospitals, in case you haven't noticed.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The Minister said, "We manage hospitals". As she is the health Minister she knows what happens outside hospitals. I want to know whether the Minister thinks the policy of a co-payment in general practice for general practice patients is the correct policy. The Australian Medical Association has come out in opposition to the policy of a general practitioner co-payment. It wants the New South Wales Minister for Health to say that the charging of a co-payment in general practice is good or bad health policy. I look forward to the Minister's clarification of this very important issue.

Pursuant to resolution business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

APPROPRIATION BILL 2014

APPROPRIATION (BUDGET VARIATIONS) BILL 2014

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2014

STATE REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 June 2014.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [11.00 a.m.]: On Tuesday the Treasurer introduced these bills, which is the fourth budget handed down by this Government. This budget has left New South Wales with a stark contrast and a stark choice after five years. On Tuesday the Premier had one final chance to offer a vision for New South Wales to show what a positive Liberal agenda could be all about. Instead, he produced a budget that once again shows this Government has forgotten the people who elected it to office, leaving our hospitals half a billion dollars short of what the Australian Medical Association [AMA] says is needed just to keep the system running, cutting more teachers from TAFE and raising fees in the middle of a youth unemployment crisis.

The single goal of this budget is to blackmail the people of New South Wales into accepting the privatisation of our electricity network. But after already privatising \$10 billion worth of public assets, including

our ports, power stations and the desalination plant, the fact remains that infrastructure spending has gone down. The Premier is releasing lots of glossy documents and flashy animations, promising more feasibility studies for projects trying to create the illusion that something is happening. It is another budget that sees the Government talking about infrastructure instead of just getting on with the job of building it. And while the Premier's infrastructure promises are likely to remain a mirage, his cuts to the services on which people rely are painfully real.

The context of last Tuesday's budget was an unprecedented attack on New South Wales from Canberra. Tony Abbott ripped away \$25 billion of funding from our hospitals and schools, including \$1.2 billion out of our hospital system in the next four years alone. Last Tuesday's budget was an opportunity for the Premier to show that he could act as a check on Canberra. The day after the Federal budget the Premier called it a "kick in the guts". On 19 May the Premier told ABC Radio listeners, "We won't sit by and let Canberra slash billions from our budgets." It is now 19 June and we can see that just like his approach to infrastructure, the Premier is all talk and no action. Last Tuesday the Premier produced a budget that let Tony Abbott get away with his cuts. Never before has New South Wales seen such a craven capitulation to the Commonwealth. It is clear that the Premier does not have the guts to stand up to his mate Tony Abbott.

Tuesday's budget did not just lock in Tony Abbott's cuts to our hospitals but it also cemented the fourth chapter of the Premier's own \$3 billion cuts to our health system. During the past three years I have travelled across New South Wales and seen these cuts hurting real people. We are seeing communities lose access to health care. An entire ward was closed at the Prince of Wales Hospital and the cardiac unit was shut down at Mount Druitt Hospital in a region with one of our State's highest incidence of stroke and diabetes. Just this month Minister Skinner's own figures show that major Sydney hospitals like Liverpool, Campbelltown and Westmead continue to badly underperform the National Emergency Access Targets. Patients are not being treated within safe time frames, despite the fact they are turning up with chest pain, trauma or severe burns.

It is the same story right across New South Wales—from bed closures at Bathurst, to the crisis in emergency departments at Wyong and Gosford. The Baird Government should be deeply ashamed that today 72,000 patients across New South Wales are suffering in pain with a 4 per cent increase in the elective surgery wait list. Our waiting times for elective surgery are the longest on mainland Australia. A child who needs their tonsils removed will wait nearly eight months in New South Wales compared to three months in Victoria and two months in Queensland. It is quicker to get a hip replacement in Estonia than it is in Fairfield.

Last week the New South Wales head of the Australian Medical Association said that in light of Tony Abbott's cuts anything less than \$1.4 billion extra for hospitals in the Baird budget would cause massive strain across our hospital emergency departments. Yet on Tuesday the Premier's failure to stand up to Canberra left patients and hospitals in New South Wales short of funding by a whopping half a billion dollars. Fixing the nightmare in New South Wales hospitals will require more than the spin of the Minister for Health. Earlier this month, Labor committed \$300 million for a major rebuild of St George Hospital with funds for extra capacity and a new intensive care unit.

The Government's budget talked big about hospital redevelopments at Westmead and St George, but if we peel back the curtain those hospitals were only allocated scraps of money for planning. Even if the Government comes to the table with funding for more than just planning, the budget shows these upgrades will not be finished until 2021. In other words, patients will have to elect the Premier for two more terms before anything changes at either of those hospitals. Worst of all, the Liberal funding cuts are starving our hospitals of staff, the people who make our health system work—doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, social workers and allied health professionals. Thanks to the Abbott-Baird cuts the Liberals might get around to eventually refurbishing our hospitals, but they will never be able to staff them.

Last Tuesday's budget also means that the Liberal Party betrayal on school funding is now complete. They promised parents in New South Wales they were on a unity ticket with Labor, but Tony Abbott and Christopher Pyne lied. They tore up the Gonski agreement signed between New South Wales and the Commonwealth and ripped out billions of dollars from our school system while the Premier stood silent on the sidelines, too timid to take on his mate Tony Abbott. As a result of the Premier's capitulation to Canberra, the Gonski reforms are all but dead. The New South Wales Government is abandoning migrant communities—cutting and running from its responsibility to provide statewide English as a second language program.

The Government has no plan to lift year 12 retention rates from 70 per cent and no plan to create modern facilities for the exploding numbers of pupils in our schools, leaving a generation to be educated in

demountable classrooms. It is to this Government's shame that Tuesday's budget cut a further \$20 million from school capital works. After four Liberal budgets in New South Wales it is clear that the Premier is no antidote to Tony Abbott. In fact, when he was Treasurer he perfected the model that Tony Abbott has made his own: Invent a fake budget crisis to justify massive cuts to the public service. The former New South Wales Labor Government delivered 15 out of 16 budget surpluses and left the State budget in a healthy condition with a triple-A credit rating from all three rating agencies.

Yet from the start Mike Baird has tried to use his claim of a budget black hole to drive his ideological reforms, a claim that was completely discredited by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office. While Barry O'Farrell noted that New South Wales needed more people delivering front-line services not fewer, it was Mike Baird as Treasurer who insisted that 15,000 of them be sacked. It was Mike Baird who delivered real wages cuts to our nurses, teachers, police and firefighters and it was Mike Baird who was the brainchild of the Government's cuts to workers compensation.

It is exactly two years today since these vicious changes were rammed through this Parliament. We have now learned from a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers that the workers compensation scheme was solvent and that the Government's case for ripping up the safety net was based on a lie. Mike Baird seized on a temporary blip in the scheme caused by the global financial crisis in order to slash support for people with ongoing injuries, hearing impairments and amputated limbs. Instead of supporting them back into work, he has just handed them a lifetime of pain and a lifetime of bills. A Robertson Labor government will scrap the heartless changes by the Liberals and restore fairness to the workers compensation system. In the end, I believe the ideology behind Tony Abbott's budget is no different to Mike Baird's four budgets. It is the Liberals' ideology that sees people as little more than economic units.

According to this view, having a fair workplace, or an accessible health or education system is not an investment in a person's ability to contribute to society or to lead a happy life. It is simply a cost and a burden. For three long years the Liberals have starved our system of child protection. On Tuesday the Government failed its duty to recruit extra caseworkers to fill the crippling staff shortages its cuts have caused in regions like the North Coast and Western Sydney. It plans to give caseworkers iPads instead of delivering extra staff. It is only a Liberal Government, completely out of touch with people's lives, that could cut funding from specialist women's refuges in Sydney. This Government's changes will cause at least 80 homelessness services to close and in the bitter cold of winter this will leave women who have suffered rape and domestic violence with nowhere to turn.

Perhaps the biggest insult to the people of New South Wales is the Government's claim that all the pain over the past four years has somehow been in service of a greater cause. Let us be real. Other than cuts and privatisation, what is the sum total of Mike Baird's delivery for New South Wales? After four budgets the results are in, and they are embarrassing. They have promised the world on infrastructure but the trouble is it is all a mirage. The Government still has not begun construction on any of its signature projects. We have had 48 media releases on the North West Rail Link but no real work has started. Even the M4 East or the M5 East duplication projects—which the Liberals promised to start construction on in this term of government—are still sitting on the drawing board, with no construction work commenced. They have wasted the last three years on reviews and inaction. They have turned out plans and studies. They have employed an army of consultants. They have probably produced more animations than Walt Disney and Pixar combined.

The Premier can talk all day about a WestConnex, a NorthConnex, a SouthConnex, even an EastConnex—all people see is a DisConnex. Meanwhile the cost of the WestConnex has blown out by \$3.4 billion because of two years of inaction by those opposite. The more Mike Baird talks about WestConnex the further away it gets. Mike Baird is happy to pretend that he is building something like a new M9 or a new F6 when all he is doing is buttering up consultants with feasibility studies and planning money. In Tuesday's budget Mike Baird unfurled a whopping 69 feasibility studies. Let us call this for what it is—\$700 million worth of paperwork that he would use to masquerade as bitumen, bricks and mortar. Ross Gittins said it best on Tuesday when he stated:

I'd be wary of gaining the impression that work on your favourite project will start next week.

[Interruption]

Is that how much you are offering to keep your seat, member for Murray-Darling? I am told it is for his seat and Kevin Conolly's seat as well. Is that how much you found in the slush fund?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! There is too much audible conversation coming from both sides of the Chamber. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: They may well try to mock to distract from their shame and their embarrassment, but that will not help them. While Barry O'Farrell never accepted the proposition that selling poles and wires was necessary to build infrastructure, his replacement as Premier is holding a gun to everybody's head. Let me be clear: Labor's view is unequivocal. Selling off the poles and wires is a dud deal for New South Wales. It means more expensive power bills for consumers. One need only look at South Australia, whose privatised network charges are the highest in the country. This plan to sell off is also woefully short term. One does not need to be a genius to realise how silly it is to privatise an asset that provides an annual income stream of more than \$1 billion a year, money our State desperately needs to fund our schools and hospitals.

Over the past fortnight the Premier has promised tens of billions of dollars on fantasy projects. Privatising the poles and wires will net him a fraction of that and there is no guarantee the people of New South Wales will ever see the benefits. The people of the Hunter will be lucky to see a third of the proceeds of the Newcastle port privatisation and the sale of Port Kembla left the Illawarra with almost nothing at all. In recent days The Nationals have rolled over on electricity privatisation to their puppet masters in Sydney. Their only fig leaf is the distant promise of projects in country New South Wales that do not even have names and no guarantee on how the funds will be administered.

It is increasingly clear that Mike Baird is improvising his poles and wires plan on the back of a napkin or a beer coaster. Already UBS has called him out for overstating the sale price by \$2 billion. There is a reason Mike Baird is only offering feasibility studies instead of real projects. It is because deep in his heart—and yes, I think he has one—he knows he cannot pay for them. Privatisation is nothing but a magic pudding. He has already privatised \$10 billion worth of public assets but infrastructure spending has gone down under this Government. There is no real money at the end of the day, just higher prices and cuts to services. But over the next nine months Mike Baird will use billions of dollars of mythical privatisation money as a marginal seats slush fund and he will be armed with glossy brochures of unfunded projects that probably will never see the light of day.

Labor has a different vision for New South Wales to the Baird Liberal Government. On Tuesday we heard a lot about planning, a lot about feasibility studies and a lot about consultants' reports. We heard a lot about State finances and making cuts to reduce expenditure. But we did not hear very much about people. The Liberal governments of Mike Baird and Tony Abbott have both forgotten people. They have forgotten what it is like to struggle to pay the bills, the anxiety of a young person about to graduate from school or someone who has just been made redundant. Over the past three years unemployment in New South Wales has risen from 5 per cent to 5.7 per cent. There are 31,000 more unemployed people than there were three years ago.

The picture is particularly bleak when you look at youth unemployment. It is unacceptably high in parts of Western Sydney, such as Parramatta at 16.8 per cent. If you consider particular regions, south-west Sydney has a 9.5 per cent unemployment rate; New England is 9.2 per cent; Murray-Darling is 8.1 per cent; and the Hunter Valley is 8 per cent. In recent months not a corner of New South Wales has been spared from mass job losses. At Electrolux in Orange 544 jobs are going, 110 jobs went at Simplot and 100 at Downer EDI in Bathurst. Scores more are going at Kellogg's, UGL, Alcoa and Sensis; and the list goes on.

The policies coming out of Sydney and Canberra are destroying people's faith that they can find a job. The risk we face in New South Wales is entrenching a whole new group of young or mature-aged disenfranchised job seekers, thereby locking them into a future of poverty or welfare reliance with the associated increased risk of crime, suicide or mental illness. Tony Abbott has fired the starter's gun with his cruel cuts to Newstart that deny people the ability to pay for rent or food while they seek out a job. There is no two ways about it, the decision to allow universities to charge unlimited course fees with a rapidly compounding interest rate is an out and out atrocity that will put a degree out of reach for generations of people to come.

New South Wales desperately needs a Premier prepared to speak out against these policies. But in New South Wales Mike Baird is kicking the Abbott agenda along with his appalling cuts and fee increases at TAFE. Next year, under the Liberals, New South Wales will move to a market-based vocational training system, the same approach that has shattered a once great system in Victoria. Mike Baird has a vision for TAFE that will see it run as a business rather than a public service, and I would not put it past him to one day sell it off. The Government is forcing TAFE to compete with private providers and is cutting away the extra support provided to disadvantaged students—\$800 million in funding has been slashed and more than 700 teachers have been sacked, with a further 375 jobs to go as a result of Tuesday's budget.

Key capital-intensive parts of the curriculum have been gutted including carpentry and metal fabrication courses from south-west Sydney TAFE, plumbing courses from Western Sydney TAFE, note-takers for hearing impaired students at Illawarra TAFE, welding and boiler-making courses cut at the Hunter and Central Coast TAFEs, and the Higher School Certificate [HSC] syllabus eliminated at the Hunter and the Riverina TAFEs. It is also an ominous sign that the Baird budget projects 23,000 fewer students will be enrolled in TAFE next year. The flag has gone up.

As of January 2015, the Liberals will begin pricing students out of training. To learn at TAFE, or one of the new private providers, students will face unconscionable fees of up to \$4,000 for basic certificates—40 per cent of students will pay between \$500 and \$1,500 extra for courses; apprentices will pay \$2,000 for a course, up from \$500 a year; a two-year diploma of electrical engineering currently costs \$3,038, but under Mike Baird's new system, the same course will cost \$8,190; a certificate III non-apprentice bricklayer course currently costs students \$838, but as of 1 January 2015 it will cost \$3,550.

One of the longstanding features of TAFE is its charter to cater for indigenous youth and people with disabilities, the groups who require more individualised attention and are more expensive to service. Under the profit-based system that those opposite want to introduce their needs will not be prioritised. Whether it is increases to TAFE and university fees, or the ridiculous changes to Newstart, Liberal governments in Sydney and Canberra are ganging up on our young people and we will not stand for it. Today I can announce that if elected to government, Labor will abolish the Baird Government's massive fee hikes to TAFE courses, which are due to take effect on 1 January 2015.

Labor will cap TAFE fees at current 2014 levels and increases will not go beyond the Consumer Price Index [CPI]. Labor will always treat TAFE as a central part of our public education system and we will never try to run it as a business. We will stop the mass sackings, cuts to courses and the massive fee increases to ensure we have a fair and affordable vocational education and training system in New South Wales. There is no more urgent challenge for New South Wales than equipping our workforce with the skills needed for tomorrow. That is why a future Labor government commits today to a landmark review in New South Wales of education and training after year 10. That review will be conducted by a pre-eminent expert. Labor seeks an action plan for a better system, one every bit as iconic as the McGaw review of the Higher School Certificate or the Gonski review of school funding.

The plan will focus on how we can improve vocational education to support the needs of young people leaving school. It will consider the adequacy of the HSC curriculum in meeting the needs of young people who pursue vocational education or enter directly into the workforce. It will recommend productive new pathways between TAFE, businesses and schools. Make no mistake, Labor believes that the Abbott-Baird fixation with cutting back on skills and education is a false economy. The jobs of the twenty-first century will not follow low wages and conditions, they will go to people who display knowledge and creativity and those capable of delivering productivity enhancements and medical breakthroughs. That is why in the twenty-first century the best economic policy that I believe a government can have is an education policy.

The correct role of government is not to reduce school funding, it is not to deregulate universities and it is not to smash TAFE, it is to gold-plate our education system into a world leader that ensures everyone in our society has the chance to learn. That is why I have announced that we will commit to delivering a fair and affordable vocational education and training system in New South Wales. That is why I have committed to establish a jobs commissioner to provide oversight of the training market and ensure the skills profile of our State is matched to emerging job opportunities. That is why Labor will fund an additional 800 scholarships for talented students wanting to train as teachers in secondary maths and science. And that is why Labor will create a dedicated fund to reskill workers and allow regional industries to access a pool of capital to cope with the slowdown in the resources boom and the high Australian dollar.

Something precious has been lost in New South Wales over the past three years and across our nation over the past nine months. If a cold-hearted focus on the budget bottom line over human happiness were all that mattered we would leave the running of our State to Mike Baird and all the other investment bankers. If the only way to get better health and education outcomes was for Government to vacate the field and shift more of the burden onto the most vulnerable, then maybe the Liberal Premier and Prime Minister would be onto something. But it is not.

Labor's vision extends beyond balancing the budget. Labor's vision extends to delivering a stronger, better and fairer society. We do not believe in privatised hospitals. We do not believe in privatising TAFE. We do not believe in deregulated university fees and taxing people for seeing their doctor. Labor's vision will never stand for cutting money to the most disadvantaged schools. Labor policies are rooted in values more profound

than anything Tony Abbott and Mike Baird could ever understand: That there is an inherent dignity to every person's aspirations for better education, better health and a better standard of life and that nobody in society deserves to be forgotten.

On Tuesday Mike Baird delivered a budget in which the dollars for infrastructure were a mirage but the cuts to services were real. He forgot our families; he forgot our pensioners; he forgot our patients in our hospitals. In the cruellest blow of all, in a budget address that failed to mention youth unemployment, he forgot to give our young people hope. New South Wales Labor will fight the Baird budget just as fiercely as it will fight the Abbott budget. We will work towards delivering a government in New South Wales that puts people front and centre, that puts people first.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Andrew Constance agreed to:

That these bills be now read a third time.

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

VISITORS

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): I acknowledge the presence in the gallery high school students who are participating in the Secondary Schools Leadership Program conducted by the Parliamentary Education Unit. I also acknowledge a group of gentlemen from the Lake Macquarie Old Blokes. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. You have just witnessed the Leader of the Opposition's contribution to the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, colloquially known as the budget in reply speech. Enjoy your time here.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2014-15

Motion by Mr Andrew Constance agreed to:

That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for 2014-15.

Pursuant to resolution debate adjourned and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by Mr Anthony Roberts agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit the resumption forthwith of the debate on the Health Services Amendment (Guaranteeing Free Public Hospital Services) Bill, with precedence of all other general business.

HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (GUARANTEEING FREE HOSPITAL SERVICES) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

[Extension of time agreed to.]

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.36 a.m.]: The rate of billing is very complex, and that is why I spent so much time dealing with it when I spoke earlier on this bill. The Medicare Act has never

allowed hospitals to charge or bulk-bill non-referred patients. To bulk-bill in an outpatients department requires a named referral to a specialist. Hospitals cannot bill non-referred patients and that is why they cannot bill for services in emergency departments and in general practices. That cannot be done under the Medicare agreement and this bill ensures that it can never happen. It has been introduced to prevent this Minister, but also subsequent Ministers because none of us is immortal, from introducing a co-payment for services that are now provided free of charge. Those services include general practice services if they are conducted in hospitals or emergency departments.

As the Minister well knows, the general practice services provided at hospitals are not run by the hospitals. They are run by the Medicare Locals that are soon to be abolished by the Federal Government. Having general practitioners based in emergency departments has been trialled in the past. An experiment was conducted at Westmead Hospital in the 1980s involving nurses triaging patients as general practice patients or emergency department patients. That process had to be abandoned simply because it cannot be determined when someone presents at an emergency department exactly how sick they are; it cannot be done. They can be stratified into triage ranks, which will determine whether they are more or less likely to be sick, but it is not an illness severity score and it never has been. The Federal Minister for Health does not understand that and has said that hospitals will be able to charge for those services.

It is clear that the only thing stopping our hospitals charging for services now is the fact that the current State Minister does not allow it. That does not mean that the next Minister will do likewise; in fact, the next Minister will be encouraged or even forced by the Federal Government to charge for these services. These vital services are not simply general practitioner services; X-ray and pathology services are also being provided. The X-ray and pathology departments in many hospitals will also be affected. Nationals members should be aware of that because it will have an impact in rural hospitals because out-of-hours X-rays are done at those hospitals. This bill will prevent a charge being imposed for those services. Members should remember that there is no legislation preventing Minister Skinner's replacement from introducing enabling legislation.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: I am not going anywhere, mate.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I note the interjection from Minister Skinner that she is immortal. She does run one of the world's better health systems, but I think immortality is beyond even her. This bill is designed to protect public health and safety. If a general practitioner co-payment is introduced in New South Wales we will inevitably have a run on emergency departments by people who need care. This bill will prevent this Minister and future Ministers introducing a co-payment for emergency department services. One of the other reasons that the Minister has not said she will impose a co-payment is that it is probably impossible to collect. Hospitals would need to have cashier services available 24 hours a day seven days a week.

The fee cannot be collected by emergency department staff because of the risks involved. Not only is the Minister claiming virtue for not imposing a co-payment, she and everyone else knows that it could not be done easily. This legislation is necessary because some of the larger hospitals with greater economies of scale have the potential to impose a charge in the future. This bill is all about protecting public health and safety. I advise the school students in the gallery that, on principle, the Minister will oppose any bill introduced by the Opposition because that is her job. She will not support any Opposition bill no matter how good it is. If it is a good idea, she will introduce a similar bill at some time in the future.

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

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

ORTHOPTICS

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.39 a.m.]: I seek leave to amend Private Members' Business item No. 2850 in the Order of Precedence for today of which I have given notice.

Leave granted.

Accordingly, I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the vital role that orthoptists play in providing efficient and effective health care.
- (2) Commends the University of Technology, Sydney, on its decision to create a Masters of Orthoptics course which will train 30 orthoptists each year.

- (3) Notes that no other university in New South Wales will now offer a qualification in orthoptics despite the growing need for orthoptists.
- (4) Calls on the Minister for Health to ensure adequate clinical placements are provided for these students.

My motion is critical of the University of Sydney for ending enrolments for a masters degree in a specialty called orthoptics. The University of Sydney was training about 30 orthoptics per year. The motion also calls for the Minister for Health to meet with Orthoptics Australia with a view to preventing a critical shortfall of orthoptists in New South Wales. I expect that the member opposite in reply to my motion will indicate whether that meeting occurred. Very few people know what orthoptists do. That is a shame, because you cannot run an eye clinic without an orthoptist. Orthoptists measure visual acuity, our ability to see.

Orthoptics measure whether visual fields are full or whether there is any defect in a person's peripheral vision, such as happens with glaucoma. They measure eye movements to see if there is any paralysis to the nerves that move the eye. They test all ages, from little babies of four weeks old. They are able to tell whether a baby has a major problem with vision. They are also able to test people who have had strokes or older Australians with glaucoma or who have had a stroke. For example, with glaucoma it is vital that people see an orthoptist because they will get tunnel vision. Tunnel vision is not uncommon in my opponents, by the way. If you have tunnel vision you do not realise you have lost your peripheral vision. Orthoptists play a vital role in detecting this.

Orthoptists work in most clinics in New South Wales. When people see an ophthalmologist in a public hospital, especially a children's hospital, they will see an orthoptist to measure visual acuity and the pressure in their eyes. If they have had a stroke their visual fields will be checked to make sure they have peripheral vision. This is vital because ophthalmologists cannot do their job without this very careful measuring of visual acuity. An eye clinic cannot run without orthoptists, but there is a shortage of orthoptists. We train only about 30 orthoptists a year. I strongly recommend a career in orthoptics, a vital part of the health industry.

Earlier this year the University of Sydney stopped training orthoptists. The University of Sydney should hang its head in shame for doing so. Every university should train professionals for the community. The university cut orthoptics for the simple reason that they were said not to be doing enough research. For that reason, this sandstone university threw out this course. That was a disgraceful day in the history of the University of Sydney, and the university should never be forgiven for this. Our community needs university-trained orthoptists. Fortunately, the University of Technology, Sydney has saved the people of New South Wales from preventable hardship. The University of Technology, Sydney has created a Masters of Orthoptics course, which means we will now get the 30 orthoptists we have to have to run every eye clinic, private and public, in New South Wales. It is much harder and more expensive to run an eye clinic without orthoptists.

The motion also calls on the Minister for Health to ensure adequate clinical placements are provided for these students. As with most health professions—nursing, social work, occupational therapy and medicine—some of the training is done as a quasi-apprenticeship in the hospital system. Orthoptists are no different. Orthoptists need to access the public hospital system for their training. They are very welcome in the public hospital system. This motion calls on the Minister for Health to ensure that these placements continue. Orthoptists are currently often trained very well in the public hospital system. The future of health care is in the multidisciplinary training of clinicians. When students enter any health profession, some of the training—especially in the first few years—will be with one of the other health specialties. That is how clinicians interact, so clinical placements in the hospital system are vital for orthoptists. The Minister for Health will have prepared a reply, which I think is to be given by the member for Blue Mountains. Is that right?

Mrs Roza Sage: I will give my own reply, thank you.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: In that reply, I hope she will indicate whether they will support the motion and continue to ensure that there are adequate orthoptics positions in clinical placements in New South Wales. Thank God for the University of Technology, Sydney; shame on the University of Sydney. We need to ensure that our future orthoptists are properly trained. That is the partial responsibility of the New South Wales health system and the Minister for Health. These orthoptists are valuable to the New South Wales health system and their future training is vital. I hope to hear that their future training is assured for many years.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [11.45 a.m.]: I speak to the motion that the shadow Minister for Health changed at the last minute, because he did not realise that the course that the University of Sydney was

axing had been taken over by the University of Technology, Sydney. That is a shame, because it took the gloss off all the wonderful things he said about orthoptics. Orthoptics comes from the Greek words *ortho*, meaning straight, and *optikus*, meaning vision. Orthoptists are allied health professionals who specialise in the study of ocular motility and visual development. Traditionally they focused on the management of patients with eye movement disorders such as strabismus, which is a squint, diplopia, which is double vision, and amblyopia, which is a lazy eye.

In the last several decades orthoptists in Australia have had an expanded role in the detection of eye disease, understanding and providing low-vision assessment and rehabilitation. As the member said, they are a very valuable part of the eye-care team. They have a role in the detection of diseases such as cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, age-related macular degeneration, systemic or neurological vision disorders and low vision. They also have a very important role assisting in the rehabilitation of the eyes following surgery. Orthoptists may work independently in conjunction with ophthalmologists or in a variety of multidisciplinary teams. I am sure members know ophthalmologists are eye specialists. Orthoptists work in a variety of settings including hospital outpatient departments, private ophthalmic practices, low-vision agencies, universities and research centres. They also work as part of rural health services in remote communities. Orthoptists predominantly work in a secondary eye healthcare capacity.

By the year 2020 the Australian population will have increased by something like 20 per cent. With this extended life expectancy it is estimated that the proportion of the population over the age of 65 will more than double. With an ageing population there will be an increase in the number of people with age-related eye diseases including cataracts, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration and retinopathy. It is predicted that one in five people will require cataract surgery over the next several years. A successful outcome of surgery depends on accurate measurements. Ophthalmology relies on the skills of orthoptists to provide these results. Australia was the first country to offer a university bachelor degree in orthoptics and Australia currently provides the only training of orthoptists in South-East Asia and New Zealand. As at June 2013, NSW Health employed 32 full-time equivalent orthoptists.

Currently, eight orthoptists are working at Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital, which is next door to this place. Over the past two years staff numbers have increased by 1.5 full-time equivalents to cater for the expanding workload. In the 2011-12 financial year the Orthoptic Department at Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital saw 10,000 patients compared with 7,000 patients in the previous year—a 43 per cent increase in activity. In February 2013 the NSW Ministry of Health was made aware that a decision had been made by the University of Sydney to cease offering the Master of Orthoptics course from 2014 due to low enrolments and the high cost of running the course, which is a little bit different from what the member for Macquarie Fields said. This decision would have left La Trobe University in Victoria as the sole provider for orthoptics training in Australia.

I bring to the attention of the member for Macquarie Fields that in April 2014 the University of Technology, Sydney announced that it will be providing the Master of Orthoptics course previously offered by the University of Sydney. The University of Technology, Sydney anticipates that the first intake of students for this course will be in 2015. We are now debating an amended motion that the member for Macquarie Fields changed at the last minute because, clearly, he was not aware that the University of Technology, Sydney will now offer the course. Between the University of Sydney and La Trobe University there were approximately 60 new graduates a year.

Currently La Trobe offers postgraduate courses, including a graduate-entry Master of Orthoptics and diplomas in health research methodology, orthoptic studies and orientation and mobility. It is hoped that the University of Technology, Sydney will maintain those figures. There is an ongoing need for a workforce in the area of orthoptics and we are pleased that the University of Technology, Sydney will be providing a program in New South Wales to train these health professionals. In my research, surprisingly, I found that orthoptics is not a registered profession under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. Orthoptics has voluntary registration through the Australian Orthoptic Board.

The Australian Orthoptic Board regulates the profession of orthoptics and holds a register of suitably qualified orthoptists. It is a separate entity from Orthoptics Australia and is a sort of collective that looks after the profession and ensures that professional standards are upheld by establishing regulations and standards for all orthoptists. While registration with the Australian Orthoptics Board is not compulsory in order to practice, orthoptists are required to register with the board, according to legislation, regarding the practice of refraction,

the prescribing of optical lenses and ultrasonography. Orthoptists are a very important part of our eye healthcare team and it is very pleasing to see that the University of Technology, Sydney will be continuing the masters course that the University of Sydney had regrettably closed.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [11.52 a.m.]: It is fantastic to see that the lights turned on for the member for Macquarie Fields about half an hour ago. The University of Technology, Sydney said some time ago that it would offer the course after the University of Sydney had said it was going to close it. The member for Macquarie Fields amended the motion 30 minutes ago, which shows that the member for Macquarie Fields is certainly not on the ball.

Orthoptists are allied health professionals who work closely with ophthalmologists and they are essential members of the eye healthcare team. They specialise in disorders of the eye and the visual system and have an important role assisting in the rehabilitation of eyes following surgery. Orthoptists also provide services to children with sight difficulties or impairment and adults with a range of chronic conditions including diabetes. Orthoptists are eye therapists who focus on optimal outcomes for individuals with eye and vision conditions. A registered orthoptist is educated in all aspects of ocular function and dysfunction. The modern orthoptist practises in many areas, including specialist eye clinics, public hospitals with ophthalmic surgeons, rehabilitation centres, low vision centres and eye and vision research centres.

The difference between an orthoptist and an optometrist is that an orthoptist specialises in the evaluation and nonsurgical treatment of visual disorders caused by imbalance of the eye muscles, such as crossed eyes or squint and lazy eye. An optometrist is a primary care practitioner who examines eyes, gives advice on visual problems and prescribes and fits glasses or contact lenses. If eye disease is detected, an optometrist will generally refer patients to a specialist for further management. An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor who has undertaken additional specialist training in the diagnosis and management of disorders of the eye and visual system.

Currently, eight orthoptists are working at Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital, which is next door to this place. The member for Macquarie Fields is the vice-president of the NSW Parliamentary Lions Club, which raised a significant amount of money last year and purchased a very important piece of diagnostic equipment at a cost of \$134,000. I congratulate the member for Macquarie Fields on being a member of the Lions Club and being part of the very successful club that raised money for that cause. The NSW Parliamentary Lions Club also sponsored the Sydney Eye Hospital on its charter with a new Lions Club at the hospital, which automatically had more than 40 doctors as members. They should not have trouble raising funds to purchase equipment in the future. It is great that the NSW Parliamentary Lions Club can be part of that.

As has been stated, the University of Sydney decided that it would withdraw the Master of Orthoptics course and the University of Technology, Sydney has announced that it will take up the program. The University of Technology, Sydney anticipates that the first intake of students for the course will be in 2015. Between the University of Sydney and La Trobe University there were approximately 60 new graduates a year. Hopefully the University of Technology, Sydney will be able to continue to graduate that number. I congratulate the Minister for Health on working with the University of Technology, Sydney and making this happen.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.56 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Myall Lakes for their contributions to this debate. It is great to see the Lake Macquarie Old Blokes in the gallery. They are incredibly welcome. Most of them would at some stage have seen an orthoptist, even though they may not have known it, because orthoptists often work with ophthalmologists and the people who check the absolutely vital things that people need, such as the ability to see and the ability to move their eyes, and if a person had health problems they would have seen an orthoptist. They are the quiet achievers of the health system.

We cannot run a health system without orthoptists and the University of Technology, Sydney should be congratulated on its decision to take over the course. The University of Sydney had sufficient applicants for its orthoptics course but it cut the course because of the lack of research and because of the small number of students—not a small number of people interested in being orthoptists but a small number of students to teach. That is why the University of Sydney cut the course. I very much look forward to the future training of orthoptists and the further contribution that they will make in the New South Wales health system and in private practice for many years to come. We will have increased demand. The member for Blue Mountains spoke about

the increased activity. That increased activity and the increased need for orthoptists will continue. Their future is secure for the moment. It is for the University of Technology, Sydney to do its teaching and the New South Wales health system to train these orthoptists for future years. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

MINGYUE LAY TEMPLE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.01 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 Australian Chinese Buddhist Society's Mingyue Lay Temple.
- (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 Mingyue Lay Temple.

The former Federal Labor Government announced a \$4.55 million funding package for community organisations throughout Australia in 2013. This funding was to be in the form of a one-off grant which was broken up into two categories. The first category was available for support equipment and non-fixed infrastructure projects. Under this band, equipment such as printers, photocopiers, furniture, telephones, sporting equipment and computers were able to be purchased. Applications that fell under this category would be eligible to receive between \$1,000 and \$10,000 to support the community organisations. The second category was for larger capital works and non-fixed infrastructure, such as community halls, multicultural hubs and meeting rooms which would be part of a public building.

Applications that fell under this category would be eligible for up to \$150,000 in funding and that is what the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society applied for and was successful in doing so. The Australian Chinese Buddhist Society proposed to build a new community hall at the Mingyue Lay Temple in Bonnyrigg, which facilitates the needs of Buddhists and non-Buddhists who come from near and far to visit the Mingyue Lay Temple. As of the 2011 census data, the Fairfield local government area had nine times the number of Buddhists in the area than the Australian national average. That is approximately 40,000 residents in the Fairfield local government area who are Buddhist. As members can see, amongst a multiculturally diverse local government area Buddhists make up a large proportion of it and they are in desperate need of resources to facilitate the community's needs in our local area.

The Mingyue Lay Temple hosts a number of large events and festivals each year, which draw in enormous crowds to celebrate the festivities and to congregate for community events. The Mingyue Lay Temple has been committed to providing top-notch community services since it opened its doors in 1990, and is viewed as one of the great sites in the Fairfield area. Much like other community organisations across Australia, the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society was devastated to hear that the Abbott Government decided to withdraw any offers of funding. The Abbott Government's decision to pull \$150,000 from the Mingyue Lay Temple is nothing but a slap in the face to the Buddhist community in Fairfield.

The Mingyue Lay Temple is a community organisation that continuously gives back to the community and welcomes everyone and anyone through its doors. Members of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society are always the first to reach into their pockets in times of flood, fire, hardship and any form of disaster. Their charity is not confined to the local area. The Australian Chinese Buddhist Society also donates generously to relief efforts nationally and overseas. The society is an integral part of the Fairfield community and it is being neglected by the Abbott Government. As we know, when the Abbott Liberal Government decimates funding to community organisations across the State, members opposite are nowhere to be found. They have failed to stand up to the Abbott Government and they have failed community organisations across New South Wales.

Where was the Minister for Citizenship and Communities when community organisations across the State were crying out for assistance upon having their grant money rescinded? I hear that he was out belly dancing and enjoying the festivities elsewhere, because that it all the Minister believes he needs to do in order to

look after multicultural communities throughout New South Wales. The Minister does not understand that in order to represent multicultural communities throughout the State he needs—I stress "needs"—to stand up and take the fight to his colleagues and tell them that this is not right. The Minister needs to inform his colleagues that the multicultural communities across New South Wales deserve better. They deserve a government that is committed to providing funding and the services they require so that they may facilitate the needs of the residents of New South Wales.

It is those non-government community organisations that provide the backbone to our local multiculturalism communities. Without adequate support, our local communities are forced to go without. The Abbott Government's decision to withdraw funding to the Mingyue Lay Temple is depriving our local area of additional facilities they require. Members of the local area, as well as community organisations, have written to their Federal members to express their concern, which is echoed throughout the community. The residents of Fairfield are not happy that this funding has been taken away from community organisations, which are there to support and service the needs of residents in the local area.

I call on the members of this House to support this motion as the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society deserves much better from the Abbott Government. Members of this House need to rally and support community groups across New South Wales and stop pushing aside such important issues because they are "Federal problems". These communities deserve better. They are wonderful people. As the member for Cabramatta will attest, the people in the Mingyue Lay Temple, who are in the Cabramatta electorate, work hard for not only their members but also members of the community. They are there to promote social cohesion and harmony. More importantly, they are there to facilitate interfaith dialogue within our community. It is a shame that members opposite do not support this motion.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [12.08 p.m.]: I am disappointed that the Labor member for Fairfield is responsible for a motion that is so misleading and so political in nature. It is evidence that the member for Fairfield does not really care about the people of Fairfield or New South Wales and that he is only interested in political gain. The member for Fairfield is again shifting responsibility, this time for the Mingyue Lay Temple, which is located in the electorate of Cabramatta. The Labor Party of New South Wales knows no bounds when it comes to lies and deception. It is brazen about the tattletales it broadcasts to the people of New South Wales. It is especially outrageous when it covers its own failures and lies with more failures and lies, and that is what precisely the member for Fairfield has done again today.

Mr Guy Zangari: Where's the lie?

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: The member for Fairfield should listen. The past week has been quite tantalising, watching the royal commission inquiry into unions was as entertaining as the State of Origin game. The Blues have ended an eight-year dominance by the Queenslanders.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: It has been tantalising—

Mr Guy Zangari: The member for Smithfield should resume his seat while I take my point of order. While we all acknowledge the Blues victory last night, that has nothing to do with the fact that the Mingyue Lay Temple has had \$150,000 ripped away from it. I ask you to draw the member for Smithfield back to the leave of the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order. It is a wide-ranging debate. The member for Smithfield has the call.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: How dare the member for Fairfield, his colleague the member for Cabramatta and Federal Labor attempt to colour themselves as the battlers for the people of this State. I remind the member for Fairfield of the saying, "People who live in glasshouses shouldn't throw stones". If the former Federal Labor Government cared so greatly for the people of Australia it would not have left us out in the cold with \$1 billion a month in interest payments. The Labor member for Cabramatta, Mr Nick Lalich, has some questions to answer. He travelled to Las Vegas to study the control of problem gambling.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 73. The member for Smithfield is seeking to impugn the reputation of the member for Cabramatta. He is not being relevant to the motion.

Mr Gareth Ward: To the point of order: This is the second time the member for Fairfield has attempted to waste the time of the member for Smithfield in an attempt to try to shut down his right to speak to this motion. I encourage you to stop him from doing so.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I advise members on both sides that I will ask the Clerk to stop the clock if further points of order are taken.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: If the member for Cabramatta were serious, I would understand why he went to Las Vegas. His electorate has a serious gambling problem. The member for Cabramatta could even be forgiven for spending more than \$16,000 of public money on the study tour.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Fairfield will have an opportunity to speak in reply to the motion. I suggest that he make notes rather than take points of order that are time wasting.

Mr Guy Zangari: The member for Smithfield is not being relevant. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association study tour that was taken by the member for Cabramatta has nothing to do with the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I note that some of the comments of the member for Smithfield were not relevant to the motion. I draw the member for Smithfield back to the leave of the motion.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: What is unforgivable is the little that the member for Cabramatta learned from his visit to London, Washington, New York, San Francisco and Las Vegas. I inform members of what the New South Wales taxpayers received for their \$16,000. To give just one example, in San Francisco the member for Cabramatta met with Ed Carew from the North Beach Police Precinct. Officer Carew informed the member for Cabramatta that crime within his precinct was fairly well under control. I am very pleased that crime in the North Beach Police Precinct is under control. But the problem for New South Wales taxpayers is that the member for Cabramatta did not provide an analysis as to why crime is under control there. There are no details about their policing strategy and their sentencing laws and no pearls of wisdom for the Minister for Police to consider.

Mr Guy Zangari: This has nothing to do with the motion relating to the Mingyue Lay Temple. I suggest the member get another speech writer. This will be the last motion he ever speaks to. It is disgraceful.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: I will skip part of the member's study tour notes and go to more exciting parts. I note that radio broadcaster Chris Smith from 2GB, following a discussion on this matter, found a telephone number after three minutes of searching on Google—a telephone number that the member for Cabramatta could not find in four weeks. Chris Smith stated on air that:

... a very kind police officer put me through to the deputy commissioner because the commissioner was out.

When he was in Washington, the member for Cabramatta was informed that Congress was not in session due to the presidential election, leaving him unable to meet with a single member of the House. In London, the member for Cabramatta reported that he was dismayed to discover—

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76. The member for Smithfield is clearly speaking outside the leave of the motion, which relates to the Mingyue Lay Temple at Bonnyrigg and the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society. The comments of the member for Smithfield have nothing to do with the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I draw the member for Smithfield back to the leave of the motion.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: I seek an extension of time. [*Extension of time not agreed to.*]

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I move:

That the member be further heard, in accordance with the standing orders.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I will take advice from the Clerk.

Mr Guy Zangari: We do not agree to an extension of time. The member has not touched on the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Members will come to order. The motion of the member for Kiama is one that is generally moved when a member has been gagged. The member has not been gagged, his time for speaking has expired. I make the observation that motions are being used to slur members on the other side.

Mr Nick Lalich: That is what the member's total speech was.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I note the comment of the member for Cabramatta. Members will confine their remarks to the leave of the motion and cease attacking members on the other side of the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [12.15 p.m.]: I join my colleague the member for Fairfield in condemning the Abbott Government for failing to honour the funding commitment of \$150,000 to the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society's Mingyue Lay Temple. This temple is one of the largest Chinese Buddhist temples in the Southern Hemisphere. It is the centre of prayer and worship for thousands of Buddhists in Sydney. Since it was established in 1982 this temple has grown rapidly in size and in community. When it started the temple was housed in a small fibro building, which is now used as a cafeteria. Today the temple spans 16,000 square metres. It was opened in January 1990 and cost \$3 million, with most of the funding donated by the community.

The Mingyue Lay Temple is run by the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society under the leadership of Chairman James Chan, President Vincent Kong, Jensen Tran, Tony Trinh, Sen Huynh and others on the management committee. The temple is used not only by Buddhists from Chinese backgrounds but also by Vietnamese, Singaporean, Malaysian and Taiwanese. These days the temple is not only used for religious services, it has become a true community centre. I have had the wonderful privilege of going to the temple regularly for festivals, Chinese New Year celebrations and fundraising events. This temple is a very important community centre for people in my electorate. That is why we were gutted when the Abbott Government chose to abolish the Building Multicultural Communities Program and not honour the funding commitment to the Mingyue Lay Temple.

The Building Multicultural Communities Program provided funding to community organisations for new infrastructure, equipment and capital works that promote social inclusion and enhance multicultural community spaces. The \$150,000 funding from this program for the Mingyue Lay Temple would have been used to help build a new community hall. The hall would have helped to meet the needs of the growing Buddhist community not only in my area but also across Sydney. The project is now at risk. It is very disappointing that the Premier, the Minister for Western Sydney, the Minister for Citizenship and Communities and the member for Smithfield have failed to stand up to their Liberal Party colleagues and support our community. The member for Smithfield said this was a lie.

The lies are on his side: \$152,000 taken from the Bankstown Multicultural Youth Services and \$150,000 from Bankstown City Council. They are not doing their job, that is, to advocate in the best interests of the community. They should be ashamed. The Liberal Party continues to neglect the community of Western Sydney. 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 Mingyue Lay Buddhist Temple or make up the shortfall. The member for Smithfield spoke about my Commonwealth Parliamentary Association [CPA] trip. My CPA trip that he spoke about during this motion—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member is entitled to make a personal explanation at a later stage if he wishes.

Mr NICK LALICH: My CPA trip was approved by the Parliament and by the Presiding Officers. I gave them a program of my tour.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order—

Mr NICK LALICH: My study tour was approved by them. So for the member for Smithfield to rubbish my CPA trip—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Cabramatta has been given latitude, but he will refrain from speaking further in relation to a personal explanation. The member's remarks have been noted.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order: My point of order is relevance.

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

[Business interrupted.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I welcome to the Speaker's gallery the Consul General of India, Dr Sunjay Sudhir. On his visit to Parliament yesterday I invited him to the Coffs Harbour electorate, which has a very large Sikh community in Woolgoolga who contribute to the agricultural and horticultural growth of the area. I inform Dr Sudhir that Thursdays of a sitting week tend to be boisterous. I again welcome Dr Sudhir to the New South Wales Parliament.

MINGYUE LAY TEMPLE

[Business resumed.]

Mr NICK LALICH: Mr Assistant-Speaker, earlier you indicated that you would stop the clock when a point of order was taken. I had 22 seconds still to go when the member for Oatley took a point of order. I had not finished my speech.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member seemed to have concluded his speech and had started to make a personal explanation.

Mr NICK LALICH: You did not stop the member for Smithfield when he rubbished a member on this side for three or four minutes.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Cabramatta will not canvass my ruling.

Mr NICK LALICH: I am just bringing it to your attention, I am not challenging it.

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

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [12.22 p.m.]: I join with all members of this House in congratulating the Australian Buddhist community on its wonderful contribution to the Australian way of life. All Government members would appreciate the ways in which the Chinese Australian community and Australian Buddhist community add to the diversity of Australia. No-one is more concerned with the Australian Buddhist community and multiculturalism than Minister Dominello, who is much loved in the community. Whenever I attend community events he is always treated as royalty.

Mr Tony Issa: He is.

Dr GEOFF LEE: He is like royalty, as the member for Granville confirms. In June 2004 funding of close to \$30,000 under the Community Relations Commission grants was allocated to groups in the Fairfield and Cabramatta electorates as part of the Government's commitment to supporting multiculturalism. I, along with many Government members, thank the Federal Government for its support of the Australian Maronite community, a fantastic community, for the allocation of \$10 million to provide an aged care facility at Harris Park. The member for Granville is an outstanding community member and I compliment him on his leadership and support of the Maronite community in my electorate of Parramatta.

I draw the attention of the House to the Australian Buddhist community in my electorate, the Buddhist Lite International Association [BLIA] and President Francis Wong. That organisation has a temple in Harris Park, a temple at Hurstville in the electorate of Oatley and the large Nan Tien Temple at Wollongong, a fantastic temple—a place of serenity, a place for reflection and a place that does good work. Recently I attended the temple in relation to its youth leadership program, which teaches young people aged 12 to 20 years about Buddhism, their role in society and responsibility. I commend the nuns and Frances Wong of BLIA for their great work with youth, the elderly and the faith base and helping those in the community who need assistance.

I draw the attention of the House to the Nan Tien Institute, which will soon become a university. It will offer the first degrees in Australia in Buddhist studies. I commend them for that fantastic initiative. There is no better example of harmonious multiculturalism than Parramatta. Almost 50 per cent of our wonderful residents have chosen Parramatta as home. People from around the world have come to live in Parramatta. Indeed, that is reflected in the budget with the great funding announcement of \$400 million for light rail and Minister Skinner's announcement of an upgrade to Westmead Hospital, the largest upgrade in the last 35 years. That commitment is very welcome not just by the Australian Buddhist and multicultural communities but also by the entire community.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [12.26 p.m.]: I am pleased to make a brief contribution to this motion but at the outset indicate that I do not favour motions that seek to either congratulate or condemn individuals or past and current governments. However, I speak on the motion because the substance of this motion is one that warrants support. The Mingyue Lay Temple project is one of many projects in communities across the country left stranded as a result of the heartless decisions of the Federal Government. For a party that convinced the electorate prior to the last Federal election that there would be no surprises and no excuses, it seems inconceivable that projects that were promised and funded would subsequently be cancelled.

It suggests to me that the Federal Coalition has no commitment to our rich diversity and our multicultural communities. How else can one explain cuts to programs that help our diverse communities provide services and programs for their citizens? The Mingyue Lay Temple project submitted a detailed application and incurred costs associated with the submission. It sought and was approved funding of \$150,000 towards the organisation's service to the community. Upon winning the election, the Federal Liberal Government ripped up the agreement and cancelled the funding.

The Mingyue Lay Temple project is one of a number of projects that were left high and dry by this callous and heartless government. In my own community, many worthy organisations were also abandoned. The Metro Migrant Resource Centre will not get \$99,000 for equipment to fit out the small and emerging communities hub. The Arab Council of Australia applied for \$25,000 for library equipment and refurbishments to allow more than one group to use its facilities at the same time. The Korean Society of Sydney, another fantastic local community group, has lost the \$40,000 it was seeking to install a sound system in its hall. The Korean Society is very disappointed because up to 700 people use the hall and the lack of a sound system makes community events just that little bit harder. A cut of almost \$10,000 will deprive the Riverwood Community Centre of new chairs and a meeting table.

I have talked about the Riverwood Community Centre on a number of occasions, a great community neighbourhood centre in New South Wales that provides services to the elderly, mothers with children, victims of abuse, and basically anyone who comes knocking on the centre's door. The centre does all this work with little Government assistance but every now and then it needs a helping hand and the decision by the Federal Coalition Government to cancel \$10,000 for this centre is another disgrace and abuse. Other organisations that have lost out in the Lakemba electorate include: the Tripoli and Mena Association, which will be deprived of \$10,000; the Rangdhanu Aus Bangla Cultural Society, which has lost \$3,600; and the United Muslim Women's Association, a fantastic group, will lose \$150,000 because of this Government's decision to cancel this fantastic project.

This motion should be supported because it would be a disgrace for a Government to cancel programs that have been funded simply because they are spiteful and do not understand, respect or appreciate the cultural diversity of our community. This motion should be supported as a sign that all members of this House support community groups and charitable organisations that serve our diverse residents—so that they know we are here for them. This motion should be supported because a cut to the Building Multicultural Communities program undermines diversity and multiculturalism. Members should support this motion if they are genuinely concerned about these groups.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.30 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for Cabramatta, Lakemba and Parramatta for their contributions to this debate. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Smithfield. I acknowledge the member's contribution but I do not thank him for it because the member for Smithfield hardly touched on the substance of the motion. Further, he has raised an issue—

Mr Andrew Rohan: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The member cut my time by three minutes, which is why I could not speak to the issue.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order. I remind the member for Fairfield that condemning another member in a motion broadens the depth of the motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Really? Let us go down this path.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I advise the member for Fairfield to return to his response to the motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The member for Smithfield has gone down a very dangerous slope by including in the debate Commonwealth Parliamentary Association [CPA] trips.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I will not accept the point of order.

Mr Mark Coure: You haven't heard it yet.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I will not accept any points of order.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I am now responding to the contributions made by the members. The member for Smithfield is now going into uncharted waters with CPA trips, which should not be a matter of debate in this Chamber or this Parliament. The member for Smithfield did not speak about the Mingyue Lay Temple. The member for Cabramatta spoke about the history of the temple and acknowledged Vincent Kong, James Chan, Tony Trinh and Jenson Tran. The member for Cabramatta spoke of the Chinese New Year celebrations, the bathing of Buddha, the open days and the interfaith dialogue at the Mingyue Lay Temple.

The member for Lakemba mentioned that the Federal Government, just before it came into power, said that there would be no surprises and no excuses. That was the catch cry from the Abbott Liberal Government. The member for Lakemba spoke about the Mingyue Lay Temple at length. The member for Parramatta spoke and thanked the Chinese community. He thanked the Buddhist community and spoke about the Buddhist community in the Parramatta electorate. He touched upon the leave of the motion, unlike the member for Smithfield. The member for Smithfield lightly touched upon it, but then went on a personal attack against the member for Cabramatta, and that was not part of the motion.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order: My point of order is relevance.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Fairfield is responding to points made within the debate. I will take no further points of order on this issue.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I was rudely interrupted by the member for Oatley. The member for Oatley has a very large Chinese community in his electorate and he should be careful about taking any point of order on a motion that basically says that the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society has been duded by the Federal Coalition Government. For the member for Oatley to take a point of order during my contribution is fraught with danger.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Fairfield will resume his seat. There is a point of order before the Chair.

Mr Gareth Ward: The motion has nothing to do with the member for Oatley. A personal attack on the member for Fairfield or other members for political purposes is out of order.

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

Mr Nick Lalich: Point of order: Obviously the member for Kiama was not listening to the member for Smithfield's message this afternoon.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Time for debate has expired. Once again, I remind members that if they wish to attack another member then they should look at Standing Order 73, which states:

Imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on Members of either House are disorderly other than by substantive motion.

When notice of these motions is given I suggest that the clerks look more closely at them. Paragraph (3) of this motion seems to have a political overtone. It is an attack on the member for Smithfield; it condemns another member of the House. The motion states, "condemns the member for Smithfield for failing to challenge...". The motion should stick to the fact that the Federal Government has cut the program. Personal attacks in this Chamber on a Thursday morning are getting rather tedious.

Mr Andrew Gee: Very weary.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Very weary, as the member for Orange says. I also agree that reference to CPA trips is ludicrous, as the member for Mount Druitt knows.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 23

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

Noes, 54

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

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

VISITORS

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I welcome to the gallery Aaron Kearney and Ashleigh McIntyre from 1233 ABC Newcastle, who are guests of the members representing Hunter electorates.

SYDNEY ROYAL SHOWGIRL COMPETITION

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [12.42 p.m.]:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all 17 finalists in the Zone 4 final of the Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition.
- (2) Pays tribute to Northern Tablelands' showgirl representatives at the final: Jodie Saggars (Glen Innes); Courtney Sullivan (Moree); Jessica Grills (Guyra); Jessica York (Inverell); Elizabeth Jarvis (Tenterfield); Melissa O'Keefe (Warialda); Cecilia Oppenheimer (Walcha); and Ashee Doak (Bundarra).
- (3) Wishes Sarah Clift (Gunnedah) and Sally Newton (Walgett) all the very best at the Sydney Royal Easter Show in April as the Zone 4 finalists.

I had the great pleasure of attending the zone 4 final of the Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition with my good friend and colleague the member for Tamworth on Saturday 22 February 2014. The event was held in Barraba, which is in the electorate of Tamworth. It brought together showgirls from across the region from the electorates of Northern Tablelands, Tamworth and Barwon. More than 200 people attended the event to support their respective show societies. They included families, friends and visitors from Sydney. Seventeen showgirls from the region were judged during the day by a panel of three, with the eventual finalists, Sally Newton from Walgett and Sarah Clift from Gunnedah, announced by chief judge Tim Capp, the Vice President and Showgirl Coordinator of the Agricultural Societies Council.

Other towns represented were Bingara, Bundarra, Wee Waa, Barraba, Dorrigo, Moree, Warialda, Inverell, Quirindi, Walcha, Glen Innes, Tenterfield, Narrabri, Tamworth and mighty Guyra. Members, and particularly rural and regional members, would be aware that the showgirl competition is longstanding and steeped in tradition. It is all about supporting rural young women and giving them an opportunity to develop and grow as individuals. It also tests their general knowledge, their skills and their advocacy on behalf of rural New South Wales. It is an opportunity to promote young women as ambassadors for not only rural New South Wales but also the agricultural sector in general.

Finalists from all the zones then appear at the Sydney Royal Easter Show for the final judging. There were magnificent finalists from the Northern Tablelands electorate. Jodie Saggars was the Glen Innes Showgirl this year. She did a magnificent job representing her community at the finals. She attended Emerald Agricultural College and has a Diploma in Agriculture. Her goals are to study animal science, show her horse at National Cutting Horse Association Snafflebit Futurity and breed a cutting horse. She is a great ambassador for Glen Innes and the agricultural sector.

I had the great pleasure of meeting Jessica Grills from Guyra, who is 23 years old. She has completed a Certificate II and Certificate III in agriculture and wool classing at TAFE. She enjoys cooking and travelling, as well as various sporting activities. Her goal is to own a property and to breed better fine-wool sheep. Jessica's family have more than 50 associations with the Guyra Show. She is secretary of the Guyra Polo Club, and volunteered at the Guyra Lamb and Potato Festival. I can attest to the mountain of work she did at the Guyra Show, especially at the opening ceremony of the show.

Jessica York was the Inverell Showgirl. She is in her third year of studying for a Bachelor Science at the University of New England in Armidale. Her hobbies are horseriding, reading, baking, swimming and playing netball; and of course she has a love of animals. Her community involvement has included leading cattle at shows and participating in horse sports. She was also involved in Relay for Life. Elizabeth Jarvis from Tenterfield is 23 years old and a great local ambassador. Her sporting interests are equestrian and dressage. Her goal is to ride and excel in the Paint Horse Association of Australia National Championship Show.

Melissa O'Keefe was the Warialda Showgirl and did a great job at the finals. She spoke very confidently and proudly on behalf of her community and show society. She is studying a Bachelor of Technology Education specialising in food technology and textile design. She is a full-time external student of Southern Cross University. Cecilia Oppenheimer was the Walcha Showgirl. She is studying for a Bachelor of Arts and Teaching at the University of New England. She participated in the Walcha Show's cooking competition, based on the MasterChef challenge. Participants were given a box of ingredients and had a limited time to cook up something extraordinary. Her team was successful in that event. Cecilia is very outgoing and is involved in all areas of agriculture as well as hockey. She is an AUSTSWIM instructor. She coordinates the merino sheep section at the Walcha Show.

Amy Young from Bingara is 21 years old. She has just completed a Bachelor of Arts (Political Science) and will complete her Bachelor of Teaching this year. She has many sporting interests, including netball and rugby, and she enjoys watching the National Football League. Ashley Doak was the youngest finalist at just 18 years of age. She recently completed the Higher School Certificate at the New England Girls School in Armidale. She is a proud Bundarra resident from a strong stable of farming people. Her ambition is to complete her university education and this year she is attending the University of New England. She has a strong interest in assisting people either in health or education, particularly people with disabilities and those from a disadvantaged background.

The event was a fantastic showcase of the incredible young women we have in rural New South Wales. I commend all the finalists for being magnificent representatives of their show societies and their communities. We need to encourage young people, particularly young women, to take on leadership roles in communities. It is my fervent hope that the young women who were finalists will move into leadership positions in their communities and in rural New South Wales. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.49 p.m.]: I acknowledge the 17 finalists in the zone 4 finals of the Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition as detailed in the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands. The member's speech gave details of each of the people involved from the various towns listed in the motion. The aspect of this motion we should focus on is the fact that the showgirl competition is still very much part of rural show societies and other regional and rural entities, such as the Country Women's Association. These entities continue to promote women in agriculture and rural affairs, as well as traditional skills for which country women are famous.

As a former Minister for Agriculture I have had a lot to do with various country women's networks involved with the Rural Woman of the Year awards. During my term as Minister I was pleased that the first female member of the executive of the Department of Agriculture was appointed: Dr Helen Scott-Orr. She was appointed to the executive of the Department of Agriculture, the first woman to hold that position in the well over 100-year history of that organisation. Prior to that appointment, the first woman regional director of the Department of Agriculture was Ellen Howard, who came from the Tamworth area. She was the first woman regional director appointed in that male-dominated department. Since then women have been appointed to leading roles in primary industries departments.

I do not know the people named in the motion, although a few of the surnames are familiar to me as I visited those areas many times when I was Minister. One of the finalists was Jessica Grills, who is working in agriculture. We should use these competitions to show that there are careers for women in agriculture and in primary industries. I could easily make a political point about the numbers of agronomists employed by the department, but women are now being appointed to such positions. I have spoken to a number of female graduate agronomists who have been employed by the Department of Agriculture, now the Department of Primary Industries.

I recognise that, whilst the showgirl competition is very popular in various regions and it enjoys wide media coverage, the other side of this competition is the promotion of women and their skills in rural communities. It is a good opportunity to tell young women to become involved with the local showgirl competitions to show off their skills and training, especially from local colleges and universities, and that there is a strong future for rural women in all facets of country life. I support the motion.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.53 p.m.]: I support the good member for Northern Tablelands in this motion to congratulate the 17 finalists in the zone 4 finals of the Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition. I joined the member for Northern Tablelands and many others at the Barraba hall that wonderful evening. It highlighted that there are many good young people in our regions of New South Wales, not just in the Tamworth and Northern Tablelands electorates. These young people have so much to offer not only in agriculture but in all aspects. Each of the finalists presented their backgrounds, hopes, dreams and aspirations not only in a personal sense but also in a regional, State and national sense—and a couple had a global component to their speeches. That shows the vision of young people in our region. It is very easy to lay the blame for problems in our society on young people who perhaps do not get up and have a go, who do not contribute and who are quite happy to sit back and take a handout rather than get to their feet and make a worthwhile contribution to society and to their communities.

It heartens me greatly when I attend events such as the Barraba showgirls zone 4 final and hear the plans of those young ladies—in health, in agriculture, in justice and in other areas where they want to make a

worthwhile contribution. I note that the Minister for Primary Industries has just entered the Chamber. She is a fine example of someone trying to get young people involved in agriculture and trying to get young women in particular in the spotlight and on the radar so that they can make worthwhile contributions. The Minister is a lady from the land herself and she knows only too well how difficult it is for young people to get a start. We should do everything we can to provide a pathway and opportunities for young people to get involved in agriculture, particularly young women. I commend the Minister for Primary Industries for her efforts and her vision in ensuring that we plan long-term to get young people involved in agriculture.

At the Tamworth Show there were junior showgirl entrants as well as the showgirl entrants and quite a number of them were planning to make that step up next year to the showgirl competition. It gives me great hope and encouragement knowing that there are many young people who want to make a worthwhile contribution to our society. I commend the showgirl competition and I commend all those who put their hand up, take a step forward and acknowledge that they are out of their comfort zone but are willing to have a go to see what they can do. It is an opportunity for them to meet new people, to learn new ideas and to make a worthwhile contribution not only to their families and the community in their regions but also to the State and nation.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [12.57 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Mount Druitt and my colleague the member for Tamworth, who was there on the night of the zone 4 final. I thank them both for their very sincere contributions and for acknowledging the important role that the Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition still plays in a modern society where in some sectors people may consider it to be archaic. It is certainly not that; it is a wonderful competition, and that was displayed on the night when we saw the 17 finalists, who were great ambassadors for not only their families and their show societies but for rural young women and young women in agriculture.

I congratulate Sarah Clift from Gunnedah. Whilst she does not have the benefit of coming from the Northern Tablelands electorate she is, nevertheless, from the wonderful community of Gunnedah. She was one of the two finalists, along with Sally Newton, who went forward from zone 4 to the Sydney Royal Showgirl competition in Sydney in April. Sarah was the second runner-up in the overall competition throughout the State. I also acknowledge Patti Crowley from Barraba who organised the zone 4 final on the night. She did a magnificent job and brought together people from right across the region.

I too acknowledge the Minister for Primary Industries, who is present in the Chamber, and her passionate support for this competition over many years. She is a fine example of what the young women who participate in this competition can aspire to: a leadership position in agriculture. I say well done, not just to the young women from my electorate who participated brilliantly in this competition and were fine ambassadors, but to all young women who entered this competition. I wish them all the very best as they pursue their educational and career goals. I certainly hope it serves as a springboard to greater leadership roles for young women in agriculture and in rural communities. 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 sessional order Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) proceeded with.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 57/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.00 p.m.]: I thank the House for the opportunity to comment on the Legislation Review Committee's recent digest, which was tabled on 17 June 2014. This is the fifty-seventh digest of the Fifty-fifth Parliament prepared by the Legislation Review Committee. Fifteen bills were introduced in the sitting week commencing 27 May and the committee made comments on eight of them. Having reported on so many bills, at one stage the committee considered making the digest a two-volume set. I will turn briefly now to some of the bills the committee considered.

The Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill authorises the exchange of personal information in situations concerning domestic violence, including enabling the provision

of domestic violence support services. The committee noted that this bill may impact on the privacy rights of individuals in a number of ways, largely as a result of the collection and disclosure of personal information without consent. While some provisions were reasonable in the circumstances, given the public interest central to the bill, other provisions may require further consideration by the Parliament.

The Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Consequential Amendment Bill removes the text of provisions invalidated by the High Court and restores the provisions that existed before the High Court ruling. In doing so, the bill provides that, following its commencement, the bill is to operate as if the amendments under it had commenced on 18 December 2013, being the date of the High Court's decision. The provisions concern disclosure obligations regarding corporate donations. The committee noted the retrospective effect of those provisions, but, given the public interest in aligning regulations concerning corporate donations with all other donations since 18 December 2013, the committee did not consider it unreasonable in the circumstances.

The Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Fees) Bill establishes a regime for the charging and recovery of ambulance fees. The committee discussed quite a few issues concerning possible trespasses on individual rights and liberties, including retrospectivity and powers of entry. The committee also considered possible lack of clarity in the legislation, as well as inappropriately delegated legislative powers. The Mutual Recognition (Automatic Licensed Operations Recognition) Bill concerns the facilitation of a nationwide scheme of licence recognition. The committee noted that powers prescribing disciplinary action and enforcement action are to be set by regulation, and the committee expressed its preference that such powers be established in the primary legislation.

However, given safeguards provided by Parliament's ability to oversight and disallow regulations, the committee made no further comment. The Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill makes certain changes to the regime of drug and alcohol testing on roads and waterways. One of the provisions is to require individuals unable to submit to a breath analysis to provide a blood sample, and to authorise the police to use "as much force as necessary" for the purposes of providing a blood sample. The committee noted that requiring an individual to provide a blood sample could be an interference with one's personal bodily integrity. Given the possible trespasses on personal rights and liberties, the committee referred this to Parliament for its further consideration.

The Transforming New South Wales Energy Sector (Towards 100 per cent Renewables) Bill lays out a policy and governance road map to achieve 100 per cent renewables by 2030. The bill provides that, in certain circumstances, it is an offence to disclose certain information or fail or refuse to disclose certain information to authorised individuals. The penalties for these offences are terms of imprisonment for up to six months. The committee considered that these penalties may be considered excessive or disproportionate to the offence and referred this matter to Parliament for its further consideration.

The Water Management Amendment Bill provides for strict liability in relation to metering offences. The committee will always comment where strict liability is imposed as it may be seen as contrary to the presumption of innocence. However, the committee considered that the offences relate to important aspects of the regulatory regime governing water in New South Wales and, as such, the imposition of strict liability is aimed at preserving this regulatory scheme and is appropriate in the circumstances. Once again, I commend the digest and I thank the staff for the preparation of the digest and other members of the committee for their contributions.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.07 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition I report on Legislation Review Digest No. 57 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. This week the committee considered 15 bills in total. Of course, the Government is rushing to deal with legislation in the final sitting days of this session, after 3½ years of quiet in the Legislation Review Committee. Our meetings have often been quick, as a result of the small number of bills that the committee has reviewed. I commend the committee staff for their efforts. No doubt having 15 bills on this occasion would have put a lot of pressure on the staff. I acknowledge my fellow committee members.

One of the 15 bills reviewed by the committee was the Mutual Recognition (Automatic Licensed Occupations Recognition) Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to provide for the mutual recognition of certain recognised occupational licences issued in other Australian jurisdictions so that an individual who holds such a licence will be deemed to hold the New South Wales equivalent. Notably, the bill will remove mandatory continuing professional development obligations for the holders of contractor licences, supervisor certificates and tradesperson certificates issued under the Home Building Act 1989. The bill will remove the requirement

for persons who carry out refrigeration work or air-conditioning work to hold a specific refrigeration or air-conditioning authority for specialist work. Instead, a new category of specialist electrical wiring work that applies only to the disconnection and reconnection of refrigeration or air-conditioning equipment that is fixed electrical equipment is created.

The bill will also require mutual notification between interstate jurisdictions of disciplinary or enforcement action against a deemed local licence holder, and for particulars about disciplinary and enforcement action taken in another jurisdiction against a New South Wales licence holder to be recorded in a relevant register kept by a New South Wales licensing authority. The committee also commented on the potentially inappropriate delegation of legislative power.

This week the committee also considered the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Fees) Bill 2014. The bill seeks to amend the Health Services Act 1997 to establish a scheme for the charging and recovery of ambulance fees. The bill shifts the responsibility for the collection of ambulance fees from the Ambulance Service to the State Debt Recovery Office and the Commissioner of Fines Administration, giving authority to the Commissioner of Fines Administration to seize property, make garnishing orders, or to place charges on land. Late ambulance fees effectively will be treated equivalently to parking fines. That is an absolute disgrace. I did not find it surprising that the committee made extensive comments about the bill, especially considering the significant financial hardship that could be faced by vulnerable persons relying on an ambulance in an emergency. The committee commented on the retrospectivity of fines in the bill, and on the power of entry. Indeed, the committee said:

The bill allows a person exercising a property seizure order under the bill to enter any premises, at any reasonable time of the day or night, for the purpose of executing the order. "Any reasonable time of the day or night" is not defined in the bill. To avoid confusion about the extent of authorities' powers to interfere with private property rights, the Committee would prefer such terms to be clearly defined in legislation.

The committee also made a notable statement with respect to having subordinate legislation not tabled in Parliament or not subject to disallowance. Given the extensive comments made concerning aspects of the bill that either trespass on personal rights and liberties or inappropriately delegate legislative power, I was surprised to see Government members vote to support the bill. The committee considered another 13 bills. I commend the digest to the House.

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

Report noted.

COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

Report: Review of the 2012-2013 Annual Report of the Health Care Complaints Commission

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

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina) [1.12 p.m.]: I speak in my capacity as Chair of the joint Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission concerning its review of the commission's 2012-13 annual report. Examining the commission's annual report is a key function of the committee under section 65 of the Health Care Complaints Act, and it is the principal means whereby the committee exercises its oversight responsibility. The report, which is now before the House, reflects on the past year of the commission, and includes transcripts of evidence from the public hearing held at Parliament House on 16 April 2014, as well as responses to questions that were sent to the commissioner before and after that hearing.

This is the committee's first report since the amendment of the Health Care Complaints Act, which broadened the circumstances under which the commission could investigate the conduct of health services. Moreover, the commission was given an own-motion power to initiate complaints against health service providers involving serious issues. The committee found, and is pleased, that these legislative changes have been useful to the commission in handling complaints. Additionally, a significant and noteworthy outcome in the last year is the fact that the additional funding provided to the commission to employ more staff to deal with the continued increase in the number of inquiries and written complaints the commission received has helped the commission enhance its level of service.

The committee found that the commission made significant progress in relation to timeliness of assessing complaints during the past year. The committee was also pleased to find that the commission's

community outreach efforts, such as its outreach to the culturally and linguistically diverse members of the community of New South Wales who wish to make a complaint; webinars it delivers to health consumers and health professionals; and the update of the commission's website, which has led to 50.4 per cent of all complaints being received electronically, have all helped the commission achieve better results. These include an increase in the complainants' satisfaction with the assessment of complaints, which increased from 47.2 per cent last year to 73.7 per cent this year. The committee welcomes this positive development.

Finally, I thank the commissioner and his staff for their dedication, for providing information to the committee in a timely manner and for implementing recommendations that have delivered better customer service, hence greater public benefit for the people of New South Wales. I express my appreciation to my fellow committee members for their ongoing interest, in particular my parliamentary colleague the member for Port Macquarie, who was the Chair of the committee until recently. I thank also the committee staff for their assistance in the preparation of this report.

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

Report noted.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Adam Marshall) left the chair at 1.17 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Order! I welcome to the public gallery members of the Kiama and Gerringong branches of the Red Cross, guests of the member for Kiama. I also welcome 22 residents of the Bucklands Retirement Village, Springwood, guests of the member for Blue Mountains. I also welcome 50 year 10 commerce students and their teachers from Koorringal High School, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Rural and Regional Affairs and the member for Wagga Wagga.

NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE STATE OF ORIGIN VICTORY

Ministerial Statement

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Western Sydney) [2.18 p.m.]: While we have seen that the New South Wales mojo is back, we have also seen that it is back in an even bigger way with an Origin series victory. I pay a mighty tribute to all those Blues who represented this great State. They showed immense courage and I am absolutely delighted to say that the State of Origin supremacy rests where it should: back in New South Wales. New South Wales is number one again. The former Premier said that and he has delivered on his promise.

I pay tribute to Paul Gallen on the field and Laurie Daley who, as an inspiring coach, did an immense job to bring the new culture and discipline that has driven the Blues to an amazing result. Eighty thousand people attended the stadium but millions at home watched the incredible efforts last night and it is now history. There was courage and guts on display by all players. Will Hopoate suffered a rotator cuff injury in the eighteenth minute but stayed on the field for his team and went through the pain to deliver for the people of New South Wales. Jarryd Hayne had a great game and his try-saving tackle on Sam Thaiday was amazing. Ryan Hoffman drove forward relentlessly. It reminds me that Robbie Farah, someone who deserves selection on the Australian team, said he did not want to be selected until New South Wales had won the State of Origin. Our hope is that Robbie Farah and many Blues are chosen to wear an Australian jersey. In fact you could do a lot worse than pick every single Blues player who was there last night because they were a great Australian team.

It was great to be there with my good mate Campbell Newman, the Premier of Queensland. He always has a lot to say—until last night. He said very little last night, and I look forward to him wearing a sky blue jersey, which will look spectacular on him. He will be very proud to wear the jersey of the number one State of Origin team in the world. I am also proud to announce that there will be a people's reception at the Sydney Opera House for the great Blues to enable this city and State to pay tribute to an amazing result. Nine years is too long to wait. We have broken the drought and we want to pay tribute to their guts, courage and inspiration. They created history and we are incredibly proud of them.

Shortly after the Blues were dominating, we saw the Socceroos come to the pitch. Before the Socceroos left this shore the doomsayers were saying it would be impossible for them because they were

playing world-class teams and they would be outclassed. A bit of Aussie ticker showed them wrong. The Socceroos took them on, and up close to the sixtieth minute they were leading the third best side in the world. Timmy Cahill, a Western Sydney champion, did us proud and kicked an amazing goal. We are incredibly proud of the efforts of the Socceroos. They are heroes. We thank them for what they have done. We are very proud of them. We say to the Blues, "We salute you. We thank you for bringing State of Origin success back to this great State."

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [2.22 p.m.]: I, too, congratulate the New South Wales Blues on what was an epic match last night, a match that was in stark contrast to game one. Nonetheless, a win is a win and I pay tribute, in particular, to Paul Gallen and the other players. It is worth acknowledging that what we saw last night was a culture change for the Blues, and that culture change is attributable to Laurie Daley. Laurie Daley has brought a great deal of character, stamina and drive to that team. He has changed the culture of New South Wales and brought pride back to that blue jersey. He does not just talk about playing football; he talks to the players about being better people, not just being great footballers but being great citizens and no better place does that play out than on the field. If you are a good citizen, then you are a good player.

Laurie Daley talks about changing the culture; that the men who run around in the blue jerseys are role models, and that is significant. The way he coaches the team, the character he has given the team and what he has taught the team is not simply about how one plays football on the field; it is about what they do for each other and how they do it. It is the fact that they are not just playing for themselves, they are playing for each and every other player but, more importantly, they are playing for all of us, to give us pride in this State and, as the Premier has said, to bring that shield back to New South Wales where it belongs. Origin began here, it belongs here and the shield is back where it should be, and that is a welcome outcome from last night.

I, too, very briefly say that it was a great effort by the Socceroos. It was very unfortunate for them to go down in the way they did but they played with real distinction and character also. Timmy Cahill scored a goal and I am told on good authority that Mile scored the second goal. The Socceroos have shown the pundits that they are not there just to make up the numbers; they are there based on their capacity to play with the world's best. They did us proud last night and I also congratulate them on their effort.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (Business with Precedence) given.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Private Members' Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.26 p.m.]

STATE BUDGET AND TAFE NSW

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer reverse his cuts and fee increases to TAFE that will leave 23,000 students without the chance to attend TAFE, find work and help grow the economy?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Wasn't today's budget reply speech one of the best? He has had three years in the role yet he came in here, gave a budget reply and did not mention congestion, rail, road or infrastructure. In fact, Labor members love congestion so much they would not buy Sudafed for a cold. There is no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition has delivered a clanger. I had to go back and look at this document. I presume it is this document that is going to pay for his TAFE measures that he has outlined in his budget reply. The \$64 billion question is: Where do we get the dollars? Down the bottom it says, "Lotteries". What do we have in response? We have the scratch-me-happy John Robertson scratchie policy.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: That is the second time today we have seen the disorderly use of props in this House. Madam Speaker is well aware of the first. I ask that you not only point out that it is a prop but also—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the Treasurer is happy to quote the source of the information I am happy to accept it. I draw the Treasurer's attention to the need to quote the source of the material that he uses. The point of order is noted.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The source is the NSW Labor Policy Forum: Jobs and the Economy Policy Commission. We have this scratch-me-happy policy.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: It is the same point of order. The Treasurer is inappropriately using props.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has quoted the source.

Dr Andrew McDonald: That is a prop.

The SPEAKER: Order! The scratch documents could be considered a prop, but that is a far reach. I trust the Treasurer will not refer to the documents in his hand.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I am happy to table the magic money one for the Leader of the Opposition. Then we have the haunted house scratch lotto.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: Clearly my point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The Treasurer might think he is amusing but this is a serious question about serious issues affecting people in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! The point of order is noted. The Treasurer will return to the leave of the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I apologise, Madam Speaker. I am trying to be as amusing as the budget reply speech that was delivered at 11 o'clock. The only answer I have is that to raise the necessary revenue the Opposition will force every taxpayer in this State—every person willing to purchase a scratch-me-happy John Robertson lucky lottery ticket—to fund TAFE to the tune of \$9,000 per head on lotteries. That is all we have out of Labor.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under standing Order 129. It is a straightforward question: Will you reverse your TAFE cuts? Yes or no.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer is talking about budget measures and is being relevant to the question, but he is stretching it. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The budget reply speech did not mention roads, rail or infrastructure. The best thing that he could announce was a review into TAFE. It was such an appalling budget reply address that I think the member for Maroubra must have written it to embarrass the member for Blacktown, who was silly enough to deliver it. It was the most appalling budget reply speech this House has ever heard. There was no vision or plan. It is obvious that the Leader of the Opposition has no idea when it comes to the needs of the community.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. Inappropriate comments coming from Opposition members are worse than usual.

STATE BUDGET

Mr GREG APLIN: I direct a question to the Premier. How has the Government outlined future plans for ongoing prosperity and are there any alternative policies?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Albury for his question. He is part of a Government that is outlining a positive plan for the people of New South Wales. In the last 10 days we have been working hard and

showing the people of New South Wales that we have a positive and comprehensive vision for New South Wales. We are looking after their future and it is clear what we want to do, where we want to go and how we want to improve the lives of everyone in New South Wales. That is very clear. What we have shown in the last 10 days is the economy of New South Wales—despite what we inherited.

Mr Michael Daley: A surplus.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They are telling porky pies. The position was that New South Wales had the lowest economic growth, jobs growth, dwelling starts and business confidence in the country.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is what they delivered to us, but we are back and leading the nation, as you would expect, and we are proud to outline that.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As the Treasurer outlined in the budget, we have brought the budget back to significant surplus over the forward estimates. There is close to a \$4 billion turnaround this year and next since the half-year review and in the following three years there is an average of \$1.5 billion surpluses. That is what a responsible Government does: you ensure that you live within your means and provide a capacity to fund more services and infrastructure with a sustainable budget. We have reduced net debt, which is what you would like to see. Infrastructure spend is up. We are proud that we have done that. There are claims from those opposite about the health budget. The reality is that there is a record health budget under this Health Minister providing improved services for elective surgeries and emergency departments and a record infrastructure spend.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Oatley and the member for Macquarie Fields will cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is \$1.3 billion going to hospitals across the State. The shadow Minister knows that is the truth and he is very supportive of our policies. Education funding has increased by over \$600 million. We have signed up to the fifth year of the Gonski reforms and we are providing a record amount for schools across the State. A record spend is occurring on roads from one end of the State to the other. We are delivering \$4 billion in regional roads and \$1.5 billion in metropolitan areas.

Mr Michael Daley: Thanks to Joe Hockey.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: He is congratulating you.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The shadow Treasurer has congratulated our roads budget. It is great to have his support; and the member for Liverpool as well. I love their support and that they are on board. We have great vision for transport. When in government the Opposition announced the North West Rail Link would be completed by 2010, but nothing occurred. Over the next four years this Transport Minister has channelled over \$5 billion into it. It is becoming a reality and that is what we are determined to do. We have provided capacity for the vulnerable. There is more money going to homelessness, support for caseworkers and the disability sector. We outlined a \$20 billion infrastructure agenda. We want to do more, so the budget outlines a clear and prosperous path forward. We want to provide \$20 billion to provide jobs, roads, hospitals and water security across the State. That is something we are determined to show the people of New South Wales.

I know the member for Bankstown is excited about the Sydney rapid transit system. It helps her community and she is on board. She wants to back it in. We love her support. That is a distinct contrast to what we saw from the Leader of the Opposition today. I did wonder what his vision and plan was for the State. If ever you wanted an example that the Leader of the Opposition loves *Seinfeld* his budget reply speech demonstrates it: it was a whole speech about absolutely nothing. I sat listening—and 11 of their team turned up, which is almost 50 per cent of the team—but the shadow Treasurer was not there at the start. He does not want anything to do with it. If ever he wanted to tell the people of this State that the budget reply speech has nothing to do with him, it was by failing to turn up in the Chamber.

Ms Linda Burney: You are lying.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Canterbury came late. I was here before her. I do not think anyone in this State is under any illusions.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What did he talk about in Health? That is it. Nothing. What did he talk about in education? Nothing. Roads and transport—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The member for Albury wants to know what the Premier is delivering for him in his electorate because he was whingeing in the hallway that he has nothing.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The reason he knows what was going on in the hallway is that that is where he was when the Leader of the Opposition was giving his speech. We expect nothing from the Opposition, no vision or plans. They want to get into government based on nothing. It is a whole new approach. The most significant thing announced today by the Labor Party was not in the budget reply speech. What we saw today is John Robertson handing full control of the Labor Party to the union movement. It is a complete and utter outsourcing.

I spoke previously about the bat phone on his desk, that it would ring and the unions would tell him what to do—now they share an office. There is no need for the bat phone. The marriage is complete. The unions have taken full control. The Leader of the Opposition has come from Unions NSW. We all remember what they did: they took down a good Premier in Morris Iemma and stood for nothing. They serve their own interests and not the State's interest. The vision that we have outlined over the last 10 days for the people of the State is in their interest. It is positive, it delivers sustainable finances, improved services and more infrastructure and we are very proud that we have done that.

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

TAFE NSW AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Mr RYAN PARK: I direct my question to the Premier. Given that the Treasurer finally admitted to the House last night that "there will be a 3.7 per cent fall in enrolments of students with disabilities compared to last year", will the Premier now reverse his staff cuts and fee increases that will see 4,300 students with a disability miss out on the chance to attend TAFE?

[Interruption]

It is a lie; he has misled Parliament.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira has asked his question. There is no need for inappropriate comments. The member will resume his seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As already stated, the funding allocated to courses is aligned with anticipated enrolments. That is the responsible thing to do. We ask what are the anticipated enrolments and what resources are required to cater for them. That brings me back to the Leader of the Opposition's speech in reply to the budget. We know that a scare campaign is coming, but we do not know what is in the Opposition's secret plans. When we were asked about our \$20 billion infrastructure plan members opposite said that they have their own infrastructure plans. Where are they?

I remind members of when the former Premier was the Leader of the Opposition and he gave his last speech in reply to the Labor Government's budget before the election campaign during which we told the people of New South Wales what we wanted to do. He said that the Coalition would establish Restart NSW, which would provide infrastructure funds for the people of this State. That is one big tick. He also announced that the Coalition would enter into a long-term lease of Sydney's desalination plant. If we want to build infrastructure we need funding. Members opposite have not worked that out yet and that is why they spent 16 years doing

nothing. They go together: we cannot build infrastructure if we do not have the necessary funds. He also announced that the Coalition would use Waratah bonds to provide resources for the Infrastructure Fund. He also announced, and members opposite forget it—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: It was a simple question.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In the dying days of the former Government's term in office it decided to impose a sneaky homebuyers' tax to raise \$429 million, which further stalled a housing market that was already hitting record lows. We announced that we would abolish that tax, and of course we did. That is another tick. We also announced billions of dollars of savings in procurement and other areas. That is what a responsible Opposition does. How will the Labor Party fund its promises if it does not make those savings? We also announced that we would franchise Sydney Ferries.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot imagine what the point of order might be.

Dr Andrew McDonald: I am sure you can.

The SPEAKER: Order! Yes, I can. It will relate to Standing Order 129. There is no point of order.

Dr Andrew McDonald: The Premier is talking about franchising Sydney Ferries, but the question was about—

The SPEAKER: Order! The question was about all things budget. The Premier remains relevant.

Dr Andrew McDonald: No.

The SPEAKER: Order! Do not say "No" to me. The member will resume his seat. I will listen no further to the member for Macquarie Fields. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Opposition members say that they want to look after the people of New South Wales. If they make promises they must have the funds to deliver. If they commit to providing infrastructure they must have the funding to do so. The Government's commitments are comprehensive and are the result of a great deal of hard work. It will not surprise anyone that half of the Leader of the Opposition's team did not bother to turn up to hear his speech in reply to the budget.

Mr Richard Amery: There were 18 members of the Opposition in the Chamber.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: But they all came in late. That is not surprising because they knew what was in it and they did not want to be embarrassed. The shadow Treasurer did not want anything to do with it. Why would he? This Government has done the hard work and it is proud to have done so. We have outlined a \$20 billion plan to provide additional infrastructure in this State. At least the member for Keira has got on board. He said that without doubt there will be a large or reasonable amount of money coming in from the lease. No-one is disputing that. He wants to back it in, and so he should. The people of New South Wales have every right to be gobsmacked, disappointed and horrified about what the Leader of the Opposition did today. I have never before seen a Leader of the Opposition present a budget reply speech that offered absolutely nothing. This Government will continue to look after the people of New South Wales, and they deserve nothing less.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: I address my question to the Minister for Education. How is the Government delivering flexible vocational education and training to meet the skill needs of New South Wales?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It is good to get a question about education. For some reason members opposite do not want to ask me about education. This great budget is the dividend of three years of hard work by Premier Mike Baird in his role as Treasurer of this State. He did a great job that has enabled this Government to

deliver \$2.3 billion for vocational education and training, which is a \$125 million increase on last year's budget. The Smart and Skilled reforms will see 46,000 more students being trained than would otherwise have been the case had we maintained the status quo. The budget also delivers \$1.862 billion for TAFE, including a capital expenditure of \$77 million.

I will deal with the issue of enrolment of students with disabilities. Of course, we have hidden that data in the budget papers, which are now online. Total enrolment in subjects has fallen by 3.9 per cent. Those figures go up and down every year—they did when the Labor Government was in office and they will while the Coalition is in office. Enrolment of students with disabilities has fallen by 3.7 per cent. That is lower than the general fall in enrolments, and that is to be expected. Those trends are consistent across the board and for students with disabilities. That puts that statistic into perspective. The Leader of the Opposition gave his budget reply speech today and made some announcements that will add significantly to the Labor spendometer. Members should rest assured that we will continue to remind them about the spendometer until 28 March next year.

Mr John Robertson: Do you want us to say nothing?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Leader of the Opposition would probably have been better off saying nothing.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Government has done the financial numbers. Abolishing the Smart and Skilled program and reversing fee increases would cost New South Wales \$1.019 billion over four years.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Opposition has added that to the spendometer. It would mean 407,000 fewer students would be provided with subsidised training. Members opposite cannot have it both ways; they cannot abolish Smart and Skilled and not increase fees and still offer as many training places. The numbers simply do not add up. We would lose, first off, \$408 million in Commonwealth payments under the Council of Australian Governments agreement under the condition that States introduce a contestable debt market. We would lose that overnight. The problem with Labor governments is they eventually run out of other people's money. Those opposite want to get rid of Smart and Skilled and the skills list, and they want taxpayers to continue to fund certain courses. We are not going to continue funding these courses with taxpayer money. One of the courses Labor wants to fund is a certificate IV in unionism and industrial relations.

Mrs Barbara Perry: What is wrong with choice?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: They have said they want to get rid of Smart and Skilled, and when they say something they have to stand by it. They want to get rid of Smart and Skilled, and they want taxpayers to fund a certificate IV in pet styling. They also want taxpayers to fund fine arts and ceramics. When a plumber in Parramatta submits his tax return and pays his taxes, those opposite will spend his taxes on a diploma of musical theatre.

Mrs Barbara Perry: A lot of people work in theatre.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: People work in the creative industries.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Auburn and the member for Marrickville will come to order. Members will cease interjecting.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I think this is a pitch to the Greens, a Greens trifecta: a diploma of musical theatre, a diploma of aromatherapy and an advanced diploma of aromatic medicine.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The budget reply from those opposite could do with some aromatherapy because it stinks.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Keira continues to interject he will be removed from the Chamber. Government members will come to order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Those opposite cannot have it both ways. They want the funds of hardworking taxpayers to go to subsidising those courses. The Government subsidises courses such as a certificate III in bricklaying. The cost of the course is \$13,100, but that is not what we charge. The student fees are just \$2,960, which is a \$148 increase from last year. The cost of delivering a diploma of electrical engineering is almost \$19,000 but the student fees are \$7,280. Under the Government's reforms the diploma fee can be paid back through VET FEE-HELP loans once a person's income is above \$50,000. I cannot think of a fairer system.

We are encouraging people to get higher level qualifications, diplomas and advanced diplomas, and once they start earning a higher salary, which those qualifications lead to, they will start paying back the loan. They repay the loan so that we can subsidise other students. This is called good reform. If there comes a day when those opposite get back into government, given the policies they have announced, it will be a very dark day for New South Wales and the taxpayers of this State.

TAFE NSW

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: My question is directed to the Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney. The Brotherhood of St Laurence has reported a 50 per cent increase in youth unemployment in greater Western Sydney in the last two years. Will the Government back Labor's plan and stand up against TAFE staff cuts and fee increases which will rob young people from Western Sydney of the chance to build their skills and find work?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney General will stop arguing across the table. Members will come to order.

Mr STUART AYRES: It is always good to get questions about Western Sydney after those opposite ignored it for the better part of 19 years. We know they ignored Western Sydney because they never invested in infrastructure, which is the fundamental basis for growing jobs. They left the State with a \$16 billion infrastructure deficit. This side of politics is addressing the infrastructure deficit, with \$61 billion to be invested in roads across the State and in hospitals so that people have access to improved hospital services. This will be a fundamental driver of jobs growth. For those living in Parramatta, Bankstown and Penrith health is one of the single biggest jobs drivers.

Mr John Robertson: How about TAFE?

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

Mr STUART AYRES: And TAFE, absolutely. While we are talking about TAFE facilities in Western Sydney, Kingswood TAFE is getting \$12 million for strategic upgrades to continue to ensure that our TAFE institutes drive the jobs growth required in Western Sydney by training people with the appropriate skills. When we have a choice between courses in business administration or pet styling, what will we choose? We will go with business administration. Will we go with courses in unionism or carpentry to drive jobs growth? Economic growth in this State is at 4.7 per cent, the highest of any State in the Commonwealth. In a strong economy, jobs growth flows all the way to young people. Young people want to know that the Government is stable and is investing in New South Wales.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I know the Government does not want to talk about the money it is going to save, but the question referred specifically to TAFE.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: Last night we had the State of Origin match. The Leader of the Opposition's favourite number is 11—11 per cent, number 11, the second row.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: The Opposition has had an opportunity to outline its jobs growth plan for Western Sydney—but we got nothing today. All they want to do is fund programs that students want to study—

or do not want to study because those courses do not drive jobs growth. Those opposite had the perfect opportunity today to lay out their plan for Western Sydney, but they neglected to do so. In their plan there is no roads infrastructure, no investment in jobs growth, no investment in rail lines, no way of moving people around so they can access jobs. Every time we have a discussion about creating greater job opportunities for young people they end up talking about higher wages. Driving up wages is the single most effective way to stop the creation of jobs for young people.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Liverpool will cease interjecting.

Mr STUART AYRES: Every time those opposite talk about work on public holidays, all they are doing is attacking the ability of young people to get into jobs.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: They attack apprentices. Where is their jobs action plan?

Mr Brad Hazzard: There are thousands of apprentices out there.

Mr STUART AYRES: That is right.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney General will cease interjecting.

Mr Brad Hazzard: I am here to help.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister does not need any help.

Mr STUART AYRES: If you want to invest in infrastructure here is a good idea. How about allocating 1,000 apprenticeships to infrastructure projects in Western Sydney? That is a way to support businesses in Western Sydney and to drive infrastructure growth. It will be funded by the New South Wales Government and it can only be funded because we have a strong economy delivered by a strong budget. This side of politics is disciplined enough to do that. When we established Restart NSW to drive jobs growth, *Hansard* shows that the response of the shadow Treasurer was, "So what?"

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr DONALD PAGE: My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. How is the Government building on its improvements to health care in New South Wales?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Ballina for his question and I celebrate with him the announcement of the new Byron Central Hospital. I recall back in 1996 consulting with his community about the need for a new hospital, but during 16 years of the Labor Government what happened? Absolutely nothing happened. This year the money is in the budget to start that project worth more than \$80 million. The money is in the bank, the project will be started and it will go to completion. Across my desk has fallen a document headed "Stop the cuts". This is a six-week campaign, planned by Labor. One of the tasks that the document lists for Labor is to "touch base with local nurses association, HSU sub-branches and union groups".

Here we are: back to the unions. What is Labor's campaign based on? On the front page of the document alone I have counted nine porky pies. Let me go through it. There is a claim that \$3 billion has been cut out of the health budget. Wrong, wrong, wrong. This year we have a record health budget which is 20 per cent larger than when the former Government was in office: a \$3.2 billion increase, not a reduction. The budget has gone up, not down. This year we have a health budget of \$18.7 billion compared with \$15.5 billion when Labor was last in government. According to my calculation, that is up, not down: no cuts. In addition, there is \$1.3 billion for infrastructure.

The document then went on to say that there were going to be staff cuts: "Labor claims there will be fewer nurses". Wrong, wrong, wrong. Since we have been in office we have employed an additional 4,100 nurses headcount, 2,800 full-time equivalent; we have employed an additional 1,400 additional doctors and 988 more hospital support staff. Labor is claiming that all these things are going down, but they are all up. The shadow Minister for Health is saying "Tick". He knows that their document is based on an absolute lie.

Labor also claims in this document that we are going to cut lifesaving operations. Wrong. There is an estimated 1.29 million acute hospital inpatient separations this year—an increase of 40,000. Every year we treat more patients.

We have delivered over 17,000 more elective surgery procedures since March 2011. Labor is claiming that there are longer waiting times in our hospitals. The truth is that under the former Labor Government for the quarter January to March 2011 only 59 per cent of emergency department patients were seen within four hours. For the quarter January to March 2014, under this Government it was 73 per cent. Up—tick. Labor's claims are a lie. Median times to start treatment—this is something I highlighted many times when I was in Opposition—under the former Labor Government non-urgent patients in emergency departments were seen in 31 minutes. Under this Government they are seen in 23 minutes. For semi-urgent patients, under Labor the median time was 34 minutes; under this Government it is 26 minutes.

Ms Linda Burney: Good on you!

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The member for Canterbury is saying, "Good on you!". I agree. I am very happy to take her congratulations. Under the former Labor Government urgent emergency department patients were seen in 24 minutes; under this Government they are seen in 20 minutes. We have seen hundreds of thousands of additional patients because the wonderful staff in our hospitals, our emergency departments and our wards have done a marvellous job in improving patient care. Under the former Labor Government 92 per cent of urgent elective surgery patients were seen on time—not a bad score; under this Government it is now 100 per cent. Under Labor 87 per cent of semi-urgent elective surgery patients were seen on time; under this Government it is 97 per cent. Under Labor 92 per cent of non-urgent elective surgery patients were seen on time; under this Government it is 96 per cent. The statistics speak for themselves. We have done better; Labor is down the drain.

WOMEN'S REFUGE FUNDING

Ms LINDA BURNLEY: My question is directed to the Premier. The Lillian Howell Project at Erskineville is currently a home for eight young women 14 to 18 years old. What does the Premier say to those young women and to this specialist women's refuge, which is being forced to close after losing its funding due to changes by the Government?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As I said yesterday, with the reforms that have been announced we are determined to make a difference in the area of homelessness. We have undertaken the reforms in consultation with the industry and with many players. Tenders have been issued for services and some people have not been successful in their tenders. But, as the Minister said, we want to work very closely with those services to establish whether there are additional roles, concurrent roles or existing roles they can play. This is a genuine attempt to make a difference for those in the most vulnerable circumstances and we are doing it in a way that engages the sector to deliver comprehensive reform.

We are proud of the reform; it is something that we are determined to do. We understand that individual services have not been successful in relation to the tender and we understand that it is a challenging time while we are in transition and working with services on what options could exist going forward. I understand the concerns being raised. We will be empathetic and compassionate because we acknowledge the service the refuges have been providing and the differences they have been making across many communities. We are determined to do all we can in the area of homelessness.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The Premier needs to understand—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We were going well until that interjection. The Minister will be working closely with all parties across the sector. We are determined not only to get the reforms right but to have more money going into the sector. Those opposite can run scare campaigns if they want to, but the Minister will be working with all of those parties. After hearing the Leader of the Opposition's budget speech in reply today, this is quite an incredible day and all of us should take stock. Putting aside all the politics and policy, putting aside all the toing and froing in this Chamber, the Opposition presented an alternative plan to the Government's. I have observed politics in this place for 30 years—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. If the budget is in surplus why is the Government closing refuges and forcing women onto the streets? It is straightforward: women will end up on the streets and the Minister is showing a complete disregard in his actions.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is on three calls to order. If he continues to interrupt he will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: No wonder the Leader of the Opposition is sensitive—a light has been shone on his leadership today. Everyone in this State has had a chance to hear what those opposite want to do. They have presented their alternative vision of government and there is nothing there in relation to key policies.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. If the Premier wants to debate the budget and the budget reply speech he can do so, but if he wants to attack the Leader of the Opposition he must do so by way of substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I will leave it to the people of New South Wales to decide between the Government's plans and those proposed by the Opposition.

Mr John Robertson: Where is your answer?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Leader of the Opposition is very good at personal attacks. I will let the Leader of the Opposition's words speak for themselves. He said we are back in surplus. What does that mean? When Labor gets an opportunity they take the car and wrap it around a telegraph pole. They are happy to trash the State's finances and raise debt and taxes. That is the vision provided by the Leader of the Opposition to the people of New South Wales. We have a responsible government. While we are controlling the finances we are proud to put more money into homelessness and the National Disability Insurance Scheme. That is exactly what a responsible government should do. Today the people of New South Wales heard about the alternative vision offered by the Leader of the Opposition. The people of New South Wales, as well as members of the Leader of the Opposition's team, are ashamed by what they heard. The job of the Leader of the Opposition is to put forward an alternative vision but he gave us nothing.

Ms Linda Burney: There will be 14-year-olds on the streets.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Canterbury knows that that is not true.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. Members will cease arguing across the Chamber. I remind the member for Auburn that this is not the time for debate. Members are waiting to ask questions.

[Interruption]

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

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 3.10 p.m.]

[Business interrupted.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I extend a late welcome to multi-award winning broadcaster, journalist and sports commentator with the ABC and the forty-fourth MEAA Prodi Journalist of the Year Aaron Kearney and his producer, Ashleigh McIntyre, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Planning and member for Port Stephens.

QUESTION TIME

[Business resumed.]

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. How is the Government transforming the State with new transport infrastructure?

Mr Ray Williams: A great question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is a great question. I thank the member for Smithfield for his question. He is a great supporter of public transport and he loves using the Opal card. This morning I thought that after three years as Opposition leader the Leader of the Opposition would reveal a single transport project or service he supports in this important area. But we got nothing from him this morning. That is of concern because he was a transport Minister and has had three years as Opposition leader. This is a sensitive issue for members opposite because it is embarrassing. The Leader of the Opposition misled the House this morning.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition said:

This Government still hasn't begun construction on any of its signature projects.

In relation to the North West Rail Link he said:

No real works.

That is of concern because it shows that the Leader of the Opposition does not get out much. The first tunnel boring machine, which is going in at Bella Vista in October this year, is 2½ kilometres from the Blacktown electorate.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I present to the House exhibit A showing the Bella Vista site, which is only 2½ kilometres from Blacktown.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition claimed that the Government has done nothing on the North West Rail Link. I present exhibit B, which shows work at the Kellyville site, which is just over three kilometres from the Blacktown electorate. I present exhibit C, which shows work on the showground. I present exhibit D, which shows work at Cherrybrook on the North West Rail Link.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney General, and Minister for Justice will come to order. The member for Maroubra will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is disappointing, although not surprising, that members opposite have nothing to say about public transport. I recall budget day when I was the shadow Minister for Transport. What do members think a shadow transport Minister would do on budget day? The shadow Minister would read the budget papers, add up the figures, see what was missing and what could be supported. I must confess that when I was the shadow transport Minister I found budget day exciting. I was always anxious to ensure that I had done my homework. This is what the shadow Minister in the other place did on budget day. During question time on budget day, 17 June, only a few hours after the budget papers had been tabled, she posted a picture on Instagram and said:

Question time is a bit dull today. Glad I found this in my folder. Latest from the Cat Protection Society.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the point of order. Members will be removed from the Chamber if I cannot hear points of order. The Treasurer will come to order.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. Also, props are disorderly at all times, and I ask you to rule that the Minister is out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I draw the Minister's attention to the use of props in the House.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The question is about transport infrastructure. I am simply reflecting on why the Opposition has no transport policies.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: One would expect the shadow Minister to be reading the budget papers on budget day. All of us care about animals and cat protection, but not on budget day. The question is about transport infrastructure.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The exhibits demonstrate the great work we are doing on the North West Rail Link. They show that the Leader of the Opposition does not get out much to the south-west. If he visited Leppington or Edmondson Park he would realise that those stations are near completion. That project is more than a year ahead of schedule.

Mr John Robertson: Not yours.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition is embarrassed. The Labor Government did not lay a single piece of track.

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

[Interruption]

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

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Blacktown left the Chamber at 3.17 p.m.]

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition does not want to hear this. He is embarrassed. He has left the Chamber so he can take a cat nap.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will be removed from the Chamber if they continue to interject. The Minister for Education will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Maroubra has got his wish.

[Interruption]

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

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Maroubra left the Chamber at 3.17 p.m.]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member for Keira will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We know members opposite do not like public transport but this is ridiculous. We have opened the Inner West Light Rail Extension, we are building the South West Rail Link and the North West Rail Link and we have introduced the Opal ticketing system. The Government is getting on with the job. We are not taking cat naps.

NSW HEALTHY SCHOOL CANTEEN STRATEGY

Mr JAMIE PARKER: Madam Speaker—

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

[Interruption]

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

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Murray-Darling left the Chamber at 3.19 p.m.]

[Interruption]

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

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Monaro left the Chamber at 3.19 p.m.]

NSW HEALTHY SCHOOL CANTEEN STRATEGY

Mr JAMIE PARKER: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Will the Minister support the health and nutrition of school students by committing to update the New South Wales canteen guidelines to bring them into line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, which recommend limiting the intake of food and drink with added sugars?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The short answer to that question is yes. This has been a great Question Time and a great week in relation to Baird's bonanza or Mike's millions, and the Minister for Transport has just capped it off. The Opposition has trouble dealing with us. The NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy requires all government schools to provide a healthy, nutritious canteen menu, which is one part of the department's response to childhood obesity. The strategy was developed to support schools in providing healthy canteen menus as well as information about the nutritional value of foods and how to select healthy food, and the nutrition criteria for foods to include and promote in the canteen, as well as foods that should be restricted. This was informed by the Australian Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents.

Dependent on their nutritional value, foods and drinks are divided into three categories: food that should fill the canteen menu, food that should be selected carefully and food that should be available only occasionally. This is to help ensure that schools have a balanced canteen menu. An extensive range of resources has been provided to schools to assist with the implementation of the Healthy School Canteen Strategy, which is available on the department's canteen website. The department continues to support schools to implement and sustain school canteens. As I said, the answer to the question is yes.

I am advised that the department started working with the NSW Ministry of Health in April 2014 to bring the Healthy School Canteen Strategy into line with the new Australian Dietary Guidelines, which are based on the best available evidence about eating to support health and wellbeing. Sugar-sweetened drinks have been banned from sale in school canteens and vending machines since 2007. This ban applies to energy drinks and to other sugary drinks such as soft drinks, sports drinks and cordials. All members, in what I would call a multi-partisan way, are seriously committed to reinforcing healthy eating habits at school, and to teaching students about making those right choices in life, particularly around their diet. That is not to say they cannot enjoy the odd treat, but it should be the exception rather than the rule.

ELECTRICITY PRICES

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy. How is the Government driving down electricity bills for customers in New South Wales, and related matters?

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: This is a pre-emptive point of order about the use of props.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no such thing as a pre-emptive point of order.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: On 30 May 1995 Speaker Murray—

The SPEAKER: Order! I don't care.

Mr Ron Hoenig: —directed the removal of props from the table, as have other Speakers. The Minister has placed a prop on the table.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Heffron will resume his seat.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: What a great week for this Government and this State. The Government is not only building massive infrastructure projects but it is also delivering on its promise to drive down electricity prices for households and businesses in New South Wales. The damage from John Robertson's mismanagement as energy Minister has been undone.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 75, which states that the members should be addressed by their correct titles.

The SPEAKER: Order! I draw the attention of the Minister to Standing Order 75.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: First, the Liberals and Nationals electricity reform program saw electricity bills brought under control. Now we have done more than bring them under control, we have driven them down. But do not just take our word for it. On 16 April 2014 the Australian Energy Regulator announced that network charges for households would fall due to our reforms. This means that next year families and businesses in New South Wales will see a decrease in network costs, which make up around half of a bill, of up to 2.3 per cent. The good news is that network costs are expected to decrease further in subsequent years. But did we stop there? No, we did not. I am happy to announce that this Government is delivering on its commitment to remove regulation of electricity prices in New South Wales.

From 1 July 2014 households in New South Wales that are still on the regulated price will receive a 1.5 per cent decrease on their electricity charge thanks to this Government. Despite the shameful attempts by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr John Robertson, and Labor to prevent families benefitting from a cut in electricity prices, we are delivering one. Who do you trust? Do you trust a Labor Opposition that delivered price increases of 60 per cent or a Liberal-Nationals Government that has delivered concrete, real and tangible price decreases? Labor prices up; Coalition prices down. Who do you trust? Do you trust a Labor Opposition delivering for the unions and their mates or a Liberal-Nationals Government serving and delivering for the good people of New South Wales?

The Baird-Stoner Government will amend the National Energy Retail Law (Adoption) Regulation 2013 ensuring that this important reform proceeds and families receive the benefit of a competitive electricity market. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr John Robertson, can try to prevent lower electricity bills all he wants, but we will not let him succeed. Ironically—it is enough to make us cry—in just 12 days those sitting opposite, who assured this House that they will retain the regulated price, which is a falsehood to which I will refer later, will be the beneficiaries of this 1.5 per cent decrease, despite their bleating, whining and whinging. They should say "Thank you." They will be grabbing and clutching the lower price, but they have tried their utmost, despite that, to make sure no-one else in New South Wales gets it because that is the Labor way.

We have done what Labor could not. We have delivered lower electricity prices for the people of New South Wales—and those opposite hate that. They hate it so much they have put together a secret plan to stop the cuts to electricity prices. It is prefaced by, "These leaflets are strictly confidential and should never be distributed to anyone outside the campaign team." Labor's plan to stop the cuts to electricity prices is being distributed through their local members. It is a six-week campaign plan to stop the cuts to family electricity bills, a six-week campaign plan to ensure households do not benefit from the Government's reforms, and a six-week campaign plan to stop money going back into the pockets of mums and dads in New South Wales.

If that is not bad enough, it is a campaign that involves Wobble boards. Do those opposite not watch the television? But that is the Labor way. The contrast between the Government and Labor could not be greater. The dark days of Labor's double-digit electricity increases are well and truly over for the people of New South

Wales. Customers no longer need to fear the impact of the failure of John Robertson, Leader of the Opposition, as energy Minister. They no longer need to fear his incompetence. Instead they can rely on a reformist Government that is working for the people of New South Wales.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: This is a Government of action, a Government delivering for the people of New South Wales, delivering and transforming New South Wales for the future. Our reforms are well thought out, forward thinking and effective. Labor's reforms are irrational, knee-jerk responses and conflicting. It begs the question why, with their so-much-hype Labor policy unit, are they so atrocious? We have discovered why. Labor members were so desperate to develop a policy, any policy, that they went to these lengths. They invested all their time, money and limited ability to create a policy thinker, a super computer that they lauded, something that could do all their thinking for them—and do it quickly and decisively. It explains everything. It explains Labor's decision to send energy prices skyrocketing, to shut down the coal industry and to oppose every reform that transformed this State. Labor's answer to everything is in the box.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: Point of order: Madam Speaker, we do not need to see what the Gazal brothers bought the Minister for Christmas. We do not need to see his Christmas gift from the Gazal brothers. What is your next holiday itinerary? Where are you going next?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Bankstown will remove herself from the Chamber until the end of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Bankstown left the Chamber at 3.31 p.m.]

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Let us talk about the raffles that the member ran. She never disclosed that donation. We know that and I have that. Here it is.

Mrs Barbara Perry: Point of order: The standing orders are clear on the use of props.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has not used a prop in his answer.

Mrs Barbara Perry: It is what he is about to do.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister's time has expired.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The answer is in the box.

Question time concluded at 3.31 p.m.

VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2013-14

Mr Constance tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2013-14 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of specific purpose payments in excess of the amounts included in the States receipts and payments estimates—Ministry of Health, dated 19 June 2014.

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

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Mr Jonathan O'Dea, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Planning NSW Infrastructure for the Twenty-Second Century", dated June 2014.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Jonathan O'Dea.

COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**Inquiry**

Mr Greg Smith, as Chair, informed the House, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), that the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption had resolved to conduct an inquiry into prosecutions arising from the Independent Commission Against Corruption investigations, the full details of which were available on the committee's home page.

PETITIONS

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

Pet Shops

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

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

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

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

Container Deposit Levy

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

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

The Hon. Anthony Roberts—Nymboida Hydroelectric Power Station—lodged 14 May 2014 (Mr Christopher Gulaptis)

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [3.34 p.m.]: I move:

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Wednesday 2 July at 10.30 a.m.

As members would be aware, the New South Wales Parliament will be required to meet to choose a person to fill the Senate vacancy that will arise as a result of the impending resignation of former Premier Bob Carr, whose term is due to commence on 1 July 2014. I apologise in advance for the inconvenience that this resignation will cause members of this place but, more importantly, I apologise to those who voted for Mr Carr, having faith that he would fulfil his full term of office.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.35 p.m.]: The Opposition supports the motion. Whilst the Leader of the House is in apology mode, perhaps he might apologise for Barry O'Farrell not serving his full term as well.

HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (AMBULANCE FEES) BILL 2014**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 18 June 2014.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [3.36 p.m.]: I speak to the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Fees) Bill 2014. The objects of the bill are to amend the Health Services Act 1997 to establish a

scheme for the charging and recovery of ambulance fees. The basic purpose of the Act is to change the way that unpaid ambulance fees are collected, moving the responsibility from the Ambulance Service to the State Debt Recovery Office to the Commissioner of Fines Administration. The bill will enable the State Debt Recovery Office to use its powers to seize debtors' property, to make wage garnishee orders or charge the ambulance fee to the land owned by the debtor, a charge over the land that will run with the land until the fee is paid.

Ambulance fees are not covered by Medicare. The State Government currently charges patients 51 per cent of the actual cost of an ambulance up to a maximum of \$5,584, a call-out fee of \$341, plus a variable per kilometre rate of \$3.07 and \$1.66 for emergency and non-emergency transport respectively. The person liable for the fee is the one who receives the service, or the parent or guardian of the child who goes to hospital in the ambulance. Most individuals with health insurance have their fees covered by the insurer, although the degree of coverage may vary. Holders of health cards and pensioners will remain exempt from fees. About 7 per cent of ambulance fees are unpaid.

Under the proposed amendments the Ambulance Service of NSW, through the Health Secretary, the new name for the director general, will still issue an initial invoice. If the bill remains outstanding seven days after the due date, the Ambulance Service of NSW will again send out a debt notice. The debt notice will notify the client that recovery action will be taken if payment is not received within 21 days of issue. A fee is likely to be incurred if recovery action is initiated. After two notices are issued, the Health Secretary will refer the fee to the Commissioner of Fines Administration who will have powers similar to those outlined in the Fines Act 1996, including property seizure, garnishee orders over wages and salaries, or charges on land owned by the debtor.

One can only imagine the plight of a farmer in drought many kilometres away from the nearest hospital who does not apply for a health card and cannot afford health insurance but who has to get an ambulance to the nearest hospital many kilometres away. He cannot pay. If he cannot pay, there will be court costs and recovery costs included in the court costs and a charge will be levied on his drought-stricken land. That charge will go on and on until paid for by the farmer, his heirs or from the will. We may have the Government seizing farm machinery from a drought-stricken farmer because he cannot pay his ambulance bill. It will be passed on to his family and beneficiaries. Essentially the ambulance fee will be treated in the same way as a parking fine.

The bill does not intend to give the commissioner the power to cancel driver licenses. It is a wonder it does not, given the way this Government taxes poor people. The Government has conducted no stakeholder consultation with professional bodies other than the Privacy Commissioner. It is interesting to take note of the comments made by the esteemed Legislation Review Committee on this particular bill in relation to trespassing on personal rights and liberties. If the ambulance fee is not paid in accordance with a debt notice a fee can be referred to the Commissioner of Fines Administration and recovery action taken under the new scheme. However, the capacity to recover pre-existing debts under the bill is subject to the Limitation Act, which provides recovery must be brought within six years.

The committee notes that the bill permits the recovery of ambulance fees incurred before the commencement of the bill. The committee generally comments when provisions of a bill are drafted that have retrospective effect. I note the report states, "This is because such provisions are contrary to the rule of law which allows people to order their affairs according to the law which is in existence at any given point in time." The next point that the well-regarded Legislation Review Committee makes is this: The bill allows a person exercising a property seizure order to enter premises "at any reasonable hour of the day or night" for the purposes of executing the order. As the committee notes, "any reasonable time of the day or night" is not defined in the bill and there is confusion about the extent of the authority's powers to interfere with private property rights.

The committee would prefer that such terms be defined clearly in the new legislation. One can only imagine a woman with her children having someone creeping around late at night, wanting to serve a recovery order and the fears that could engender. It is important that the Government identify what is a reasonable hour of the day or night so that a gung-ho debt collector is not crawling around a property late at night trying to serve notice on a woman at home with her children. Section 32 of the bill outlines the circumstances under which the Commissioner of Fines Administration may disclose personal information. The committee notes again that listing "any other Act or law", rather than listing the names of those Acts limits the clarity of new section 32 in part 6 of schedule 9 to the bill. The committee would prefer the name of each Act or law to be listed to avoid this lack of clarity.

The disclosure can take place under any Act or law. We need certainty. People need to know under what circumstances their privacy is to be invaded. It is bad enough that they are levying fines on people who cannot afford it and trespassing on their rights. The Legislation Review Committee also notes the bill provides commencement on a "day or days to be appointed by proclamation". The committee says that it prefers that this type of new legislation, which impacts on the rights and liberties of the subject, is to commence on a fixed date or on assent, and not by proclamation as proposed in this bill. Clearly this bill has not been thoroughly thought out in accordance with laws, rights and responsibilities.

The committee also notes that it would prefer the matters that involve administrative review rights be included in the proposed primary and not subordinate legislation. There is provision here for a person charged with a fee to apply to the Health Secretary for a review of the decision to charge an ambulance fee, but it is not required to conduct a review in certain circumstances, including circumstances prescribed by the regulation. What are the circumstances? Surely these should be spelled out in the proposed primary Act to which most people would refer. Most people do not understand there are regulations that govern the machinery of the Act.

The committee also looks at the personal information that is to be provided to the Commissioner of Fines Administration for the purpose of enabling recovery of ambulance fees. The committee says it prefers matters of this nature involving privacy rights to be included in the primary and not subordinate legislation. It goes on to say that the Privacy Commissioner may be consulted and regulations can be made under the bill only with the concurrence of the Attorney General and the Privacy Commissioner; they both must be consulted. These are subject to disallowance under section 41 of the Interpretation Act, but still we need clarity.

The problem with the bill is that it is unfair. It imposes unfair liabilities and practices on those who can least afford it, whether it is the single mother with two kids or a farmer in the remote west of the State many miles from a hospital. It is unfair, unjust and complex. It transgresses on the rights and liberties of the subject as pointed out by the Legislation Review Committee. The Minister should take a second look at the bill, read it and think about the points made by those on this side of the House, whether she likes them or not. Given the problems with the bill I oppose it and I support the Opposition's position in so doing.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) [3.46 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for Balmain, Coogee, Macquarie Fields, Riverstone, Heffron, Davidson, Cabramatta, Granville, Cessnock, Smithfield and Miranda for their contributions to this debate. I reiterate that this bill does not introduce any new fees or charges for services provided by New South Wales. The purpose of the bill is simply to provide for more efficient recovery of existing debts. I have been listening to the debate in this Chamber, and the scaremongering and the fear that those opposite are putting into people's minds about things that clearly are not going to occur, and that worries me.

Yesterday the member for Macquarie Fields stated that it was impossible to find the ambulance expenses for 2014-15 in the budget. If the member for Macquarie Fields was familiar with the budget papers he would be aware that all Health agencies are currently being issued service agreements for 2014-15, as the papers say. Itemised budgets for the local health districts and the Ambulance Service are never published in the budget papers, they are published in the service agreements, which can be found online. The member for Macquarie Fields also stated that the budget for last year was \$678.9 million for the Ambulance Service of NSW. This is incorrect. The indicative New South Wales ambulance budget for 2013-14 is \$726 million, which is \$38 million or 5.5 per cent more than the previous year.

Yesterday the member for Macquarie Fields also indicated an increase in ambulance response times. This, of course, does not bear directly on this bill but, nevertheless, I inform the House the median response time in 2011-12 and 2012-13 was 11.1 minutes for priority one responses. For 2013-14 to the end of May this year the median response time was 10.8 minutes; which represents a drop. So far this year the number of ambulance emergency incidents has increased by 2.9 per cent compared to the same period last year. This means the response time is improving despite the increase in demand. I note that the member for Balmain has raised concerns with the retrospectivity of this bill.

Mr Barry Collier: As did the Legislation Review Committee.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: As have others. I understand this is in reference to the Legislation Review Committee report on the bill published on 17 June. The report refers to the "retrospective effect". The member for Balmain stated in his speech that, "People enter into certain agreements understanding the law at the time." This bill does not impose any retrospective liability for payment of ambulance fees that does not already exist.

Members opposite should understand that it is not a new fee; it is an existing fee, a debt that has been incurred but not paid. The law is clear. If someone uses an ambulance service they have an obligation to pay, unless they are exempt due to hardship. That is the point I make to address the stupid scaremongering in which the member for Miranda and others have indulged. The member for Miranda's example of the widowed mother on the property is the most ridiculous claim I have heard.

Hardship exemptions are provided in the bill. It does not change anything. Indeed, that is acknowledged in the Legislation Review Committee report on the bill, which notes that, "The retrospective provision only increases the likelihood that a pre-existing debt will be recovered from a debtor". It does not retrospectively change the rules concerning liability for, or quantum of a debt. However, the bill does provide a more cost-effective and efficient process once the bill commences. This will include debts that are incurred up to the date of commencement of the bill. The value of historical debt and the number of individuals affected ranges from \$21 million in 2008-09, involving about 50,000 invoices, to \$26 million in 2011-12, involving about 68,000 invoices. A trial will be conducted to determine the efficacy and cost of pursuing older debt.

Dr Andrew McDonald: So they are going to do it.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Nothing has changed. This is what we were always intending. The member for Balmain acknowledged in his speech that the new debt collection proposed by the bill will "release people from a court system by introducing a non-court process, which is beneficial for citizens". That is correct; the Government agrees with that point. The member for Balmain went on to ask whether "that benefit outweighs some of the impacts of debt recovery on people who cannot cover the costs" or who do not fit within the exemption categories. I will address the issues of hardship provisions and exemptions shortly.

However, I make the point that the Office of State Revenue has a well-established record of managing the recovery of moneys owing to government. It did that under the Labor Government and it continues to do so under the existing provisions. The Office of State Revenue has policies and processes for engaging directly with affected individuals and working actively to explore payment options in a flexible way. The member for Macquarie Fields, the member for Heffron and others have labelled these provisions "draconian". However, the Government agrees with the member for Balmain that there are advantages to using the expertise and resources of the Office of State Revenue compared with a court-based approach. It is faster, it is cheaper and it is less stressful. It is therefore better value for the people of New South Wales.

The member for Balmain has also asked for clarification regarding clause 19 of schedule 9 to the bill, which permits a property seizure order. The member sought clarification of where this provision came from or whether it was created for this bill. I assure the member that this provision was not created for this bill. The provision is identical to section 76 (1) of the Fines Act. As I have explained, this bill seeks to replicate the very same civil enforcement powers that are now in use. The member for Balmain also raised the issue of review rights contained in the bill. He was specifically concerned about "the fact that the entities seeking the revenue will also be managing the review process".

I remind the House that individuals from whom NSW Ambulance seeks to recover debt have absolutely no statutory review rights in relation to that process. NSW Ambulance has an internal review process in place, but it is administrative only. The bill, for the first time, provides a right of review by the Health Secretary and protects individuals against ongoing enforcement action while a review is undertaken. It also prescribes a minimum time frame—42 days—within which the secretary must conduct the review. Finally, it provides the secretary with a range of options in relation to the outcome, including payment options to accommodate the circumstances of affected individuals. If a debt remains unpaid, and it is referred to the commissioner for fee recovery action, there are further and additional rights of review.

The Office of State Revenue will, as part of its standard operating procedures, engage with individuals to enter into agreed payment plans where appropriate. However, if this process does not result in a satisfactory outcome then individuals have a further right of review to the Hardship Review Board. The Hardship Review Board is separate and independent, both from NSW Ambulance and from the Commissioner of Fines Administration. Throughout the debate, a number of members have referred to individuals who do not have financial capacity to pay. The member for Balmain questioned "the impact of debt recovery on people who cannot cover the costs and who do not fit within the exemption categories".

As I have explained previously, NSW Ambulance already has a policy that permits applications to be made for waiver of debts or payment arrangements on the basis of financial or other hardship. That policy is

publicly available and is administered by NSW Ambulance. It was in place under the former Government and it will remain in place. This policy will be replaced by the provisions of the bill and the payment rules that will be made under the bill. These rules will include provision for financial and other hardship as is the case under the current policy. NSW Ambulance has advised that it will conduct a review of the current policy for the purpose of translating the protections under the proposed payment rules. There will be consultation with affected stakeholders.

A number of statements were made in the debate last night about garnishee orders, and concerns were raised about them being made against individuals on a low income or with limited capacity to pay. I remind the House that section 122 of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 regulates the amount that can be garnisheed from wages in New South Wales. Under these provisions, a garnishee order must not, in total, reduce the weekly wage or salary of a person to less than a prescribed amount. The member for Balmain also sought clarification concerning claims that these measures will apply only to about 7 per cent of cases. This 7 per cent value reflects the number of invoices written off each year as a percentage of the total number of patient episodes provided by NSW Ambulance in that year.

Essentially, it indicates that most people do the right thing and pay their bill. However, in 7 per cent of cases payment is not made despite the best efforts of NSW Ambulance at recovery. This bill will provide a more effective means of recovering debts from the 7 per cent who do not pay. In the event that any of these people are suffering hardship, or if they are in fact exempt, they will not be required to pay. This bill aims to ensure that those with the financial capacity to pay will pay rather than pass this debt on to the taxpayer. I thank the member for Balmain particularly for his questions. They were reasonable and rational. Unlike members of the Opposition, he did not scaremonger. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 59

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

Noes, 19

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

Pairs

Mr Baird
Mr O'Farrell

Ms Burton
Mrs Perry

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mrs Jillian Skinner agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

EDUCATION AMENDMENT (GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS) BILL 2014**Second Reading**

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Education) [4.07 p.m.], on behalf of Ms Gabrielle Upton: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As this bill was introduced in the other place on 28 May 2014, and is in the same form, the second reading speech appears at pages 29208 to 29210 in the *Hansard* for that day. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [4.07 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Education Amendment (Government Schools) Bill. We support this bill, which aims to ensure that the registration and auditing of public schools is similar to that in independent and Catholic schools. We think this is a positive move. We have had detailed discussions with the department, and I thank the Minister and his office for that. We are happy to support this legislation. We want to make sure our schools have the highest possible standards.

This legislation will mean that work conducted by the Department of Education and Communities will be presented to and reviewed by the New South Wales Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES] in the same way in which our independent and Catholic schools are required under legislation. This requires a small amendment which does not have an impact on the closure of schools. It is an opportunity for the public to see that an independent group, BOSTES, is reviewing local public schools. That is an important and positive step. As I have said in the past to both the Minister and those in government, the Opposition will back Government legislation if it thinks it is in the best interests of young people. We would like to think that when we introduce legislation the Government will do the same.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.09 p.m.]: I support the Education Amendment (Government Schools) Bill 2014. This Government is committed to providing high-quality schooling for all New South Wales students and to education reform and improvement necessary for ensuring the future social and economic success of New South Wales. This bill introduces amendments to the Education Act 1990 which support that commitment. These amendments will provide a mechanism of assurance that government schools comply with similar requirements to those required for non-government school registration.

School registration provides parents and the community with assurance that the minimum standards set by the Education Act are being met. The NSW Department of Education and Communities has a unique responsibility for the universal provision of schooling in New South Wales government schools. In this role the department already has extensive and rigorous systems for requiring government schools to meet standards that

are similar to non-government school registration. What is new is that these amendments provide external and independent assurance that those minimum standards are being met. This additional assurance is to come from an independent external body, the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES].

BOSTES is a new agency formed by the merger of the former NSW Board of Studies and the former NSW Institute of Teachers. Its purpose is to support the high standards of New South Wales schooling and to help lead the continuing improvement of educational standards in New South Wales schools, regardless of whether the schools are in the government, the Catholic or the independent sector. With this purpose, and given its independence, BOSTES is best placed to implement processes for assuring government school compliance with the Act. Further, the highly regarded work of the former Board of Studies, now BOSTES, in regulating non-government schools and registration systems, brings high-level expertise and the experience necessary for successfully implementing this Government initiative.

With this amendment, BOSTES will have a new role in advising the Minister in relation to government school compliance with similar requirements to those for non-government school registration. BOSTES' current process for advising the Minister in relation to the registration of Catholic systemic schools provides a sound model that can be readily adapted for this new role. That process for monitoring Catholic registration systems has developed over many years. It is recognised as being collaborative and supportive of the culture and governance responsibilities of each system, as well as rigorous in facilitating a high level of compliance with the Act.

BOSTES will draw on this experience to develop a similar process for government schools. The process will be based on recognition of the authority and responsibility of the department for governing and operating government schools, and for meeting similar requirements that apply to non-government schools. In the Catholic system, the requirements for non-government school registration are determined by the Act. These requirements are detailed in a registration manual published by BOSTES. The registration manual used by Catholic systems is the result of extensive consultation across the non-government sector in New South Wales.

One of the benefits of the manual for Catholic systems is that it identifies the general types of documents and records a school would typically have in place if it is complying with the requirements. This provides a common foundation for each school to develop its curriculum and policies and procedures according to the culture and context of its community. It also allows each school and its community to know the requirements, the type of information or evidence to maintain and how the system will assess its compliance with the requirements.

For government schools, similar requirements will be developed in consultation between the department and BOSTES. The department already has requirements relating to teaching staff, curriculum, records of student achievement, premises and buildings, facilities and the provision of a safe and supportive environment. These requirements will form the basis of the similar requirements for government schools. When finalised, the requirements will assist government schools by establishing shared expectations of the evidence of compliance the department requires.

BOSTES requires each Catholic system to describe the procedures it uses for checking the compliance of its schools. Similarly, the department will describe the systems and strategies it uses for reviewing compliance against the standards. For each Catholic system the process of checking school compliance against the registration requirements is just one aspect of the broader governance structures it has in place for accountability, quality assurance, ongoing improvement and the provision of high-quality education. It is expected that this will also be the case for the department, with its procedures for assessing compliance just one aspect of its overall quality assurance framework.

BOSTES does not impose any prescriptive procedure for checking compliance. It is up to each Catholic system to document its procedures according to the purpose, culture and priorities of the system and its school communities. Similarly, the department's procedures will reflect its governance and operational structures. Across the Catholic systems some common procedures are used for assessing compliance. These include school audits according to a predetermined schedule; online compliance checklists; identifying schools where improvement is required; reviewing and analysing school-based data, records and evidence; monitoring the development and implementation of improvement plans; and targeted support for schools where needed.

The department's current systems for the internal review and monitoring of its schools, along with the development of an online compliance monitoring tool, will form the basis for its procedures for checking

compliance against similar requirements. When documented, these procedures will provide a framework for the systematic and routine monitoring of government schools by the department against clearly identified requirements. When BOSTES monitors a registration system the process focuses on the procedures implemented by the system. This process is consistent with the purpose of BOSTES' monitoring, that is, to be assured that the system's procedures are effective in assessing the compliance of its schools.

In adopting this approach for government school registration, BOSTES will focus on the efficacy of the department's procedures for reviewing compliance. BOSTES conducts monitoring of each system on an annual basis. Typically, the monitoring includes processes for reviewing a sample of the records and evidence maintained by the system in accordance with its procedures; observing the system and undertaking a school audit; reviewing a sample of online compliance tools, as completed by the system's schools; and reporting to the BOSTES Registration and Accreditation Committee.

The specific monitoring processes for any one year are planned in advance, developed in consultation with the system and respond to emerging issues and system initiatives. This approach provides BOSTES with the information necessary for advising the Minister in relation to the registration of systemic non-government schools. A similar approach for government schools will provide the assurance required for advising the Minister in relation to government school compliance with similar requirements of the Act.

BOSTES takes a collaborative, open and consultative approach in its monitoring of Catholic systems. In many ways, the approach seeks to observe what the system would be doing in order to ensure the quality and accountability of its schools, regardless of BOSTES' monitoring. It is expected that this will be the case for the department and its procedures for reviewing government schools. Once established, this amendment to the Act will provide the information necessary for the independent assurance of standards in government schools. This external verification provides the assurance that parents and the community expect.

I take this opportunity to state that this bill has nothing to do with independent public schools. Rather, this bill is about the school registration process applying to the government system, similar to how the Catholic systemic schools are registered. I repeat: This bill is not about independent public schools. I think everyone in this State is aware of the Minister's views on independent public schools. For the reasons I have given, I commend this bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [4.17 p.m.]: I support the Education Amendment (Government Schools) Bill 2014. I commend the hardworking Minister for Education for delivering for the people of New South Wales, particularly country people, yet again. Before I speak in detail on this bill I draw the attention of the House to some people who are not delivering educational outcomes for the people of New South Wales.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: Who are they?

Mr ANDREW GEE: I am speaking of a fringe political group, and, for the benefit of the member for Cessnock, I am not talking about the Labor Party on this occasion; I am talking about that other fringe political group known as The Greens.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Members will resume their seats. I remind members that it is against standing orders to wander around the Chamber.

Mr ANDREW GEE: It is important that the House hears what I am saying because this is about education and about my experience with The Greens' education policy. Back in February I was minding my own business in my electorate office when the staff came in and said, "We can smell smoke." Obviously, bushfires are a real concern in the Central West so I went outside, sniffed the breeze and said to my staff, "No, I do not think that is smoke. I think that is incense. It can mean only one thing: The Greens are on their way to town." I realised then, by the wafting odour that was coming up Bing Street in Orange, that they must have been at about Mount Victoria on their way to Orange.

Ms Linda Burney: You need their votes now and again.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The member for Canterbury is being disrespectful. Sure enough, about two hours later and right on cue, I heard the wonderful sound of wind chimes, the strains of *The Road to Shambala*

and *Kumbaya*, and the clinking of chardonnay glasses. The Greens had rolled into Orange on an educational tour. I could not believe it. There were quite a few Greens, Roman sandals were in abundance. You can tell the difference between Country Labor wearing Roman sandals and The Greens wearing Roman sandals because The Greens wear them with socks. It is all there on Dr John Kaye's website.

Ms Linda Burney: What legislation is this?

Mr ANDREW GEE: Members opposite should bear with me; it will all tie in at the end, trust me. For The Greens, it is all about the photo opportunity. I found on Dr John Kaye's website a travel diary for his trip to Orange. When I looked at it I saw the usual suspects. The chief bomb thrower, Jeremy Buckingham, looks enthusiastic about Dr John Kaye. He is standing there with all the enthusiasm of a limp piece of celery. That is how much he loves Dr John Kaye; I do not think there is much enthusiasm there. The man wearing the red shirt in the picture is important. He is like the man on the grassy knoll. We will hear more about him later. I present that picture as exhibit A.

There was also the obligatory photo opportunity in the media. This picture is the upshot of the huge TAFE protest by The Greens. Take out the Labor members, The Greens and the union organisers and there you have it: five people. The gentleman wearing a Russian hat and sunglasses is showing us the hang loose sign. At first I thought it was Mr Jeremy Buckingham in disguise, but I found out it was a TAFE student. I do not think the students knew why they were there because I met that protester at a Central West jobs expo a couple of weeks later and he had no problems. We are close; we are mates. But wait, there is more. The Greens protest moved to the Central Coast. In the picture taken on the Central Coast we see again the man in the red T-shirt on the grassy knoll, the ring-in. It is all about the ring-ins. Who else was there? Members should pay attention to the lady in the floral dress in the forefront of the picture because she plays a role shortly.

The caravan then moved into Newcastle. Who is in the picture taken at Newcastle? More ring-ins. The man in the red T-shirt on the grassy knoll appears again. That is the way The Greens roll. There were hardly any genuine protestors worried about TAFE in New South Wales. I note that the member for Balmain, also known as the Balmain bandicoot, has entered the Chamber. That is timely because he features in the next exhibit. This picture shows the member for Balmain speaking at Leichhardt Town Hall. To his credit, he is wearing a tie. Who is also there? The woman in the floral dress and more ring-ins. It is all about the ring-ins for The Greens. The Greens caravan, with the incense, the chardonnay, the Roman sandals—

Mr Barry Collier: With socks?

Mr ANDREW GEE: —with socks, as the member for Miranda rightly points out, finally rolled into Parliament House. Who is in the picture taken at Parliament House? The picture on Dr John Kaye's website shows that the woman in the floral dress is back, although she is no longer wearing the same attire. The picture shows Dr John Kaye standing in front—the picture features on his website; it is a big TAFE protest, taking the bill into Parliament House—and if one looks closely one can see that the supporter behind him is giving him rabbit ears behind his head. Why would a member put that on his own website?

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: He might be "my favourite Martian".

Mr ANDREW GEE: The member for Clarence says he might be "my favourite Martian". I do not know what is happening. I call on the member for Balmain, also known as the Balmain bandicoot, to do something about Dr John Kaye's website because it is an embarrassment. It should not fall to The Nationals to help the member for Balmain maintain his dignity in this place. At the end of the day, The Greens are all about banning things. The Government announced a commitment to build a new dam in the Central West. The Greens want to ban dams, rodeos, mining, cattle farming, live cattle exports and wood heaters. Earlier this year—nothing is sacred—they also wanted to ban the *Lord's Prayer* in Parliament.

That was my first experience with a fringe political group and its contribution to education in New South Wales. Having been through that and showing those terrible pictures full of ring-ins and protesters who did not know what they were doing, I am proud that the Minister for Education has introduced the Education Amendment (Government Schools) Bill 2014. He cares about quality education and educational standards, unlike the Roman-sandal wearers with socks opposite who make no real contribution to education in New South Wales. I thoroughly commend the bill to the House.

[*Business interrupted.*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business****Motion by Mr Anthony Roberts agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide for the following routine of business after the conclusion of the discussion on the 10,000 signature petition:

- (1) Consideration of the Education Amendment (Government Schools) Bill.
- (2) Community recognition statements.
- (3) Private members' statements.
- (4) The House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of private members' statements.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT (GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS) BILL 2014**Second Reading**

[Business resumed.]

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.27 p.m.], on behalf of Ms Gabrielle Upton, in reply: I thank the member for Keira and the member for Orange for their contributions to debate on the Education Amendment (Government Schools) Bill 2014. The changes to the Act are supported by the three education sectors and key New South Wales education stakeholders. They are supported because they provide an additional level of external oversight to our largest schooling system while reflecting and supporting the unique roles and responsibilities of government school education. We have the balance right.

This legislation is the next reform in the Government's commitment to ensure that every school in every community provides the education that parents expect. On behalf of the Minister I thank the hardworking staff at the Department of Education and Communities, in particular Janet Davey, Dail McGilchrist and Eric Jamieson, for their assistance on this bill. I thank also the staff at the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards, including David Murphy, for their tireless work. I take the opportunity to thank the staff of the NSW Parliamentary Counsel's Office. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Mark Speakman, on behalf of Ms Gabrielle Upton, agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Legislative Council without amendment.

Pursuant to sessional order discussion on petition signed by 10,000 or more persons proceeded with.

COAL SEAM GAS MINING**Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons**

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [4.30 p.m.]: I commence by thanking the members of the North West Alliance for bringing this petition before the Parliament. I acknowledge the presence of several members of the North West Alliance in the gallery today. I met with Anne Kennedy, Naomi Hogan, Megan Kuhn and Rohan Boehm of the alliance at my office on 27 May. This very productive meeting was held jointly with the office of the Minister for Natural Resources,

Lands and Water. At that meeting representatives of landholders in north-western New South Wales outlined their environmental concerns around coal seam gas and coalmine development, particularly in relation to potential impacts on the Great Artesian Basin. These are concerns that I recognise, and I share their determination to be satisfied on real impacts.

Resource development must be done in a sustainable manner and takes account of all other land users and their interests. As such, I want to make it clear that this Government will protect our water resources and will not allow resource development to have a detrimental effect on water systems. To this end the New South Wales Government has a good story to tell. We have brought in exclusion zones for coal seam gas development to ensure that it occurs only in sensible areas. We have commissioned the Chief Scientist to look into the cumulative impacts of coal seam gas development and provide recommendations on any regulatory changes that may be required. We have introduced an Aquifer Interference Policy and a Well Integrity Code to ensure that our water resources are protected. We have also beefed up our compliance regime with the establishment of the Office of Coal Seam Gas.

As Minister, I have taken a tough stance to ensure that coal seam gas companies are compliant with their licence conditions and applicants for licences meet the highest standards. I can assure the House that this is not an industry for speculators or those without the requisite capabilities to undertake this very complex work. This includes the ability to be a responsible corporate citizen and respect the community one works within. Earlier this year I was proud to join with AGL, Santos and landholder representatives as they signed the Agreed Principles of Land Access framework. In this framework, these two companies agreed to respect the wishes of landholders in relation to the drilling of coal seam gas wells on their land. The willingness of AGL and Santos to sign up to these values demonstrates that they are companies that respect the communities they work within and the landholders they deal with.

I am happy to inform the House that I am working closely with the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands, and Water to ensure that New South Wales has world-class measures in place to monitor and protect our water resources. We are interested in the impact that all commercial activities are having on water systems, not just the potential impact of coal seam gas and mining. I am passionate about making sure that all water users and the environment are adequately protected. I again thank most sincerely the alliance for bringing this petition to the House. We have been listening and acting upon their concerns. I look forward to continuing to work with them to ensure that coalmining and coal seam gas is developed in a responsible and sustainable manner in this State.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I inform the public in the gallery that they are here by invitation. If they continue to make remarks the gallery will be cleared. I ask those in the public gallery not to make further comment. The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [4.33 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition I contribute to debate on the petition requesting legislation to protect agricultural land, bushland, drinking water supplies and underground aquifers from coal seam gas and coalmining activities. I acknowledge the number of community members, including farmers, traditional owners and local residents who have travelled from north-western New South Wales to witness this debate. I praise the community for obtaining the 11,000 signatures that appear on the petition, which reflects the strong sentiment of those in north-western New South Wales to coal seam gas.

On a number of occasions the former Minister for Resources and Energy indicated publicly that coal seam gas cannot be left in the ground, and until very recently that seemed to dictate government policy. Shortly after the 2011 election, the Labor Party announced that it had learnt its lesson from the election results. The Leader of the Opposition then announced that there should be a moratorium on coal seam gas mining until the Government could be satisfied that coal seam gas could be safely mined. Community outrage across the State caused the New South Wales Government to finally act. The former Premier overruled the former Minister for Resources and Energy as to exclusion zones and engaged the Chief Scientist to review the matter. Do I need to remind the House that to this day the Chief Scientist of New South Wales cannot tick off coal seam gas mining?

The Chief Scientist of New South Wales was commissioned to conduct that review on 21 February 2013, some 16 months ago. The Chief Scientist's initial report was dated July 2013. In that report she said that the issue was complex and the review was expected to continue well into 2014. The Chief Scientist of New South Wales cannot tick off the safe extraction of coal seam gas mining so there is no point in reviewing licences as the Government has done. There is equally no point in putting fear into the people of New South Wales or for the Minister for Resources and Energy to now have an epiphany in relation to coal seam gas

mining because the vested interests have been having their way. For too long New South Wales has been turned into a quarry for the vested interests to extract coal seam gas and make money for their shareholders, overseas investors and fund managers at the expense of prime agricultural land and aquifers.

Do I need to remind the House that it was only a month or two ago that the Government voted down an Opposition amendment to ban coal seam gas mining in Sydney's water catchment area? Why would the Government do that? The law does not permit one to fish in the Sydney water catchment area nor to light a fire, yet one can mine coal seam gas. No, the Liberals and The Nationals were not prepared to support Labor in protecting Sydney's water supply. The Government is trying to convince the people of New South Wales that it has had an epiphany in relation to coal seam gas and coalmining in order to get to the 2015 State election. It will then open the gates and I will tell you how. When gas prices start to rise because of the export gas facilities, the Government will blame the increased gas price on the fact that no coal seam gas is being mined in New South Wales. The legitimate concern of the people of north-western New South Wales is being backed by the Chief Scientist of New South Wales. No member of Parliament should rest or allow the continued destruction of aquifers or prime agricultural land until we know it is safe to do so.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western NSW) [4.38 p.m.]: I too acknowledge the members of the North West Alliance, those present in the gallery and those who cannot be here today for bringing this petition before the Parliament. I also acknowledge other concerned members who have raised this issue in the Parliament today and prior. As my colleague the Minister for Resources and Energy has mentioned, both my office and I have met with members of the North West Alliance and other groups on multiple occasions.

People like me and the Minister for Resources and Energy have listened to their concerns and we continue to listen to community concern. As someone who has spent the vast majority of my life living and working in north-west New South Wales—apart from six years spent in the southern part of Tasmania—I am well aware of conservation issues and what local communities are saying. It is a pity the previous Government was not. What this Government and the North West Alliance have in common is that we are both committed to protecting the State's precious water resources and assets.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: We know that from one end of New South Wales to the other water is the lifeblood of our State's diverse regional communities, industries and economies. I am very proud to say that, with the support of my community and the extended community, no government has done more than the Liberal-Nationals Government to protect our water resources and to ensure that resource development does not have a detrimental effect on water systems. The Minister for Resources and Energy and I have been working together very closely to put in place Australia's strictest and most transparent regulations to monitor and protect our water resources. We have introduced vital safeguards and oversight through measures such as the gateway panel, which is playing an extremely important role in providing independent scientific assessment on major resources projects. We are linking up with the independent expert advisory panel under our Federal agreement.

In addition, the Land and Water Commissioner has been working closely with the Chief Scientist to develop a robust water monitoring framework and has been engaging local communities in the process. That process is currently underway and will be ongoing. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has delivered the nation's first clear and objective Aquifer Interference Policy, which applies across the State and to all exploration and extraction activities. The Aquifer Interference Policy protects our aquifers while balancing the water use needs of agriculture, the community, the resources industry and the environment now and into the future. This policy delivers on two election commitments of this Government: the protection of water resources from the impacts of mining and coal seam gas exploration and extraction; and returning decision-making powers to independent experts. I am pleased this afternoon to say that we have acted on the concerns of groups such as the North West Alliance and delivered the strictest protections anywhere in Australia for the State's water resources.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [4.42 p.m.]: I begin by recognising country and the lands of the Gomeroi people of north-western New South Wales. I also congratulate people in the public gallery who have made an incredible effort to gather 11,000 signatures on this petition. It shows their passion, distress and the level of concern in their part of the country about gas mining activities, agricultural land, bushland, drinking water, underground aquifers and Aboriginal cultural heritage, on which I will focus. I thank those whom

I have met today, particularly the Aboriginal women, and also members of the North West Alliance whom I have met in the past. Today I heard about how some mining companies conducting their activities on the lands of the traditional owners are destroying sacred burial grounds, scarred trees and other sites important to men and women. I am also well aware of the concerns of other citizens within the community, particularly landholders, about the way in which mining licences are granted as well as the damage that will be done to the land. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are worried about their lack of rights to their heritage, culture and lands.

The north-west New South Wales community has major concerns about the Narrabri Gas Project that is proposed to include up to 850 production gas wells across the Pilliga forest. My speaking time today is limited but I encourage the community to maintain their outrage and to approach members of this House who make decisions about what is best for the State. Clearly, the people understand what is best for the State. They know what is close to their hearts, culture, peoples and country. They are hearing gumpf from the Government, which is trying to pacify them and cover up the fact that it wants to exploit their lands, country and cultures for its own gain. That is not acceptable.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.45 p.m.], by leave: I thank the Minister. I also thank the North West Alliance, a coalition of more than 30 groups, for its fantastic work. The alliance has worked hard to gather more than 11,000 signatures. In particular, I thank Nicky Chirlian and Rowan Bonham for their fantastic work. In this debate we have heard from the Labor Party and the Government. To some extent it is a remarkable turnaround on the part of the Labor Party, after 16 years of profligately issuing coal seam gas licences and supporting the coal industry without question. The Government has taken some steps to reverse that, but more needs to be done. An important issue that has not been raised in this debate is that this is not only about coal seam gas but also about coal. The decision being made by omission is between food and water or coal and coal seam gas exploration.

The Greens believe in the precautionary principle. We believe projects should not proceed unless the burden of proof, which should fall on the proponents, is absolute. The Chief Scientist has indicated that the jury is still out on coal seam gas. We know that there are no guarantees or definitive proof in relation to extraction—whether it is a new coalmine or coal seam gas exploration—that the Great Artesian Basin will not be under threat and that other important aquifers or river systems will not be endangered. The key issue that needs to be addressed—and which has been brought to us by the petition—is not just an argument about what regulation is available but also what is the future of energy in New South Wales, this country and the world? Unless we transition to renewable energy we will fight forever and a day about coal and coal seam gas. We must address the question of how we will achieve 100 per cent renewables in this State and nationally. Without renewable energy at the heart of this Government and of future planning, we will never move forward.

Our economy must be focused on renewable energy. We need to transition to 100 per cent renewables. We need to stop new mines and coal seam gas exploration, in particular, because the evidence is not clear. It cannot be proved that there will be no impact on land, water and the communities in the areas the North West Alliance represents. It seems to me that this is an opportunity not to continue to fight about energy that is not renewable but to focus on solar, solar thermal, wind and a whole range of other technologies—where we know there are billions of dollars in the pipeline—that are waiting to be supported by this Government. I thank all the people in the public gallery for their efforts. We are at the beginning of this campaign. We are at the beginning of an historical change about how we deal with energy, our land and our future.

Discussion concluded.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

WATERMAN OF THE YEAR CAMERON PYETT

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.49 p.m.]: I congratulate Cameron Pyett, a Cronulla resident, on recently winning the Waterman of the Year award at the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association 2014 national conference at Coffs Harbour. Cameron represented New South Wales in the OPSM international challenge, which he also won along with his colleague Steve Winner. Cameron's individual success saw him achieve first place in the open board rescue event, second place in the ocean surf swim event and third place in the open one kilometre beach run event.

MRS ADA STAADER AND AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.49 p.m.]: I am proud to commend to members well-known local Maryland hero Mrs Ada Staader. I had the pleasure of attending Ada's Australia's Biggest Morning Tea event. This was Ada's fifteenth year of hosting a very successful Australia's Biggest Morning Tea event for the Cancer Council. It is hard to believe that in the Hunter there were more than 800 tea parties. I applaud everyone who hosted a party or went along to one to support this fantastic cause. Special thanks go to Ada for all her work and to all those who attended Ada's event. I loved the delicious chocolate slice—yum!

THE OBSERVATORY HOTEL, PORT MACQUARIE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [4.50 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to acknowledge Chris and Trish Denny, the directors of The Observatory Hotel in Port Macquarie. This hotel is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, as well as being shortlisted in the sustainability category for the 2014 World Boutique Hotel Awards. Having their hotel considered for such a prestigious award is nothing new to the Chris and Trish Denny—The Observatory Hotel has previously won the award for best deluxe hotel in New South Wales and was runner up in the deluxe accommodation category at the 2013 Australian Tourism Awards.

The Observatory Hotel has won awards for sustainability and environmental excellence, due to Chris and Trish's efforts to make the hotel environmentally conscious. Carbon neutrality was achieved in 2012, and last year 234 solar panels were installed on the hotel roof. They provide enough power for 100 guests per week. Such efforts speak volumes of Chris and Trish's passion for the environment. Congratulations to Chris and Trish on The Observatory Hotel's 10-year anniversary and for being shortlisted for the 2014 World Boutique Hotel Awards in the sustainability category. I thank them for their commitment to sustainability.

ASHCROFT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.51 p.m.]: I recognise the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Ashcroft High School held on Saturday 24 May at the Liverpool Catholic Club. Ashcroft High School does well at celebrating its important milestones, as it did for the fortieth anniversary celebrations at which I was also present. At the recent event 540 guests were present, including Chris Hayes, MP; councillors Wendy Waller and Anne Stanley from the Liverpool City Council; and previous deputy principals Garry Joannides and Davern Lewis. The master of ceremonies for the night was current principal Ted Noon. Other guests included academics from the University of Western Sydney, the University of New South Wales and the University of Newcastle. An acknowledgement of country was given by Auntie Mae Robinson.

The theme of the evening was "Past, present and future". The proceedings commenced with displays from various groups from the school, starting with Aboriginal student performers and including the school's didgeridoo group, an islander display and a dance group. The school, of course, has had signification highlights, including in the areas of sport, creative arts and performing arts. Rooms connecting the main hall gave more details on the theme of the evening, "Past, present and future". The school is currently pursuing its future plan 2014-24. It is pursuing a twenty-first century learning and innovation centre with green environmental design.

BALKAN FLOODS

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [4.52 p.m.]: I express my sympathy for the many victims of recent floods in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia caused by unprecedented rainfall the likes of which have not been seen in a century. The rainfall over the Balkans has caused more than 3,000 landslides, the deaths of 47 people and the displacement of more than 60,000 people following the overflow of the Sava River and its tributaries. In the wake of this disaster, entire villages and towns were inundated—causing loss of human life and extensive damage to property—land, houses, roads, bridges and railway lines. Farm animals and other valuable assets were lost across the country and dormant World War II landmines were exposed. Many victims only had enough time to collect their personal belongings before fleeing their properties. On 9 June I attended a humanitarian fundraising event at Bonnyrigg Sports and Community Club. It was given great support by the local Serbian Australian community. Financial donations can be made through the Australian Red Cross. They have made a sterling contribution in salvaging the situation in the Balkans.

MADONNA DELLE GRAZIE

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.53 p.m.]: I recently attended the Madonna delle grazie religious festival at Club Marconi. In the village of Tresilico in the region of Reggio Calabria in Italy the month of May is dedicated to the figure of the mother—the Madonna. The festival is celebrated with a large procession through the town, which is followed by celebrations and fireworks. It is great that this tradition has been carried over to Australia. It is one of the occasions when the Australian Italian community can get together and celebrate their heritage. It is also an important religious occasion during which Italian Catholics pray for the Madonna's blessing. I thank the festival organisers for organising such a fantastic event, the committee of the Association Maria SS Delle Grazie Santuario di Tresilico and the event sponsors.

MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.53 p.m.]: I inform the House that Elana Withnall from Old Bar has been selected to represent Australia at the 2014 Oceania Athletics Championships in the Cook Islands this month. Elana is a heptathlete and won the event in Tahiti in 2013. She also won a silver medal in the women's 4 x 400 metre relay. In 2014 Elana will try to retain her title and she will also contest the individual women's 100 metres hurdles. Elana is studying full time for a Bachelor of Sports Business degree and trains up to seven times per week to meet the unique demands of her seven-event heptathlon program.

I further inform the House that Joshua Bird from Wingham has received a major award at the North Coast TAFE Student Recognition Awards, which were held in Coffs Harbour earlier this month. The awards are recognition that the students receiving them are the best, due to their hard work and the great support provided by teaching and administrative staff from North Coast TAFE. Joshua received his award for successful completion of his Diploma of Information Technology. As a result of winning this award, he has been nominated for the wider New South Wales State Training Awards for the Northern region of TAFE.

MINCHINBURY MANOR

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.54 p.m.]: I ask the House to recognise that Minchinbury Manor, in the Mount Druitt electorate, is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. In a recent article in a local newspaper it was reported that the aged care facility was established when a property developer decided to establish Minchinbury Manor when he found it difficult to have his father placed in a facility that was suitable to him. In a relatively short time, Minchinbury Manor has become an established facility in the electorate. I acknowledge the owners and staff, who provide a high standard of care to the elderly in my electorate.

NEW ENGLAND GIRLS SCHOOL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.55 p.m.]: I commend the students from New England Girls School [NEGS] who participated, with great success, in Wingham Beef Week late last month. Year 11 team captain Kate Cannington won the paraders' competition for her age group and was second in the junior judging. Year 6 St John's student Elijah Layton was awarded second place in his paraders' competition for his age group and first place in the under-12 herdsperson competition. Year 8 and year 9 students Amelia Edmonds and Emma Costello were awarded second place in their respective paraders' competitions. Emma was also assistant judge of the show—courtesy of her stellar efforts at last year's event.

Other students who were placed in their paraders' competitions were Amber Strelitz, Olivia Carter and Caitlin Bonnici. The four NEGS charolais and charolais-cross steers also placed in the lightweight class. I congratulate NEGS agriculture teacher Mark Fisher and all students involved on their work ethic, professionalism and effort that resulted in their fantastic achievements at Wingham Beef Week. I wish them all the very best for future competitions.

BANKSTOWN BULLS JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.56 p.m.]: As the member for Bankstown and shadow Minister for Youth it gave me great pleasure to attend the fundraiser for the Bankstown Bulls Junior Rugby League Club on Saturday 14 June. The Bankstown Bulls are based at Ruse Park, Bankstown, and are a staple amongst our local sporting clubs. They have a very strong following amongst many families in the Bankstown area. The Bankstown Bulls are fielding 21 teams this year in the Canterbury-Bankstown Junior Rugby League, under-6 through to under-13, and the Sydney Combined Competition under-14 and up. The club has a strong

focus on junior development. I acknowledge Bankstown Bulls club president Najib Nohra, secretary Danny Safetly, and other executive committee members, including Romiz Barakat and Ted El Sayed for their incredible efforts—not only in organising a wonderful fundraiser for the club but also in coordinating the club's teams through the season and supporting the many young people and families involved with this terrific club.

MRS WIN NEWTON, MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [4.57 p.m.]: I congratulate Win Newton, a Berowra resident of 57 years, on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in this year's Queen's Birthday honours list. Win has been a volunteer "Pink Lady" in the children's ward of Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital since 1972. She has provided a cheery face to many patients who were going through, in some cases, considerable suffering. In 2012 she was awarded a certificate of appreciation for 40 years of service from the hospital. Whilst doing this she has also volunteered for Meals on Wheels for the past 20 years. She has also run bingo sessions through the Hospital Games Auxiliary, raising money for the children's ward at Hornsby-Ku-ring-gai Hospital and the Richard Jeeves Centre for dementia in Turrumurra.

Win was awarded the Community Service Award by the Rotary Club of Turrumurra in 2003, and the Rotary Club of Berowra in 2011. I nominated her for the Hornsby Local Woman of the Year Award last year. Win does an outstanding job in our community. Win has dedicated her life to serving others. This work shows the difference one individual can make in a community. It is the people like Win who make the Hornsby community what it is. I congratulate her on this well-deserved award, and wish her the best with her continued involvement in the Hornsby community far into the future. She is a living treasure.

FRIENDS OF PYRMONT COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.58 p.m.]: I commend the contribution of the Friends of Pyrmont Community Centre, a group of residents who involve and include the wider community in the resources, networks and services of this City of Sydney facility. I have attended the group's monthly dinners, where funds raised are allocated to local groups supporting vulnerable people. I have met many inspiring residents who give their time, skills and effort to build a supportive community and help people in need. More than 7,000 people took part in the group's annual Christmas in Pyrmont Street fair—with musical groups, activities, exhibitions and children's events. I am looking forward to attending this year's event. The group has an annual program of events, including Clean Up Australia Day events, first aid courses and family open days. The group distributes regular newsletters to more than 6,000 residents. This is vital in an area where there are many new residents. I congratulate the Friends of Pyrmont Community Centre on their strong and caring spirit, and the work they do to build an inclusive community.

MAITLAND ELECTORATE YOUNG ACHIEVERS

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland) [4.59 p.m.]: This week congratulations go to 16-year-old Brad Elder of Louth Park on his recent successes in our local harness racing competition. Brad has followed in the footsteps of his father, Darren, and his grandfather in the sport by securing his first win in just his second drive on 30 May on board Paint Me Canvas. I wish Brad all the best with his future races and hope that many wins remain for him. I am proud to see that Maitland junior rugby league talent remains strong with Jesse Cronin, Brock Lamb and Callen Edwards, who were recently selected in the New South Wales Combined Catholic Colleges under-15s team and the New South Wales Combined Catholic Colleges open team respectively.

Jesse attends All Saints College, St Joseph's Campus in Lochinvar while Brock and Callen are both students at All Saints College, St Mary's Campus in Maitland. I hope their sporting futures are bright. I am sure the Maitland Pickers will be thrilled to see such young talent coming through in our community. I also thank the Earthcare Park Landcare group for the Avian Awareness Adventure they conducted on Sunday at Earthcare Park, particularly Eric Huber and Trees in Newcastle. It was a great day out and a pleasure to see some of the work they have done with bush regeneration. We saw some wonderful birds.

NULKABA PUBLIC SCHOOL SILVER ANGELS

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [5.00 p.m.]: I congratulate the Silver Angels, the new State aerobics champions from Nulkaba Public Schools. The Silver Angels are year 3 students Maddison, Ayva, Cooper and Mali. They finished second at last week's State Championships, which included a 4.00 a.m. start from Cessnock to travel to the Sutherland shire to compete. They are off to Brisbane in August of this year. Go get them, the Nulkaba's Silver Angels!

JOHN HOWARD DEBATING CUP

THE HILLS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.00 p.m.]: I congratulate the Sydney University Liberal Club on hosting the John Howard Debating Cup on Thursday 22 May at St John's College. Federal Minister for Education Christopher Pyne and Federal Attorney-General George Brandis were in attendance, as were the Hon. Catherine Cusack, the Hon. Peter Phelps and others from the upper House. The event was a great success, despite protestor's best efforts, which included trespass and the destruction of property. I am sure this House would agree that those responsible for organising the protest should reimburse the college for all damages. I look forward to the final adjudication by John Howard between Sydney University Liberal Club and the UTS Liberal Club.

I congratulate the University of Wollongong Liberal Club and the University of Newcastle Liberal Club who also won their rounds. I thank former President Alex Dore for organising the event and congratulate William Dawes, the new President. The Hills District Historical Society does a magnificent job of documenting the history of our shire and their latest publication, *Transport in the Hills District*, does not disappoint. Mail contracts along Windsor, Old Northern and Pennant Hills roads, buses, which I know are close to the heart of the member for Hawkesbury and me, and the North West Rail Links—the original as well as the second edition—are all covered. I congratulate Julie Graham, Pam Trimmer, Megan Mulhall and the entire society on a wonderful publication.

AUTISM ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.01 p.m.]: On Saturday 3 May 2014 I attended the sixth annual Foundation of Hope Charity Ball of the Autism Advisory and Support Service. Ms Kathy Wintery recited a truly moving poem, speeches were delivered from special guests and the Cecil Hills High School Choir provided entertainment that moved the entire gathering. I thank Mrs Grace Fava, President of the Autism Advisory and Support Service, and the Autism Advisory and Support Service Committee for their kind invitation. I congratulate the Autism Advisory and Support Service on hosting another successful ball and I wish the service all the very best in its future endeavours.

PARKES MAYOR KEN KEITH, AO

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.02 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to Parkes Mayor Councillor Ken Keith, who was recently recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List when he received a Member of the Order of Australia for his tremendous service to the Parkes shire. Ken's love of the Parkes shire has seen him serve on Parkes Shire Council since 1983. Ken became mayor in 2008 after holding the position of deputy mayor for 17 years. Ken has an extensive record of service not only to the Parkes community but also to other boards and groups to which he has contributed and continues to contribute greatly—the list is too long to recognise them all individually.

However, on a personal note, I have been honoured to work with Ken in his capacity as Chair of Centroc, an association for Central New South Wales councils. It is important to note that Ken can also be seen front and centre as he sports his famous red jumpsuit at the Elvis festival every year in Parkes. I had the honour of joining in the celebrations this year. My congratulations go to Ken on this outstanding recognition and also to Sue, his supporting wife of 30 years, who has been there through it all. They are a great team. Congratulations, Ken.

WOOLLAHRA PUBLIC SCHOOL NOTABLES PROJECT

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [5.03 p.m.]: On Friday 13 June 2014 I was pleased to attend student presentations for the year 6 Notables project at Woollahra Public School. The project required students to select a person who has made a positive contribution to democracy, and dress and act the part of that person. Students chose people who have done their part in furthering democracy, including the late Baroness Margaret Thatcher, the late Nelson Mandela, the late Benazir Bhutto and George Washington to name a few. I congratulate the year 6 students on their research and performance skills, which were on full display during their presentations. I also commend principal Simon Symeou and assistant principal Samantha Nicol for encouraging the pursuit of knowledge in creative ways such as the Notables project, as well as the teachers at Woollahra Public School.

Community recognition statements concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FORGACS FAMILY DAY

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [5.04 p.m.]: On Saturday 24 May this year Forgacs had a family day at its Tomago facility in the Hunter. The general public was invited inside for a sausage sizzle and a guided tour around the advanced manufacturing facilities. There was music, a jumping castle and fairy floss for the kids, and a great deal of detailed technical information for curious adults. Forgacs estimates the family day was attended by about 1,000 people, which is fantastic. Although I could not attend on the day, I have been told that it was a great event and a very informative look at one of the Hunter's most vital manufacturers. Mr Pat Carroll, whom I know, attended the event and said:

It was a great opportunity to show my wife and son what I do at work every day.

He is a long-time Forgacs employee. Before working at the Tomago site Mr Carroll spent many years on Forgacs iconic floating dock, which is one of the landmarks of Newcastle's harbour. Pat said:

All of us blokes are proud of the work we do, so it was great to show the public what we do and how we do it.

For those unfamiliar with Forgacs, it is a maritime engineering company that has done a lot of work for the Royal Australian Navy. It has become a fixture in Newcastle and the Hunter since it was founded 50 years ago by Hungarian immigrant Stephen Forgacs. Forgacs is currently part of the team building the \$8 billion Hobart Class Air Warfare Destroyers [AWD] for the Department of Defence and is manufacturing 37 of the 93 AWD blocks at its indoor modular shipbuilding facilities at Carrington, Newcastle, and Tomago. The family day on that Saturday was organised to celebrate the completion of the four latest destroyer hull modules at the Tomago site. These modules, referred to as blocks, are built here and then put on a barge, shipped down the Hunter River, and then on to Adelaide where the destroyers are assembled.

On 26 May blocks 401, 403, 405 and 407 left Newcastle. They will soon comprise part of the Royal Australian Navy's next generation of warships. I salute Forgacs for giving the public a chance to see what it does and how it does it. However, Forgacs, along with manufacturing in the Hunter generally, is facing a dire crisis. In February it was reported that Forgacs is facing "the valley of death", the time between the end of current shipbuilding projects and the start of new work. Part of the problem is that the Federal Government is refusing to confirm new work for Forgacs. The Federal Government is delaying decisions on any new contracts after it produces a new defence white paper in the first months of 2015. Chief Executive Officer Lindsay Stratton has warned:

We have barely 18 months before we lose 900-plus people out of our organisation.

In August next year the Tomago facility may be forced to close. A commentator on the ABC's online report writes:

It could be a greater loss than expected. The loss of a standing workforce will blowout timelines and costs trying to recruit new skilled labour.

Daniel Wallace, an organiser from the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, said:

This uncertainty starts to create an environment where people think, "Should I pack up now" and can hinder future contracts.

We need to invest in our regions and not simply in the primary resource sectors. Australia should be investing in our skilled labourers and manufacturing industry; we should be looking at local manufacturers, local know-how and local skills to meet our defence and transport needs. Why has the Federal Government frozen Australian firms out of the building process to build two new supply ships for the Royal Australian Navy? Instead of helping Australian businesses, Australian industry and Australian workers, this work will go to South Korea or Spain. How does that help the Hunter economy? The defence Minister criticised the Australian shipbuilding industry as dysfunctional and I think the hardworking men and women at Forgacs might vigorously disagree.

With the mining boom winding down and the Abbott Government unwilling to invest properly in the digital infrastructure necessary for twenty-first century economies, perhaps it is time to reconsider government procurement policies and shore up local manufacturing. The Government must start by building the \$2.8 billion

worth of new trains in the Hunter, where we have the infrastructure and skills base ready to go, rather than purchasing them off the shelf from overseas. We have to act to support Australian industry, Australian business and Australian workers and their families.

GASTROSCHISIS AWARENESS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.09 p.m.]: This afternoon I will share with the House the story of a lovely young girl from my electorate named Amanda Valentiner. I met Amanda two weeks ago in my South Coast electorate office. Her start to life was precarious, to say the least, and her journey in life for the past 19 years has not been without complication. Nevertheless, Amanda wants to share her story through me speaking in Parliament and in other ways. She wants to raise awareness and start a foundation for parents whose children are born with the very rare condition she suffers from, which is called gastroschisis.

Amanda is an extremely impressive young lady. I was delighted to meet her with her mother and stepfather and hear about her strength. Amanda was born on 26 April 1995 in the King George Hospital and was later transferred by the Newborn and Paediatric Emergency Transport Service [NETS] to Campbelltown Hospital. Amanda's mother was informed that her daughter had a small hernia and that there was nothing to worry about. As the day proceeded it became apparent that there was indeed a lot to worry about. Amanda was not suffering from a small hernia but rather the rare condition gastroschisis in which babies are born with their stomachs outside their bodies.

Two doctors undertook repair surgery but Amanda's parents were informed that her chances of survival were slim and that they should start to make preparations for their baby's funeral. The doctors' doubt about Amanda's future was most likely due to the fact that gastroschisis was and is a rare condition and little was known about whether the repair surgery would work. However, after repair surgery Amanda miraculously continued to improve, thrive and grow over the next six weeks of her life. More than 19 years later Amanda wants to tell others her story of survival. Over the years Amanda has suffered bouts of appendicitis and had her appendix removed. Following CT scans it has been discovered that her stomach is upside down and back to front and that her spleen "floats up and down". Amanda told me that she thinks about having children in the future but that is uncertain because it is not known how her condition might affect her chances of giving birth.

I raise this issue in the House because Amanda wants to start a gastroschisis foundation. She wants to raise awareness of the condition and is endeavouring to locate parents or children who may wish to connect and share their experiences through a support group. That is the crux of the matter. If a support group is created parents of children with the condition can share their stories and help each other. At the moment there is little research on gastroschisis and there are no support groups. I think Amanda also told me that there is no foundation for the condition in Australia. Amanda has contacted media outlets to no avail, probably because it is a rare condition that nobody has heard about. She is waiting for somebody to take an interest in her story so that at 19 years of age she can start raising funds to create a foundation to help other people in future.

I encourage members to contact me if they wish to assist Amanda either by connecting her with others or helping her to start her foundation. She is a brave and intelligent young lady who is articulate, compassionate and willing to share her story to help others. Even though it is quite embarrassing for Amanda to show photographs of herself as a baby with her condition she has grown to learn how to live with some of its debilitating aspects. She has come to terms with her condition and is now adequately and appropriately mature to say that she wants to help somebody else by telling her story about gastroschisis. I believe she has met with other members of Parliament. I urge members of the media to contact Amanda Valentiner or my office so that she can advance her aspiration of starting a foundation to help others.

WORKCOVER SCHEME

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.13 p.m.]: I will start by claiming credit for the Blues 6-4 win against Queensland last night on the basis that they trained in Coffs Harbour. I congratulate all people involved at the Coffs Harbour training camp. I also congratulate Laurie Daley as coach and Paul Gallen as captain, who was named man of the match. The best way for me to make my private member's statement is to read onto the record an email I received from Warren Whitten from Arc Attack Engineering. He writes:

Andrew

Thank you for following up on this problem. Mate my problem is how easy the worker can go on compo and I can't do anything about it.

Case one - Worker redundant on the 17-7-12 and went on compo with 7 days after being made redundant. He has not had to fill in any paper work that he had injured himself at work. Now this person is still on compo for a tennis elbow going on for 2 years. His wage were done on the new change over period that your government brought in. So his wages for the first 26 weeks were \$964 gross - more than he was getting at work and now he is on \$784.00 gross for as long as he can get away with it. Why would you want to go back to work and have your wages reduced?? Some of that period he has had off, we have caught him working every day for 6 months but the insurance company couldn't or wouldn't try and catch him out. By the way, he told all the staff he hurt himself playing tennis at Christmas earlier that year but the insurance company said it wouldn't stand up even if everyone signed a state dec.

Case 2 - Worker hurt himself shutting the workshop door 6 weeks off. That day he didn't shut the door. I did - with 3 other people as witnesses but the insurance company just paid the worker to have time off, then we find out he got hurt playing soccer.

Case 3 - Worker sexual harassment claim. 6 x weeks paid holiday!! She started a new job even though I had enough evidence to squash the claim, but under the rules had to be paid. This was after the worker told most of the staff what she was doing.

Case 4 - Worker hurts himself while starting a new family business and is still on compo. This person cannot carry any items or drive but I have caught him carrying boxes and driving around but what I see means nothing to the insurance company. He has refused to come back to work on light duties, refused to go other doctor meetings, trying to go on stress (but the insurer managed to throw this aspect out).

Case 5 - The worker is on sick leave but when that runs out he will be on compo. I gave him a letter to have a meeting 4 days later for a disciplinary meeting. He tells me to @@ and that I'm going on stress. So (as per the regulations) we fill out a incident report and guess what - the insurance company accepts it!! Now this bloke told the insurance company he wasn't putting in a claim but we have no doubt that when he runs out of money this will change and there is nothing I can do about it.

All us employers want is a fair system and for the doctor's to stop being so liberal in handing out workcover certificates because at the moment this is killing small business ...

This is not an isolated case. Mr Whitten is just one constituent on whose behalf we have made representations to insurers and WorkCover. I commend the Ministers for the Government's full review of the WorkCover scheme. Even though we have saved money and made it tougher for employees to get workers compensation, it appears that these sorts of rorts are rife in the workplace. It is the employer who ends up footing the bill. That bill includes employing other people, paying increased premiums and creating a situation that at the very least gives ulcers to employers who are trying to do the right thing by their employees. It is sad that the good employers who pay above the normal wage are the ones who suffer. I have raised this issue in this House on other occasions. I raise it again because WorkCover and insurance companies need to protect employers. If employers did not have the added expense of these dud claims they would employ more people and give us a stronger economy. I condemn the people who rort the system.

CRONULLA ELECTORATE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.18 p.m.]: I am delighted to acknowledge four Cronulla constituents who have been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for their service and dedication to the community. Lorna Stone of Sylvania has been appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her services to Sylvanvale and the many other community organisations to which she so tirelessly volunteers her time. Lorna has dedicated much of her life to supporting a wide range of organisations. Included in the long list are Sutherland Hospital, the Hope for the Children Foundation, Assistance Dogs Australia, Sutherland Food Services and the NSW Community Welfare Appeals Tribunal.

Lorna is the patron of the Lamrock Committee of St George Hospital, a life member of the Federation of the Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW and president of the Women's Pioneer Society of Australasia. Lorna's passion for community work grew from her volunteering at her four children's school, Sylvania High School. She is particularly proud of starting the Sylvania P & C Life Members Good Citizen Award. Lorna is a former State member of Parliament for Sutherland and a former Sutherland Shire Councillor.

Shirley Cameron of Cronulla was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her commitment to the surf life saving movement. Shirley become involved in the surf life saving movement at the age of 16 and since 1975 has been a life member of North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club. Shirley has been committee president for 33 years and dedicates her time to fund-raising and assisting with events. Ms Cameron is also a life member of Cronulla RSL Memorial Swimming Club.

William Anderson of Sylvania received a Public Service Medal for outstanding public service in New South Wales. Bill has been recognised in particular for his contribution to the Schools Spectacular show. Mr Anderson has been an executive producer of the Schools Spectacular since 2008. He is a strong advocate of ensuring all students receive a well-rounded education. He has helped to raise over \$13 million for extra school

programs and established a school sporting program for physical activity and sport. Throughout his life Mr Anderson received encouragement from others and now he seeks to encourage people to achieve the best they can.

Rural Fire Service volunteer Peter Carter of Caringbah received an Australian Fire Service Medal. He has been a member of the Rural Fire Service since 1982 and was one of the first firefighters to attend the Como-Jannali fires in 1985. Mr Carter has used his extensive expertise to train rural fire service volunteers to become skilled firefighters. Peter's contribution to rural firefighting is world class and he has developed a course that has set a world standard for the training of incident controllers in major incidents. I congratulate all four constituents for their wonderful achievement of being recognised in the 2014 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

WALK FOR RESPECT RALLY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.21 p.m.]: I was proud to attend the recent Walk for Respect rally, which was a public display of unity against racism and bigotry. The Bankstown community is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse in all of Australia. Bankstown has become a home to people from all corners of the globe who are proud of their rich cultural heritage and Australian identity. Multiculturalism is deeply rooted in the very fabric of our society. I was delighted to join a crowd of more than 1,000 people representing the broad spectrum of cultural and ethnic diversity in the Bankstown, Lakemba and Canterbury regions. The crowd cheerfully rallied in support of the right of everyone in Australia to live free from discrimination and hate speech based on their race, ethnic origin or the colour of their skin.

Specifically, the Walk for Respect signified our community's public opposition to the Federal Liberal Government's proposal to amend section 18C of the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975. Labor introduced the protections against racial hate speech in section 18C almost 20 years ago, and we continue to stand by those protections today. Section 18C protects against offensive behaviour because of race, colour or national or ethnic origin. The section makes it unlawful for a person to commit an act when that act is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of that person or group of people.

The Federal Government's proposed changes would allow for insulting, offensive and bigoted actions and speech, and seem to undermine and misrepresent the multicultural nature of Bankstown and the wider Australian community. The sense of harmony in our local community was proudly on display during the Walk for Respect. Participants, both young and old, put forward a united front in celebration of the multicultural face of our community. The Walk for Respect was brought to life thanks to energetic performances from many of the different cultural groups present including a welcome to country, Chinese lion dancers, and upbeat Lebanese drummers. The Walk for Respect epitomised the harmony within our local community.

More importantly, participants at the walk were given the opportunity to express their view on how the proposed changes to section 18C were a step in the wrong direction for our nation. The Walk for Respect aimed to protect not merely the sanctity of section 18C, but also the significant historical value of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. All members of this House are aware that the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 was a part of Gough Whitlam's ground-breaking legislative program that brought about a thorough tranche of indispensable social reform to the people of Australia, including the introduction of universal health care: Historical reforms that only a Labor Government is capable of delivering.

Following 23 years of conservative Liberal-Country Party rule, Whitlam's renowned It Is Time campaign delivered on the ambitious package of reforms that was promised to electors. More importantly, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 was passed to ratify our international obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1966 was one of the first human rights treaties to be adopted by the United Nations. Martin Luther King once famously remarked:

I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.

A similarly strong message was expressed by participants on the Walk for Respect. This message has resonated within my electorate of Bankstown and throughout the wider New South Wales community. The message is loud and clear: Our community wants to live in a society free from racial vilification, hate speech and bigotry.

I take this opportunity to commend the more than 1,000 people who attended the Walk for Respect and the many community organisations and not-for-profit organisations present on the day, representing hundreds of different organisations.

There were representatives from different schools as well as many Federal and State representatives, including Mr John Robertson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Tony Burke, the Federal member for Watson. He, along with his staff, coordinated and organised a successful event. I acknowledge the following Federal members for their attendance: the shadow Attorney General, Mark Dreyfus, Michelle Rowland, Ed Husic and Jason Clare. Many of my State colleagues were in attendance to support the community at an event that will be remembered by many for years to come. It was an opportunity to unite as a community and to send a strong message to the Abbott Government that the change to section 18C is utterly unacceptable.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND SHEEP COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [5.26 p.m.]: I congratulate the University of New England [UNE] Sheep Cooperative Research Centre [CRC] chief executive officer [CEO] Professor James Rowe and his team on receiving two prestigious awards at last month's national CRC Association Conference. With 40 CRCs competing for the top honours, it is an impressive effort and certainly very richly deserved. The first of the awards, the Star Award, was won by the Sheep CRC's Managing Scanned Ewes program for excellence in contributing to the development of this business sector. The training program, led by Chris Shands, Senior Research Officer at the NSW Department of Primary Industries [DPI] Glen Innes office, was delivered in partnership with pregnancy scanning businesses to help sheep producers improve lambing performance.

The Sheep CRC also received the award for Excellence in Innovation for training delivery. The program RamSelect is led by Armidale based Lu Hogan and workshops are presented by NSW Department of Primary Industries' local sheep industry specialists Jim Meckiff and Brent McLeod. The program provides a hands-on practical approach to using Australian Sheep Breeding Values [ASBV] for ram selection so that sheep breeders can maximise genetic gain and therefore increase profit from their wool and meat businesses. Sheep CRC CEO and staff at the CRC's UNE headquarters in Armidale assisted in the development and support of both programs. Helen Sisson, Janelle Holzberger and Rhonda Brooks assisted with the organisation of logistics and providing communication and media support for the training events. Both programs show the impact of effective collaboration between public sector researchers and private sector service providers in creating a platform for sharing knowledge with producers for years to come that will result in huge economic gains.

The results show that both programs have had a major impact on the productivity of the industry by not only reaching such a large number of producers with information about new innovations, but also delivering high levels of practice change, which is absolutely vital. The Managing Scanned Ewes program received the Star Award after delivering 88 scanning workshops around Australia to 1,800 sheep producers, resulting in approximately 80 per cent of attendees going on to change their management practices. Doug Fowler from Glen Innes, Charles Street from Walcha, Bill Harris from Uralla and Tim Lawrence from Guyra have all coordinated programs with their clients in the Northern Tablelands electorate.

It is estimated that improved use of pregnancy scanning data and increased uptake of testing has led to an additional 500,000 lambs born per year across Australia, which translates to a 15 per cent increase in reproduction efficiency. It is an amazing statistic for the sheep sector not only in my electorate but across Australia. The RamSelect program was developed by the Sheep CRC and the NSW Department of Primary Industries, with input from Sheep Genetics, Meat and Livestock Australia [MLA], Australian Wool Innovation [AWI] and the private sector. The RamSelect program so far has delivered 73 workshops to 1,389 participants, who included ram breeders, ram buyers, agents, industry service providers and students, with more than 85 per cent of participants indicating they would use ASVBs in the future to select rams.

The overall impact of the RamSelect program on the sheep industry is evidenced by producer survey data showing the proportion of producers using a balance of visual assessment, ASVBs and performance data to select rams increased from 32 per cent to 42 per cent between 2011 and 2014, representing a practice change by approximately 3,000 sheep producers—a staggering statistic in an industry spread across our country. Both programs have resulted in the industry service sector being well positioned to continue to deliver training to producers for many years to come. Investing in development of private sector service providers is a long-term strategy and is highly sustainable. It supports small business, which will play an increasingly important role in the implementation of agricultural innovation, and protects the industry from overdependence on government support.

The University of New England Sheep CRC as well as Professor James Rowe and his team should be commended for their efforts. I wish them all the very best for the future. On behalf of sheep producers and the sector more widely, I thank them for the work they are doing to increase productivity and greater economic returns for the people of regional New South Wales.

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.31 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the Secondary Schools Leadership Program 2014 and commend the wonderful student leaders who attended Parliament House yesterday from a number of secondary schools that are located in the Camden electorate. The Secondary Schools Leadership Program is conducted by the Parliamentary Education Unit and I will mention the team because they produce an outstanding effort and should be commended: Jeannie Douglass, manager; Daniela Giorgi, education officer; Rita Bila, education officer; and Kathy Slade, administrative assistant. The program recognises the leadership role of year 12 school captains and offers them the opportunity to meet their elected representatives and to further develop their knowledge of constitutional and parliamentary proceedings, including the role of the Governor of New South Wales and the work of Parliament.

It was with great pleasure that I addressed year 12 school leaders from a number of electorates, and I was particularly proud of the year 12 leaders from the secondary schools from the Camden electorate. It is an honour and a privilege to be a member of Parliament and I cherish my role as the elected representative for Camden. It was a pleasure to convey these sentiments to those young leaders and discuss my role as a member of Parliament. As I said to the students, they had been elected by their peers and teachers to represent and lead their school. They have been entrusted with a great responsibility as an elected leader of their school and it is a position that is held in the highest esteem. To be the elected leader of their school is a testament to the hard work, commitment and dedication that they have shown to their respective schools. I encourage those students to continue to build and develop their leadership skills and use them to make a difference to their community for the duration of their school life and beyond.

I am as proud of these students as are their schools, families and wider community. I commend the outstanding education provided by the schools for the students. The high calibre of students is testament to the commitment and dedication of the students, teachers and staff of the schools. I particularly mention each of the school leaders who attended the Secondary Schools Leadership Program 2014 and represented a number of schools from my electorate: Camden High School, Rory White and Joshua Black; Elderslie High School, Ani Hoxha and Todd Thurlow; Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Kevin French and Arielle Antonino; Macarthur Anglican School, Maire Playford and Sam Watson; Magdalene Catholic High School, Lachlan Burke and Tiarme Brown; and St Gregory's College Campbelltown, Luke Hughes and Mark McCormack. Those students are our leaders of the future. It is important that we empower them to experience great leadership in practice and to know the importance of being responsible and making decisions.

The year 12 school leaders are great ambassadors for their schools. I congratulate those school leaders; they should be very proud of their excellent conduct and the way they have represented their schools and fellow students. I am sure they gained a lot from the visit and enjoyed the guided tour of Parliament House. I look forward to seeing the great contribution that those year 12 leaders make to our community. As I have said, we have wonderful leaders in the Camden electorate and wonderful schools. I commend the principals of our schools and their outstanding staff who have enabled young adult leaders to represent the schools and my community so well. I cannot express the pride I felt as a member of Parliament when walking the students around yesterday, knowing that Camden and our community will be in great hands in the future. Camden High School, Elderslie High School, Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Macarthur Anglican School, Magdalene Catholic High School and St Gregory's College, Campbelltown, are all outstanding schools and I am extremely proud to have them within my electorate.

BLUE MOUNTAINS RURAL FIRE SERVICE BRIGADES

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [5.36 p.m.]: Winter is the season for our Rural Fire Service [RFS] brigades' annual general meetings and already I have been invited to and attended the annual general meetings of the Glenbrook-Lapstone brigade and the Warrimoo and Mount Wilson-Mount Irvine RFS brigades, with more to attend. During the recent disastrous fire season in the Blue Mountains, every brigade, every tanker and every truck was deployed in defence of their communities in the Blue Mountains and further afield to attend to bushfires in other areas as well as interstate at different periods. This quiet time is the first opportunity I have had to personally say thank you to the fantastic RFS volunteers for their commitment to the safety of the Blue Mountains communities.

We have more than 2,000 RFS volunteers in the Blue Mountains. After the fires a huge influx of people joined their local brigades, so the brigades have the good problem of training those volunteers to help during the next fire emergency. As I say to each brigade, unfortunately the fire history in the Blue Mountains means it is a matter of when, not if, the next bushfire will come. Everyone needs to keep their skills up to date. At the recent meetings I attended I heard of the many new recruits who have now completed their basic firefighter courses and are training for the next module. That will infuse a lot of extra enthusiasm and new blood in all the brigades. Although Glenbrook-Lapstone is not strictly in my electorate, many of the members live there. I was able to catch up with the east sector group leaders and group captains, who did such a magnificent job at incident control at Winmalee and then Faulconbridge during the fires.

Captains Greg Corrigan, Colin Brown and Duncan worked very long hours over the period, often with very little sleep, to oversee the campaign. It was also great to see the President of Glenbrook-Lapstone Rural Fire Service, Jeanette Quinn, who performed the very important role of logistics officer over the bushfire period. On behalf of the community, I offer my sincerest gratitude and thanks for their efforts. The next annual general meeting I attended was at the Warrimoo RFS, my home brigade. Warrimoo was involved in a nasty incident during the earlier Hawkesbury Road fires at Hawkesbury Heights. The brigade's Warrimoo 1 tanker came too close to the action and was severely damaged. Soon after the Hawkesbury Road fires, I went on a reconnaissance run with one of the group captains as the fire was being controlled. I saw firsthand the damage to the vehicle on the ground, with much of one side quite melted.

One of the young firefighters sustained some minor injuries. I am able to report to the House that he is fully recovered and has just started working at the Rural Fire Services headquarters at Homebush as a paid staff member—such is his dedication. It was also good to see that the renovation of the brigade building is now nearly complete thanks to some Community Building Partnerships grant money. We saw it transformed from a building with a ceiling that was literally falling down to a nice clean, modern facility. It was wonderful to see.

Finally, I visited the Mount Wilson-Mount Irvine Rural Fire Service. That brigade is in the most westerly part of my electorate and the locals suffered very badly as a result of the State mine fire. People could not get in or out of that area. Fortunately, they had a magnificent fire brigade and a large number of appliances from outside the area were on hand. The local brigades also worked with the Katoomba and Lithgow brigades and that doubled the demand on their services. Captain Beth Raines and Deputy Captain Peter Raines did an outstanding job for their community. I heard repeatedly during the meeting about how they took control in the most difficult of circumstances. This area really did it tough and the community appreciated the efforts of the entire brigade so much that they donated a staggering \$200,000. Fortunately, everything turned out well and everybody is safe, although traumatised. I look forward to the next round of meetings.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.41 p.m.]: I commend the efforts of the Rural Fire Service and all the volunteers who assisted during the recent emergency in the Blue Mountains. I also commend the local member, who worked side-by-side with the service and other groups during the emergency. She continues to work with them and to draw the attention of the House to the challenges that were faced but, more importantly, the way in which the community has addressed them. I also thank the families and friends who support the firefighters and volunteers. That support allows them to protect our community and to rebuild in the aftermath. We sincerely appreciate their efforts because often they are not acknowledged. It is appropriate that the Parliament acknowledge their efforts and the sacrifices that they make to ensure our community is safe. I again acknowledge the member for Blue Mountains' fantastic efforts. She works tirelessly for her local community. I thank her for drawing this issue to the attention of the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garry Edwards): I endorse the Parliamentary Secretary's comments.

IRAQ CONFLICT

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.42 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a range of concerns raised by my local constituents, community groups and vested organisations concerning the recent escalation of violence in Iraq. We have seen conflict between armed militia groups who identify as ISIS or ISIL—which stand for the "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" and "Islamic State of Iraq and Levant"—moving from the northern regions of Iraq throughout the country. ISIS was established during the peak of the Iraq war and its members have fought alongside Al Qaeda and other Sunni groups. It has been reported recently that the Jihadists fighting in Iraq and Syria are planning attacks on British soil.

While the world has been watching the recent escalation of violence in Iraq, a number of community organisations in Sydney have been raising their concerns about the plight of its people and the grave dangers

they are facing. The conflict has seen a number of cities from Mosul to Fallujah fall under the control of ISIS militants resulting in water and electricity supplies being cut. In the past 24 hours, Iraq's main oil refinery has been set upon by ISIS militants who have allegedly now taken control. According to reports, there have been fears of ISIS moving towards the city of Baghdad in large numbers, armed and ready. Given that we have now heard reports of both Australian and British residents who have travelled to northern Iraq to fight in support of ISIS, this is definitely a matter of great concern for us locally.

We have also seen reports of the conflict as it has been played out on the local television stations, online and via social media. We have seen senseless torture of innocent people broadcast to the world, the looting and takeover of private homes and reports of ISIS burning down all Christian Churches throughout Iraq. The futility and gruesomeness depicted in images is now unfortunately making its way to innocent children here in Australia through such streams. Luckily, our schools are proactive and are assisting their students using a variety of measures and offering them as much support and care as possible. In fact, next Tuesday, Mary MacKillop College in Wakeley will be holding a mass to offer petitions and prayers of intentions for those affected by the conflict.

The conflict has caused large-scale displacement of people who are fleeing and escaping to other countries. A large number of my constituents have been deeply impacted by the conflict in Iraq. I am sure many members have heard the outcry and anguish from their constituents who are going to hell and back as a result of this conflict. I believe a number of members have also been contacted by the many community groups that are working tirelessly to raise awareness and to seek support for their countrymen. I have been in contact with the Assyrian Universal Alliance [AUA], which has recently sent a delegation to Canberra to speak to the Government and the Opposition about the plight of the victims in Iraq. The AUA has also been to the New South Wales Parliament to seek support and assistance from Government, Opposition and crossbench members.

I have been contacted personally by a number of concerned members of the local Assyrian and Chaldean communities who have requested advocacy from their elected representatives on their behalf. Given the turmoil in Iraq and the enormous number of victims who are being displaced from their homes as a result of this conflict, we will be seeing an increase in the number of people seeking refuge throughout the world. We need to welcome these victims with open arms and to offer as much help and support as we can to those who have been displaced as a result of the tyranny reigning over Iraq.

I acknowledge the efforts of the Assyrian Resource Centre in Fairfield. The centre is at the forefront of service delivery to people who are the victims of torture, stress and anxiety as a result of being displaced from their homeland. The centre does great work to ensure that those who have fled this persecution feel safe and welcomed in our community. As the local member and as the shadow Minister for Citizenship and Communities I will do my utmost to help those who have fled persecution in Iraq, and I am sure that other members will join me in offering their support.

STATE BUDGET AND BALLINA ELECTORATE

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina) [5.47 p.m.]: I welcome this year's budget, which will fund major projects that will improve the lives of those living in the electorate of Ballina. These major projects include funding for the commencement of a new Byron central hospital, \$205 million for the completion of the Tintaburra-Ewingsdale section of the Pacific Highway upgrade and \$110 million for a regional tourism fund, which could finance the construction of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail trail. These projects target areas such as health, tourism and transport and they have the potential to benefit the entire Northern Rivers region.

After many years of lobbying, it has taken a Liberal-Nationals Government in its first term in government to deliver funding for the construction of a new \$80 million Byron central hospital after 16 years of Labor neglect. The new hospital will service Byron Bay, Bangalow, Mullumbimby, Ocean Shores, Brunswick Heads and surrounding areas, and will take some pressure off the Lismore Base, Ballina and Tweed hospitals. It is intended that the new hospital will provide 24-hour accident and emergency services, 50 acute medical beds, low-risk maternity services, X-ray and medical imaging facilities, a 20-bed mental health unit, and a day surgery will probably be provided by the private sector but will treat both public and private patients.

The land for the new hospital was purchased about five years ago and a new ambulance station, which will complement the hospital, was built on the site in 2012. Building a new hospital is a big ticket item and I thank the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, for her longstanding support of this project. This hospital will provide state-of-the-art equipment and attract more clinicians, which is good news for local residents.

Earthworks for sewerage infrastructure and car parking for the new hospital will start as soon as possible after council approvals are received. I took great pleasure in announcing the new central hospital for the Byron shire area because I have been working hard on this project for at least 10 years. I am thrilled to be delivering a new hospital in my final term as local member. I thank the Byron Central Hospital Community Liaison Group for its role and, in particular, Tony McCabe and Rae Cooper. I also acknowledge the support I have received from Chris Crawford, Chief Executive Officer of the Northern New South Wales Local Health Network.

I was pleased to see that \$205 million was allocated for the completion of the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of the Pacific Highway. When finished, this section of road will have cost \$870 million, which is an extraordinary amount of money. The projects will not only save lives; over the three years of construction the flow-on benefits to the local economy have been significant. Another announcement in the budget was the creation of a \$110 million regional tourism fund.

I am keen to see a rail trail established on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line, which was closed to trains by Labor in 2004. An independent consultant's report in 2013 indicated that any combination of train services on the line would not meet the public transport needs of the region because two of the three largest urban areas—Ballina and Tweed Heads—would not be serviced. The rail line has been lying idle and deteriorating for 10 years and, whilst it is not currently viable to restore rail services, the development of a rail trail will see the corridor retained in public hands should the trains ever come back. I have been lobbying to have the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Trail funded from the Regional Tourism Fund. Rail trails are extremely popular in other parts of the world, particularly in the United States and New Zealand. I believe the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Trail has the potential to become an iconic domestic and international tourist attraction offering outstanding walking, cycling and possibly riding experiences.

The Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Trail Feasibility Study report, which was released earlier this month, estimates the direct cost of constructing the rail trail at around \$75 million. Base case figures in this Arup report estimate the rail trail would generate around \$200 million per year for the region. Treasury and Infrastructure NSW are currently examining the report to verify the consultant's cost-benefit analysis and after this is done I am confident further announcements regarding funding for this project will be made by this Government. We will ask the Federal Government to co-fund the construction of the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Trail and I am having ongoing discussions with the member for Page, Kevin Hogan, about this matter.

The State budget also provides for projects such as the Byron bypass, and I am currently working with Byron Shire Council and Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] to finalise funding for this project. I am hopeful I will be able to make a positive announcement about this in a few months' time. We have significant traffic congestion issues in Byron Bay and, whilst the bypass will not solve everything, it will help to alleviate some of the congestion. I appreciate that the bypass is a local government responsibility, but I know it will not happen without State Government support. Overall, I am delighted that our electorate is to receive such a high level of funding, which will improve health services and road safety, and create jobs.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.52 p.m.]: I congratulate the member on his hard work and his achievements in this place over the past 25 years. It is clear that this member has no intention of slowing down, even though he has given us notice that he will be leaving this place at the end of this term. The things that the member has spoken about are wonderful achievements that will leave their mark in the form of bricks and mortar. Importantly, a lot of work has occurred socially to which the member has contributed. The upgraded Pacific Highway, new hospital with ambulance station and rail trail will clearly bring benefits to the local community for a long time. I wish the member well and thank him for the enormous amount of work that he has done. As demonstrated in the speech that he just delivered, he is still achieving for the beautiful electorate of Ballina. I wish the member and his community well.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garry Edwards): Once again I wholeheartedly endorse the comments of the member for Wagga Wagga relating to the member for Ballina.

CROYDON RAILWAY STATION

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [5.53 p.m.]: The Croydon community has expressed a desire to have Croydon railway station included in the New South Wales Government's \$770 million Transport Access Program as a matter of priority. Unfortunately, 16 years of complaining to former Labor governments resulted in nothing, just like the Labor Government's Action for Transport 2010 plan resulted in next to nothing.

I have made this my number one priority for the people of Croydon and surrounding areas. I acknowledge the Minister for Transport's announcement of the upgrade to Flemington railway station, at the other end of my electorate. Commuters and visitors to Sydney Markets, one of the most popular markets in New South Wales, will see a design of the new railway station that will go out for community consultation by September this year. The community is ecstatic that finally a Liberal government is delivering a new railway station after 16 frustrating years of being ignored by Labor governments. It took a Liberal government to recognise the problem and it will take a Liberal government to deliver the new station at Flemington.

Another equally urgent priority is Croydon railway station. According to the 2011 census Croydon has a population of 10,381 people. The median age of people in the suburb is 38, which is slightly older than the rest of Sydney. Croydon still retains many of the characteristics of the broader inner west region of Sydney, including a high proportion of residents born overseas. Croydon's principal commercial area is located around the railway station. The Strand, south of the railway line, features a number of restaurants and cafes, while the older Edwin Street precinct, north of the line, is mainly specialist businesses. Croydon features many of the inner west's most sought-after addresses due to its grand homes, larger blocks and family-friendly streetscapes. Croydon is a quiet, village-like suburb with mostly detached housing built in the early part of the twentieth century. The southern side of Croydon remained largely undeveloped until the early twentieth century with wide tree-lined streets and houses built in the then modern Federation style.

Croydon railway station is located on the main suburban railway line in the Sydney suburb of Croydon. The station has six tracks passing through it, though only five platforms. The entrance to Croydon railway station is from The Strand and Meta Road, Croydon. This is the only entrance to the station, which has two islands and one wayside platform, all of which have station buildings, as well as an overhead booking office and a footbridge. There is commercial activity along The Strand and Hennessey Street, and residential development along Paisley Road and Meta Street. Croydon is the ninety-sixth most patronised railway station in Sydney out of a total of 176 stations, with an average of 2,370 passengers boarding each day. The station services two local schools, the Presbyterian Ladies College and Croydon Public School.

Half of Croydon station is in the municipality of Burwood and half is in the municipality of Ashfield. Ashfield was proclaimed a municipality in 1872 and Burwood was proclaimed a municipality two years later. This boundary was an important part in the decision to open a new station because both local government authorities agreed on its location. Croydon railway station is way past its use-by date. It is old and tired; it is a significant impediment to public transport use for parents with children, the elderly and the frail. It offers commuters almost no protection from the vagaries of weather. Not only access at the railway station can be vastly improved but also amenity and safety can be dramatically improved. It is my hope that a new Croydon railway station will become a catalyst for faster renewal on the northern side of the railway station and lead to improved trading for existing local businesses.

There is no shortage of suggestions for improvement from the community as I conduct street stalls and community events close to the railway station. In fact, I find that the best advice for improving the railway station comes from hairdressers, closely followed by taxicab drivers. The sad truth is that Croydon is yet another example of the almost criminal neglect by Labor governments to invest prudently in public transport infrastructure. Only a Liberal government will deliver a new Croydon railway station. I have already had a meeting at Croydon station with one of the Minister's policy advisers and Transport for NSW officials to discuss several options. I have asked the Minister for Transport to visit Croydon railway station so that I can brief her on the difficulties faced by commuters and demonstrate the feelings of the community by way of a petition in support of priority action. Given the Minister's past response to such requests, I am sure that in the coming weeks she will be at Croydon railway station listening to my community and that she will redevelop the railway station to better service the needs of the community.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.58 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant amount of work done by the member for Strathfield in advocating for improvements to the character and amenity of his electorate. He has been a tireless campaigner for road upgrades, health system improvements and education facility enhancements. Today he is advocating on behalf of the people of Croydon for an upgrade of their railway station. I know that the Minister for Transport is passionate about improving public transport across this State, including in communities like Hornsby and Strathfield. The Minister has been a tireless campaigner to improve our public transport network. She will take to the election a plan that will invest heavily in public transport. I am sure she will work closely with the member for Strathfield to deliver better outcomes for his community.

TRIBUTE TO GARY FIZZELL

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [5.59 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House of a very special and proud Australian who passed away on 26 May 2014. Gary Edward Fizzell was 77 years old, an Australian war veteran whose selfless commitment and service to Australia was demonstrated both through his military service and throughout his life in service to war veterans, our schoolchildren and the community of New South Wales. He will be missed. Gary Fizzell was born on 11 March 1937 and was one of five children. After the devastating family tragedy of the death of his younger brother and soon after his mum, his father was left to care for the young children. His dad worked as a ganger on the railways. As an 11-year-old Gary and his dad lived in a tent along the railroad tracks at Rooty Hill. As valiantly as he tried, Gary's dad could not take care of the children. As a result Gary spent some years in an orphanage.

An angel by the name of Grace Cambourn, or Gracie, offered to take care of Gary when he left the orphanage in Narrandera. His first job was in the local post office, operating the telegraph and switchboard, before enlisting in the Army. As fate would have it, Gary, who lived along the railway tracks at Rooty Hill as an 11-year-old, would return, decades later, to Rooty Hill to build his family home with his lifelong partner, David. Over the course of time Gary met his siblings. He loved his family and was proud of them all. Gary also loved dogs and would have two or three dogs at a time. His first dog, a sausage dog called Hoova the house dog, was the first of many a spoilt and loved pet. Gary did not cry often, but he did once in Thailand at the death railway cemetery and another time when his favourite dog, Rudi the German shepherd, had to be put to sleep.

Gary enlisted to do national service on 27 April 1956 and transferred to the Citizen Military Forces on 3 August 1956. On 14 August 1956 Gary transferred to the Australian Regular Army. He served our nation with dignity and diligence for almost 18 years. He served in Malaya from 7 August 1958 to 7 January 1961 and in Vietnam from 26 April 1966 to 4 May 1967. His principal units were the 19th National Service Training Battalion; 55th Independent Workshop and Park Squadron; 1st Company Royal Australian Army Service Corps School of Signals; 101st Wireless Regiment; 1st Division Signals Regiment; 1st Signals Regiment; 103rd Signal Squadron; and 130th Signal Squadron Army Head Quarters. He received the following awards: Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with clasps Malaya and Vietnam; General Service Medal with clasp Malaya; Vietnam medal; Australian Service Medal with clasp SE Asia, Australian Defence Medal; Long Service and Good Conduct Medal; Anniversary of National Service 1951 to 1972 Medal; Vietnamese Campaign Medal; and Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medal.

During the celebration service for Gary's life there was standing room only, with the crowd spilling out of all the doorways and entrances to the chapel. Hundreds of Gary's fellow service men and women, government representatives, RSL clubs, community members, RSL sub-branch members, school principals and school leaders, relatives, friends and his partner, David, were in attendance. The service was powerful, moving, solemn, joyful, yet at times surreal, for Gary lived life to the full, engaged in his community, healthy, fit and strong. His passing was a shock to us all. As a patron of the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch I was humbled to be part of this special service to give honour where honour was indeed due. Gary's brother, Colin Fizzell; the St Marys Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia President, Mr Greg Cant; the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch President, Mr Ron Kelly; Heavenly Celebrations celebrant Ms Michelle Latham; St Marys RSL Club Limited President, Mr Harry Griffiths; friends Mr Tony Mullavey, the irrepressible Reno from the Train Washers, Mr John and Mrs Di Foeken; family and friends all gave reflections on Gary's life.

Gary's life was lived without fear—from buying an old school bus to travel around Australia, relocating to Tasmania but returning to New South Wales broke, driving cabs, buying into a cab business with good friend Joe Capper, journeying through post-traumatic stress disorder, spending time at St John of God at Richmond, and his unstoppable commitment to the Vietnam veterans, war veterans, war widows of the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch, affectionately known as "the Train". The Train was an integral part of Gary's life and Gary was an integral part of the Train. He loved it. He was always thinking of ways to improve things. David used to tell him to slow down and to let some of the others do more, but no, he had to do it his way and it kept him going and gave him his drive. Gary was never happier than when he was conducting school talks, sharing military history with our current generation of young Australians. He had just come back from a tour to Cooma and Canberra where he was asked to say the *Ode to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* at the Australian War Memorial. This was a very proud moment for him. The service ended with this poem:

*When we are weary and in need of strength,
When we are lost and sick at heart,
We remember him.*

*When we have a joy we crave to share
 When we have decisions that are difficult to make
 When we have achievements that are based on his
 We remember him.
 At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter
 At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring,
 We remember him.
 At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer
 At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
 We remember him.
 At the rising of the sun and at its setting,
 We remember him.
 As long as we live, Gary too will live
 For he is now a part of us,
 As we remember him.*

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.04 p.m.]: I thank the member for Mulgoa for celebrating what is best about her community—the people who live in Mulgoa. Mr Fizzell was obviously one of the best of her community. Mr Fizzell, like so many service men and women, sacrificed a great deal to give us the opportunities we enjoy today. They fought in faraway places for people they did not know. They did so because of the values that Australians hold dear. I pass on my condolences to Mr Fizzell's family. I thank the member for Mulgoa for the remarkable work she does in her community to ensure that those who contribute to making her community a great community are appropriately recognised.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE GITTOES

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [6.05 p.m.]: I recognise the valuable contribution to the Rockdale community of George Gittoes. George is an Australian humanist artist and filmmaker, a widely known and highly respected member of my electorate. George spent his childhood in Villiers Street, Rockdale and believes that the multicultural nature of Rockdale had a profound influence on him and inspired his art. George is a man of many talents: artist, photographer, filmmaker and photojournalist. He has a unique style and deep-seated desire to share his diverse experiences. He has produced numerous films and documentaries over the past 45 years in countries in conflict and social upheaval such as Iraqi, Afghanistan, Rwanda and Bosnia. George believes "the role of the artist is to provide meaning amid the chaos".

The Sydney, Berlin, Amsterdam and Telluride film festivals have featured George's provocative documentaries, which challenge audiences to question war zone narratives by mainstream media presenters. George's approach combines mainstream cinema and contemporary art. A retrospective of all these mediums was curated at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Houston, Texas. George's films have also been regularly featured at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

George Gittoes has continued to pioneer a multimedia and cross-disciplinary storytelling practice. He has received an honorary doctorate from the University of New South Wales for his ongoing contribution to visual arts. In 1997 he was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia [AM] for his contribution to the arts and international relations. A retrospective of his paintings, films, photography, drawings and diaries from the battlefield titled *I Witness* is on display until 27 July at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre. George has now reached the crossroads between war and creativity. He has embraced beauty in the form of exquisitely conceived watercolours. According to George, there is a need in these, his later years, to affirm, regardless of the horrors he has experienced, that he is still positive and optimistic.

When not in Australia, George is based in the Afghan city of Jalalabad, where he has set up the Yellow House to make films, paint and mentor young people in the creative arts. George Gittoes was the co-founder, with Martin Sharp, of the original Yellow House in Potts Point in 1967 to 1971. The Yellow House was joined by acclaimed artists such as Brett Whiteley and Peter Kingston. Locally, in 2013, George established the Yellow House in Rockdale. The Yellow House initiative is important to local schools, whose students attend workshops and art-training sessions. A high percentage of the students speak English as a second language at home. They are inspired to hear from someone who speaks passionately about their homelands. He helps them realise that wider Australia is interested in their history and problems.

George has used his art to reach out to the local communities to provide positive themes and role models. George and his partner, performance artist Helen Rose, share the belief that art and filmmaking have the ability to create a better future. George Gittoes' documentaries aim to reveal "things we didn't know." By

continually pushing the boundaries and placing himself in situations where few would dare to venture, George has brought us closer to recognising the importance of world peace. I congratulate George on his many achievements and his contribution to the local Rockdale community.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.09 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to thank the member for Rockdale for the outstanding work he is doing in his electorate celebrating what is best about his community and its people. Artist and filmmaker George Gittoes certainly is one of those people. His achievements speak for themselves. He has used art remarkably to build a better community to celebrate what is best about Australia and humanity. I thank the member for Rockdale for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I congratulate George Gittoes on his significant contribution to the Rockdale community and, indeed, to our State and great country.

MALTA-AUSTRALIA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIP FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [6.10 p.m.]: It is indeed significant that today I speak in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the diplomatic relationship between Malta and Australia. In 1964 Malta became an independent nation and in 1979 became a republic but maintained its membership of the Commonwealth of Nations. But relations between our two countries precede this date. In 1883, 131 years ago, organised emigration from Malta to Australia began. Maltese-Australian connections are indeed multifaceted and deeply ingrained in the history of the two nations. It is fitting to note that the first High Commissioner for Australia in Malta was Sir Hubert Opperman, a world-famous cyclist and a former Liberal member of Parliament for Geelong.

From those early years relations between Australia and Malta have gone from strength to strength. Political relations between our two countries are excellent and have been made easier by the fact that we share a common heritage and vision. Apart from our shared values, the bonds between Australia and Malta also are rooted in history. Malta and Australia fought side by side in both World Wars and, true to its mission as the nurse of the Mediterranean, Malta gave shelter and provided treatment to the Anzacs injured during the Gallipoli campaign. Australian service members also were involved in defending Malta during World War II. Malta now has an Anzac monument at the Argotti Gardens, Floriana, which was completed last year as an initiative of Maltese-Australians living in Malta, who were ably backed by financial assistance from the Maltese community in Australia.

The flow of Maltese migrants after World War II continued and as many as 50,000 people left the shores of Malta to build a new life down under. Like the Australian Government, the Maltese Government looks after its people living abroad. In 2012 it established, by an Act of Parliament, the Council for the Maltese Living Abroad. Two councillors are from my electorate: Lawrence Dimech from Greystanes and Gaetano Pace from Blacktown. Amendments to the Maltese Citizenship Act 2007 extended the qualifications of dual citizenship to second-generation children and beyond—those born outside Malta—and removed the distinction between paternal and maternal lineage. Malta and Australia also have social security and health agreements. Thousands of Maltese-Australians have benefited from these changes, and this has further strengthened the people-to-people bond between the two countries.

In February 2007, the Australian Senate approved amendments to the Australian Citizenship Act leading to some 2,000 Maltese being re-eligible to apply for Australian citizenship. Prior to that, in 2004, Malta became a full member of the European Union. This provides the ideal framework for regional cooperation in that the European Union and Australia share common interests in the wider geopolitical arena. Malta again will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting [CHOGM] in 2015. I know that the Maltese community is keen to see Prime Minister Tony Abbott follow in the footsteps of former Prime Minister John Howard, who attended the CHOGM conference in Malta in 2005. What is perhaps unique in relations between Malta and Australia, and particularly our State of New South Wales, is that between 1909 and 1917 then Sir Gerald Strickland, a Maltese-born Australian, represented the three Australian States of New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia as Governor. Later, Lord Gerald Strickland became Prime Minister of Malta from 1927 to 1932. The Strickland Foundation is still the owner of the *Times of Malta*, the largest selling newspaper on the island of Malta.

The Maltese community in Western Sydney is very active and well organised. Like other communities that were established here after World War II, the Maltese community is now ageing fast as migration from Malta has virtually stopped. Special needs relating to old age now confront Maltese immigrants, similar to those experienced with their initial settlement. The Maltese have very large communities in the cities of Blacktown,

Holroyd, Penrith and Fairfield. The largest Maltese meeting place is La Valette Centre at Blacktown. Then there is the Maltese Resource Centre at Mays Hill and the Hamrun Club at Marsden Park. The Horsley Park Good Friday procession is a yearly spectacle with statues and people dressed in biblical costumes. The Maltese Annual Festa of Our Lady of Victories at Greystanes also is a major event that attracts large crowds. Malta's loss became Australia's gain. Maltese people have integrated well into the Australia community and I am proud to have so many of them living in my electorate of Smithfield.

NORTHERN TIGERS FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.15 p.m.]: I share with the House a recent sporting achievement in Hornsby where the local representative football club the Northern Tigers reached the Waratah Cup quarter finals. The Northern Tigers represent the northern district in the newly established National Premier League men's two competition. This inspirational team plays without fear and often defeats much bigger named opponents in pre-season or cup competitions. This year the Northern Tigers has joined 600 clubs from around Australia embarking on a new competition called the Football Federation [FFA] Cup. The FFA Cup is modelled on the English FA Cup and gives semi-professional and amateur clubs the opportunity to face Australia's nine A-League sides in a new national knockout competition. I commend Football Federation Australia on its major investment in grassroots football, which has the potential to further unite the game and build on the code's many recent successes.

This new competition will create a unique football pathway for rising stars to showcase their skills on a national stage. If implemented correctly, the new competition will provide plenty of magic and charm to captivate audiences and to build a new and exciting chapter in Australia's diverse sporting calendar. Late last month the Tigers team narrowly missed out on an opportunity to join the FFA Cup's remaining 32 teams when it was defeated in a penalty shootout loss to top-tier side Manly United. It was a heartbreaking loss for our region's team, which once again proved it can mix it with the big teams and deserved a place in the prestigious round of 32. However, the Tigers have two more chances to qualify for the FFA Cup via a series of play-off matches starting with a semifinal clash against Hakoah Sydney City FC.

Tiger's coach Jason Eagar and assistant Steve Hurd are more than capable of delivering the club an inaugural FFA Cup finals berth after successfully guiding the team through the competition's preliminary rounds with victories over the Western New South Wales Mariners, Blacktown Spartans and San Souci. The quarterfinal defeat to Manly showed the Tigers certainly have the talent to qualify for major tournaments after showing plenty of spirit to come back from a goal down to force the quarterfinal into extra time. An early goal to Jimmy Oates had Manly ahead 1-0 at half time, but the Tigers came out firing in the second half. Aram Tayebi hit the equaliser home in the fifty-first minute and a nervous period followed. The Tigers were spurred on by the silky skills of Shervin Adeli as well as Aram Tayebi and Max Glanville, while the much experienced trio of keeper Stuart Page, midfielder Steve Baveas and defender Daniel Cunningham provided much needed stability in the middle of the park.

Both sides had chances as full-time approached, but regulation time and then extra time ticked out with scores locked, sending the game to a shootout. Manly keeper, Tonu Liiband, stole the limelight for the home side to give Manly player Graeme Forbes the match-winning kick to score 5-3 on penalties. Local derbies always bring out the best in players and this contest certainly did not disappoint. Despite just missing out on qualifying, the Northern Tigers have done our region proud. With any luck we could have our region's first representative in national knockout football competition.

This would be a huge accomplishment for the Tigers, our region and the Northern Suburbs Football Association, which has one of the biggest junior membership bases across metropolitan Sydney. I congratulate the chief executive officer of the Northern Suburbs Football Association, Duncan Tweed, on his outstanding work behind the scenes. Duncan and his team do so much for youth development and grassroots football in the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai region and they deserve plenty of praise.

I put on record my support for the fledgling FFA Cup tournament, which kicks off with the final round of 32 on 29 July. With any luck we will be seeing our Tigers drawn against one of the A-League's glamour clubs, such as the Central Coast Mariners, Sydney FC or the Western Sydney Wanderers. A visit from any one of these A-League clubs to Mills Park, Asquith, would be a huge boost for football and the thousands of junior players in the Northern Suburbs Football Association. The Tigers may find themselves playing in a televised match for the first time, setting the scene for a David and Goliath battle in which a semi-professional suburban team gets its shot at glory against a professional high-profile team brimming with Socceroos representatives and overseas players.

I look forward to seeing the inaugural draw on 26 June and hopefully getting down to Mills Park, Asquith, to cheer on the mighty Tigers. If the FFA Cup is anything like the English FA Cup we could be in for a fairytale run with a small club like the Tigers battling it out for a spot in the cup final on 16 December. As I said, success on the field requires a lot of hard work off the field. I particularly acknowledge the board of the Northern Suburbs Football Association, including the outstanding and hardworking Chris Rayner and Roy Ashpole—a great friend. Roy and his wife, Claire, do so much in our community and I thank them for it. I also thank Howard Mann, Duncan Tweed, Caroline Morris, Alan Barwick, Paul Templeton, James Sneddon and Dave Watson. They do outstanding work providing direction for the football association and they make it the great association that it is.

JANELLE TRIGG HEALTH CARE COMPLAINT

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [6.20 p.m.]: In the three years I have been in this place I have used this forum to extol the virtues of my electorate and to argue for projects and priorities that matter. However, today I come to this House as a last resort to tell the story of one of my constituents who deserves to have her story told. Janelle Trigg is a perfectly normal, hardworking woman whose experience with the health system is anything but ordinary. On 5 July 2011, Janelle attended Wollongong Skin Cancer Clinic to have examined a white spot of skin that had appeared on the bridge of her nose. The doctor concerned took a biopsy for further investigation.

According to Janelle, a week later she received a call from the same skin cancer clinic advising that the biopsy revealed that the spot was cancerous. When Janelle arrived at the Wollongong Skin Cancer Clinic she was told by the doctor that it was in fact pre-cancerous. In the consultation the skin cancer clinic doctor applied the ice gun to her nose, which caused Janelle's nose to bleed. A bandaid was applied and Janelle left the facility. A week later Janelle discovered that the ice gun procedure had created a ditch in her nose and she phoned the clinic to advise it of her discovery. Upon returning to the clinic, the same doctor, Dr Jeremy Reader, advised Janelle that he had treated three patients for a similar condition and that they had all healed without a mark. The doctor said that the only way to get rid of the ditch would be to stitch it. He asked Janelle to lie on the table, he pulled Janelle's nose together and he applied a stitch.

After reflecting on his work, the doctor advised Janelle that he was not happy with the presentation. He removed the stitch and applied another. The doctor put a bandaid on her nose and told her to return to the clinic in a week to have the stitch removed. Due to pain and anguish from this procedure, Janelle called her usual general practitioner [GP] and saw her the next morning. Janelle's GP advised her that she thought the skin cancer clinic had been shut down. Upon looking at the stitching, which was causing great pain, Janelle's GP said that there was a severe infection and she prescribed strong antibiotics.

Janelle returned to the skin cancer clinic to speak with the doctor who had carried out the procedure. When the doctor took the stitch out large holes, which had been caused by the infection, were discovered. Dr Reader said that if Janelle was not happy she should consider seeing a plastic surgeon and referred her to Dr Krishna. Janelle then sought an appointment with Dr Krishna who advised Janelle that because the holes in her nose were new she would need to wait for an operation. The operation took place on 5 September 2012. As a result of this operation Janelle had 10 stitches in her nose, which exacerbated the holes and the ditch in her nose.

Janelle is a community service worker and she has had to pay \$7,000 to try to fix this mess. Janelle was offered the opportunity to be placed again on the waiting list for further treatment, but, given previous outcomes, she is terrified to return to the skin cancer clinic. Despite writing to the Health Care Complaints Commission and explaining this situation in detail, the response from the Medical Council was that no action would be taken against either doctor. When having her treatment reviewed, she sought the advice of dermatologist Dr Edmund Lobel. Dr Lobel advised that Janelle will require ongoing cosmetic surgery and that further ongoing management will be required to reduce the visual impact of the scar.

Dr Lobel does not disagree with the step taken by Dr Reader in carrying out the biopsy procedure. However, on page six of his report, Dr Lobel gives the opinion that the post-cryotherapy treatment, being the stitching of Janelle's nose, was not appropriate treatment. Dr Lobel noted that the surgical revision of the scar may have been appropriate but that the decision to do so is not within the expertise of a general practitioner and Janelle should have been referred to a plastic surgeon for opinion and treatment at the time. In his response to this matter Dr Lobel made it clear that the most common effect of cryotherapy is hypopigmentation, or a pale area, where the treatment is applied. Cryotherapy is followed by a blister and, provided the blister remains intact until it dries up into a scab, infection is uncommon. Infection becomes much more common if a blister ruptures before drying into a scab.

Whilst Janelle has received legal advice that she may have a small claim in negligence, changes by the Carr Government to the Civil Liabilities Act means that that this claim would be a challenge. I raise this matter in Parliament today to give a voice to a person who needs it. Janelle does not have the means to fund an expensive legal challenge, but what is clear from Dr Lobel's opinion is that a general practitioner may well be conducting surgery he is not qualified to do. I have to ask the question: Why is the Health Care Complaints Commission allowing this to continue? Why is someone allowed to practice at a skin cancer clinic if they do not have the sufficient skills to undertake this practice?

MIDDLETON GRANGE OPEN SPACE AND FACILITIES

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.25 p.m.]: Tonight I advise the House of concerns of a constituent of mine in relation to a lack of community facilities and open space in a newly developing area within my electorate. The constituent concerned is Mr Eric Corso. About one year and two months ago Mr Corso and his family moved into the suburb of Middleton Grange. He moved into the area relying upon not only what was said by the developer but also what was publicly and proudly displayed on advertising hoardings and in information on the Liverpool City Council website. I will quote from an email sent by Mr Corso:

We have like many others purchased land and built homes looking for a lovely area to raise our family. When purchasing the land we made enquiries about the area to ensure it is right for our family. Particularly inviting was the promise of a new town centre and local recreational areas. We had hoped that the town centre would provide an important gathering place and important foci for a range of activities, public interaction and the development of a community.

In good faith we accepted the information presented to us, assuming it was accurate. It was explained to us that as soon as most homes in our estate were established, a communal recreation area would soon follow. Being parents of a young special needs child this was a major factor in selecting Middleton Grange to build our new home. There were and still are billboards advertising a proposed town centre in the nearby vacant land, behind Middleton Grange Primary School. We had no reason to doubt the information given to us as there was public advertising to support the information provided.

Unfortunately, these promises have not been delivered upon. Mr Corso has taken steps to remedy the situation but they have been unsuccessful. Mr Corso continues:

On multiple occasions I have contacted council requesting information about the promised recreational areas and proposed town centre. It has been very frustrating, as I have not managed to find anyone who is willing to speak to me and give the information I need. Having spoken to other families we were not alone in the belief that these services would be forthcoming in the near future.

This has been the cause of great frustration to Mr Corso and these are important issues. As Mr Corso says:

The provision of public open spaces is a key factor in promoting active living and providing important physical, psychological and social health benefits for individuals and the community. Especially when land lot sizes have dramatically decreased and backyards are a luxury of the past.

In addition I must mention that our children are currently playing on the streets, only a few weeks ago a child on a scooter was nearly hit by a reversing parent. This is a disaster just waiting to happen. We would like someone to look into the situation and contact us with a suitable explanation. It would be great to have an honest and prompt reply.

Mr Corso wants the problem solved but he also wants other people warned. He says:

Land is being cleared all around us and many more homes are to be built. I think it only fair that we make new families looking to settle in the area fully aware that the advertising is false.

Mr Corso has aspirations for his area, as most residents do, and he says:

Other new and developing areas such as Oran Park, Georges Fair and Willowdale have considered the needs of families and how important communal areas and parks are to a growing community. They have multiple parks planned with some already built. They have a strong sense of community as the foundation of their estates.

It is not too late at Middleton Grange, with vacant pockets of land still available. We too would like to build a community not just a house.

Mr Corso has raised serious issues and he needs his concerns addressed. I particularly ask Liverpool City Council to look at these issues and promptly to address Mr Corso's concerns.

VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [6.29 p.m.]: Most of my constituents and 80 per cent of Australians want the option to choose a painless death if they or someone they love becomes terminally ill and

experiences severe suffering that cannot be relieved. The law must relieve futile suffering. Physician-assisted dying and voluntary euthanasia allow a doctor to prescribe or administer lethal medication to a patient at their request. Assisted dying laws exist in Switzerland, Oregon, Washington, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, but they do not exist in New South Wales or anywhere else in Australia. Palliative care cannot always prevent a slow and painful death because it does not relieve all forms of pain and suffering, such as extreme weakness and fatigue, disability, insomnia, difficulty with swallowing, psychological distress and loss of dignity.

Last year my constituent Loredana Allesio-Mulhall shared her story with me. She is 63 and has had multiple sclerosis for 37 years. Her condition has deteriorated and she now requires assistance for everything, including eating, dressing, bathing and going to the toilet. She cannot move an inch. She has a device that allows her to speak, but will soon lose that ability. She is able to answer the phone with her mouth, but sometimes she cannot reach. Loredana receives the maximum care of seven hours a day, but the rest of the time she is alone in her flat, unable to move. Loredana does not want to die now, but when her body shuts down further she wants to die safely and painlessly, surrounded by her family.

There are many sad stories from people whose loved ones have died after immense suffering. A daughter wrote about her father whose incurable cancer prevented him from eating because of serious stomach pain. His mouth was inflamed, which made it difficult to understand him when he spoke. He could not go to the toilet alone and he could not sleep or swallow. The son of a man who developed motor neurone disease wrote about his father taking his own life out of fear of starving to death or dying from choking on his saliva. His father had lost the capacity to speak and to swallow. He stressed that his father wanted to live longer but took his life while he could still administer medication independently to avoid putting others at risk of conviction.

A woman whose husband was diagnosed with progressive supranuclear palsy, which eventually prevented his being able to walk, talk, write, eat or see properly, tells how her husband took his life prematurely because he feared his dying days. It is likely he would have died from choking. She pointed out that if he had access to assisted dying he could have been around longer and died with her by his side. These stories are heartbreaking and highlight the ludicrousness of the current situation. If people are suffering significantly and death is inevitable, they should be able to end their life with their family by their side when the suffering becomes unbearable.

Last year Cate Faehrmann introduced her Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill, which was defeated in a conscience vote in the other place. The bill included strong safeguards, such as requirements for the patient to be at least 18 years old and to be suffering from an illness that causes severe and unacceptable pain or distress. The patient would have to be mentally capable and fully informed of the diagnosis, prognosis and treatment, which has been certified by a psychiatrist and two physicians. Physicians would not be forced to assist someone to die. Cate Faehrmann should be commended for her work on that bill and I hope to work with colleagues in the next term of Parliament on a similar bill. Those few who are opposed to assisted dying generally take a hardline Christian view against human intervention in death, but medication to prolong life is intervention. Christians Supporting Choice for Voluntary Euthanasia argues that assisted dying is consistent with Jesus' message of love and compassion.

The Australian Medical Association does not support voluntary euthanasia because it believes medical practitioners should not be involved in interventions that are aimed at ending a person's life. Surely it is harmful to prolong a slow, painful and inevitable death against someone's will. Surely it is in a patient's best interests to avoid severe suffering and to allow them to die peacefully, close to their loved ones. I have been contacted by Doctors for Voluntary Euthanasia Choice, which supports Dr Rodney Syme, who assisted a patient whose oesophageal cancer made him little more than a living skeleton. He was unable to swallow and was nourished only by a tube running into his stomach. Medical practitioners say that voluntary euthanasia and assisted dying in lawfully defined circumstances is a final compassionate act of palliative care. I call on all members of Parliament to open their hearts and listen to their constituents, and to support those who are terminally ill and experiencing severe pain and distress to have the right to end their lives with the assistance of a physician and with their loved ones by their side.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 6.33 p.m. until
Wednesday 2 July 2014 at 10.30 a.m.**
