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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 6 August 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.

TEMPORARY SPEAKERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 20, I nominate Mr Christopher Gulaptis as Temporary Speaker in the place of Mr Adam John Marshall during the present Parliament.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery guests from the Small Schools Marimba Ensemble.

ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (MANDATORY ALCOHOL INTERLOCK PROGRAM) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 June 2014.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [10.08 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. I indicate at the outset that although the Opposition will not oppose the bill, an amendment will be moved in the other place. I thank the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, for the courtesy of his briefings for the Opposition and for making his staff available. I draw to the attention of the House that in August 2013 the Opposition proposed a Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, or Staysafe, inquiry into the use of compulsory alcohol interlocks. The then shadow Minister for Roads, the member for Keira, wrote to the chair of Staysafe requesting an examination of legislative and operational requirements that could be introduced for the mandatory installation of alcohol interlocks in the car of a driver who applies for a probationary licence when the applicant has a record of a second offence of driving under the influence of alcohol within the past five years or has committed any offence relating to a blood alcohol content of 0.15 per cent, which is three times the legal limit, or higher.

Two months later the New South Wales Government announced similar legislation, and 10 months later we are debating it in the Chamber. It is extraordinary how fast the Government moves when a good idea is proposed. It is a pity it cannot move at the same speed as far as public funding of election campaigns is concerned so that we may rid the State of the culture of political donations. It should be noted that 11 years ago the then Labor roads Minister, Carl Scully, introduced interlock devices as a court-based penalty for drink-drivers on a voluntary basis. Sadly, since then New South Wales has fallen behind the other States and Territories in respect of interlock devices. Victoria has successfully operated the mandatory program since 2002.

The program automatically applied to drivers with a recording of a blood alcohol concentration level of 0.15 or higher and first-time offenders under 26 years of age who record a blood alcohol concentration level of 0.07 to 0.149; second tier or subsequent offences receive a variable period of mandatory interlocks. In the Australian Capital Territory from June this year the interlock program applies to the following drivers: those who exceed a blood alcohol concentration level of 0.15, those who refuse to provide a breath or blood sample related to alcohol, and those convicted of two or more alcohol-related disqualifying offences within a five-year period.

South Australia introduced a mandatory interlock program in May 2009. This replaced the voluntary participation that was previously in place. This affected drivers who recorded a second or subsequent offence within a period of five years of driving with a blood alcohol level at or above 0.08, drivers with a blood alcohol concentration level of 0.125, and drivers who refuse to provide a sample of breath or blood for the purpose of alcohol testing. The bill makes it mandatory for an interlock order to be issued by the court to all repeat and serious offenders convicted of an alcohol-related major offence. These offences include a high-range prescribed concentration of alcohol, refusal to submit to a breath analysis, and any prescribed concentration of alcohol for a second offence or a subsequent alcohol-related offence within a five-year period.

The court can also issue an interlock order to a person convicted of a dangerous driving offence in breach of section 52A of the Crimes Act, provided the offence deals with the consumption of alcohol beyond the statutory level. As members would know, section 52A of the Crimes Act—what was called culpable driving—provides for a range of different behaviours of drivers. It generally carries penalties of imprisonment but it is only the alcohol-related offence under section 52A to which this bill purports to apply. Further, the punishment for the offender will include a period of licence disqualification prior to the interlock device being fitted to the vehicle. I acknowledge that both sides of politics want to see a decrease in the number of drink-driving offences recorded annually, not only for the sake of the lives of the offenders but also, more importantly, for the safety of the rest of the population whose lives are put at risk.

New South Wales police do a commendable job in enforcing this law, with five million breath tests conducted annually. It is of concern, however, that more than 20,000 drivers are still charged each year with drink-driving offences. I commend the past and present governments for their tough stance on drink-driving and the education campaigns that have contributed to the community no longer accepting drink-driving as the social norm. Of the 20,000 who are charged each year, one in six offenders in New South Wales will be convicted for a second drink-driving offence within five years. This is an alarming statistic that shows that while the message is being received by a large section of the population there is an entrenched attitude within a few that must be changed.

It has been a remarkably successful program by governments over many years to change the culture of alcohol and driving. Those of us in our more senior years will recall when it was standard practice for people to consume large quantities of alcohol and then drive home. Requirements existed for almost unlimited car parking spaces to be located near alcohol establishments of clubs and pubs, and invariably people drove home from those establishments. Prior to the introduction of mandatory testing, one was permitted to be breath tested only if police observed drivers doing something wrong or they were involved in a car accident. The fact is that it was ingrained in our culture to drink and drive. Indeed, many young persons used to boast about how they could not remember driving home—such was the culture that this Parliament and successive governments have effectively changed.

Young persons who used to take those risks when I was growing up and starting to drive no longer do so. It is within the social norm for young persons to have a designated driver and for the others to drink. It is within the social norm for young persons to obtain other forms of transport if they are available. In rural and country areas it is remarkable how the social norm has changed and how the education program has effectively worked with many people in the community. However, as I said, there are still sections of the community that do not make the appropriate judgements. I suppose in fairness, one problem with the consumption of alcohol and judgements being made by drivers as to whether they are able to drive can lead to misjudgements as to how much they have consumed. Some famous people have made those misjudgements. For example, a former Supreme Court judge, Justice Howie, who wrote the guideline judgement on drink-driving and made these gratuitous, profound statements that would normally be made by a member of this House or the other place, was embarrassingly arrested and prosecuted for drink-driving offences.

So even the best in the community make errors of judgement, and the nature of alcohol is that it affects a person's ability to make a judgement. Generally, the criminal law punishes people for their guilty mind unaffected by substances, but alcohol affects everybody and their judgement. So it has been important over many years for the Parliament and for governments of the day to effect a change in the social culture. They have done so successfully, but a minority of drivers still either make those misjudgements or, alternatively, become repeat offenders. Repeat offences can occur in a combination of misjudgement and alcoholism, which in itself is a disease as distinct from a conscious breach of the law. But irrespective of whichever way one looks at that sort of offending behaviour, it puts at risk ordinary innocent users of the road who are either drivers, passengers or pedestrians.

It is for this reason that the law takes such a firm view in relation to this behaviour. In the past five years 340 people have died in alcohol-related crashes. Each public holiday we hear news reports of people dying on our roads. It is time for this statistic to change. A mandatory interlock program is the next step in keeping our roads safe. If wider education campaigns are not reaching the minority of people who continue to commit drink-driving offences, lessons have to be learnt in a way that will force a change in their behaviour. Offenders who have completed a period of licence disqualification will be forced to change their behaviour if they are unable to start their vehicle when alcohol is detected on their breath. This is particularly true for people who rely on their vehicle for work or for generating income. Offenders must learn that dangerous driving, through the consumption of alcohol, cannot and will not be tolerated by the community.

Those offenders who are granted an interlock licence will be monitored by Roads and Maritime Services [RMS]—a significant responsibility for the RMS to be tasked with when one considers that the misuse of alcohol is a wider social problem. The RMS must be resourced adequately to supervise interlock licences and must be adequately empowered to take action in a timely manner against repeated attempts to start a vehicle under the influence of alcohol. As I said in respect of a bill in this House yesterday, it is one thing to give the RMS responsibility but the RMS must have the resources to carry out that responsibility. It must receive adequate funding and not be left fighting for every dollar with the NSW Treasury in every budget cycle. For the interlock licence program to be effective it must be adequately funded. The RMS must be adequately resourced and it must employ dedicated officers to provide for the supervision of offenders.

I encourage the New South Wales Government to continue to do what successive governments have done in taking road safety seriously in respect of funding for the supervision of the interlock program. I also acknowledge that the bill enables the RMS to transfer interstate interlock licence holders to the New South Wales mandatory program and I commend this move. I also observe that the NRMA supports this proposal which sees offenders bear the cost of the interlock program. The bill is sensible and it is long overdue. I was told by the Minister's adviser at the commencement of this debate that the Government proposes a series of amendments to the bill which are effectively drafting errors. I have been advised that the shadow Minister, the Hon. Walt Secord, agrees with those proposed amendments, as does the Opposition.

There is a difference of opinion between the Opposition and the Government that will be resolved in the other place. It relates to those who aid and abet the tampering of the interlock device. For example, an intoxicated driver requests a friend who is sober to blow into the device, thus avoiding the application of the device. The Opposition takes the view that such offences, which are missing from the bill, should be contained in the bill. The Minister proposes to address the matter by way of regulation when there are better mechanisms to deal with the offence of tampering. It is not just a philosophical difference of opinion. One can provide for regulations relating to tampering with an electronic device—that is understandable—but a person who acts to bypass the device, as in the example I have given, that is specific conduct of a person and should be covered by the bill so that the offender is prosecuted for a discrete, specific offence. It should be borne in mind that what constitutes criminal conduct in a regulation is not really the way in which governments traditionally provide for offences of this nature.

Before the member representing the Minister speaks in reply—because I understand the amendments proposed by the Government in order to correct the drafting errors will be proposed in this House—I suggest that the Minister and his staff go back to Parliamentary Counsel and ask whether or not it might be better for the tampering provision to be contained in the bill as distinct from simply within the regulations. In my view, regulations are not appropriate to such a discrete offence. The example I gave is the likely way that somebody is going to seek to bypass the interlock device and in my view regulations are not appropriate. Other than the matters I have raised on behalf of the Opposition, I commend the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014 to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [10.26 a.m.]: I support the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. I reassure the member for Heffron that this Government takes road safety seriously. One aspect of taking road safety seriously—and I will come to the leave of the bill shortly—is to ensure we have a road network that is safe. Ensuring a safe road network means investing in that network. This Government, under the Hon. Duncan Gay in the other place, had a record budget of \$5.5 billion to invest in our road works which, as we know, enhances the safety of drivers and road users and reduces the incidents of car crashes and vehicle collisions.

I inform members that \$4 billion of the \$5.5 billion regional roads contribution from the Minister was allocated to regional roads to ensure that those road networks were upgraded after years of neglect by the Labor

Government. New South Wales suffered a long period of non-investment by governments in road infrastructure such as the Pacific Highway, the Oxley Highway in Tamworth, Manilla Road in Tamworth, and dangerous intersections such as the Dampier Street intersection in Tamworth which is now being rebuilt with a roundabout to make it safer. This Government takes road safety seriously.

I assure the member for Heffron that Roads and Maritime Services and Transport for NSW do not have a problem with funding. Indeed, the community road safety funding for this year—\$283.7 million—is a significant increase on the amount that was invested by the Labor Government over many years. This Government is investing significantly in our road network to improve safety. This Government takes road safety seriously. I thank the Hon. Duncan Gay, the Minister for Roads and Freight in the other place, for ensuring he has the necessary funds and a record budget to keep upgrading our road network right across New South Wales.

The main purpose of this bill is to improve road safety by introducing a mandatory alcohol interlock program for offenders convicted of serious and repeat drink-driving offences. The bill also enables additional licensing requirements to be applied to licence holders who repeatedly exceed their demerit point threshold and repeat drink-drive offenders. Tampering will be addressed by regulation. We will ensure that anti-tampering measures will be put in place and significant penalties will apply to those who try to get around the law and allow a habitual offender to access and drive a vehicle. The bill proposes significant changes to the way that New South Wales addresses drink-driving, and it is important to understand the context for the proposed amendments. Since the introduction of random breath testing in New South Wales more than 30 years ago, on-road enforcement, public education and tough penalties for drink drivers have contributed to a massive reduction in alcohol-related trauma on the State's roads.

Importantly, the community now understands, and no longer accepts, the risk that drink-driving behaviour poses to other road users. Most offenders charged by police each year face court, accept the consequences of their actions and do not reoffend. However, we also know that some offenders are not heeding the road safety message or are not deterred from reoffending by traditional penalties or risk of detection. This bill proposes introducing a mandatory alcohol interlock program for drivers convicted of serious and repeat drink-driving offences in New South Wales. The new penalty will work alongside existing drink-driving countermeasures to further reduce alcohol-related offences and trauma on New South Wales roads.

The bill will make it mandatory for the court to issue interlock orders to all repeat and high-risk offenders convicted of an eligible alcohol-related major offence. All interlock orders will require the offender to serve an initial licence disqualification period when they will be unable to drive, and then complete a period of interlock participation. Alcohol interlocks are devices that are connected to the ignition of an offender's vehicle and prevent the engine from starting if a breath sample provided by the driver is above a set limit. Drivers who participate in interlock programs are restricted to driving only vehicles with devices installed. By providing a direct link to licensing, interlock programs reduce the chance that offenders will drive unlicensed, and potentially under the influence, while disqualified. I stress that any driver who holds an interlock licence will be monitored by Roads and Maritime Services for the duration of their interlock program.

All attempts to start the vehicle and any attempts to interfere with the proper operation of the device are logged by the interlock device, and this data will be monitored by Roads and Maritime Services. Warning letters and referrals for health interventions will be sent to drivers who frequently try to start their vehicle while under the influence. The vehicle will not start if alcohol is present. In addition to ongoing monitoring and strict program requirements, offenders will not automatically qualify for an unrestricted or provisional licence without the interlock condition at the end of their interlock period if they have not demonstrated compliance with program requirements. These provisions are in place to ensure that those drivers who are unable to separate drinking and driving, even after a long interlock program, and who may pose a risk to the community are allowed to drive only with the safeguard of an interlock device.

The other provisions of this bill relate to repeat traffic offenders. The New South Wales Government is implementing tougher penalties for bad drivers. Any unrestricted licence holder who receives a licence suspension under the Act because they have exceeded their demerit point threshold twice in five years will be required to complete a driver knowledge test before their licence suspension will be lifted. Additionally, these offenders will be required to complete a driver awareness course to improve their understanding of traffic law and the road safety implications of their behaviour. Persistent risky driving is not acceptable on New South Wales roads and will result in tough penalties.

This legislation represents the next step in combating drink-driving and repeat traffic offenders. The measures proposed target offenders who refuse to acknowledge the dangers of drink-driving and other traffic

offences to the community. The bill sends a clear road safety message: Dangerous driving behaviour is not tolerated on New South Wales roads. I congratulate the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, MLC, on the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [10.36 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to this vital debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. The bill seeks to amend the Road Transport Act 2013. The amendments aim to give a court the discretion to order the use of breath alcohol interlock devices fitted to motor vehicles with a mandatory period of disqualification for drivers convicted of certain alcohol-related driving offences; to provide for the accreditation of persons installing, removing, maintaining and carrying out other functions in relation to such devices and for Roads and Maritime Services to enter into agreements concerning the exercise of such functions; to enable Roads and Maritime Services to require certain holders of licences who repeatedly exceed specified demerit point thresholds to undertake driver education courses and driver knowledge tests; and to make provisions of a consequential or savings and transitional nature.

Drink-driving remains a problem in our society. One person who drinks and drives can ruin or take the lives of so many. One of my staff members told me last week about her cousin, aged just 16 or 17. He and his friends were on the way to their local McDonald's and a driver, drunk behind the wheel, crossed over into oncoming traffic and hit their vehicle. They were all killed instantly. But that was not the only tragedy. The car spun, flipped and killed a pregnant woman who was coming out of a shop. One drink-driver took the lives of a car full of young people with bright futures ahead of them and a woman who was happily expecting a child. The statistics on drink-driving are also frightening. In the past five years more than 340 people have been killed and more than 5,700 people injured in alcohol-related car accidents. Each year more than 20,000 drivers are charged with drink-driving offences. Alcohol accounts for an unacceptable 20 per cent of all road fatalities in this State.

This is why I will support the bill, in the hope that it will save more lives. In August 2003 the then Labor Minister for Roads, Carl Scully, introduced the interlock device as a court-based penalty for drink-drivers as a voluntary program. Alcohol interlock devices are electronic breath-testing devices connected to the ignition of a vehicle's engine. If the driver fails a breath test the vehicle will not start. Labor introduced legislation that provided that if convicted drink-drivers volunteered to obtain an interlock driver licence and took part in the program they were allowed to continue to drive after a reduced disqualification period. Those who did not volunteer to be part of the program had to serve their full disqualification period. Mid last year my colleague the then shadow Minister for Roads, the member for Keira, announced that Labor would make interlock devices mandatory for repeat serious drink-driving offenders. I am pleased that the Government has decided to take up our policy.

The policy aims to make it mandatory for the court to issue interlock orders to all repeat and serious drink-driving offenders. It is important to note that, although the bill says "mandatory", it gives the court the discretion to issue interlock orders. The bill outlines minimum interlocking periods ranging from 12 months for low range and novice range repeat offenders to 48 months for serious repeat high-range offenders. A 12-month minimum period will be put in place to ensure that offenders have enough time to learn how to change their drinking and driving habits. Before participating in the interlocking program all offenders will have to serve a licence disqualification period when no licence will be available. Although this period is shorter than the current period outlined in the Act, the combined period of disqualification and interlocking participation will, in most cases, be longer than that currently spelt out in the Act. I am pleased to see that the bill will give the court discretion to order a longer interlocking period than the minimum, if needed.

If an offender does not take part in the interlocking program, as ordered by the court, they will be disqualified from holding a licence for five years. Convicted offenders can be exempt from taking part in the interlocking program in two circumstances: first, if the offender has a serious medical condition that prevents them from using the device; and, secondly, where the offender does not own or have access to a vehicle in which they can use the device. However, any offender exempt from the interlocking program must complete a drink-driving awareness and rehabilitation course. Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] will monitor all drivers who participate in the interlocking program. RMS will send warning letters and referrals for health interventions to drivers who frequently try to start their vehicles while under the influence of alcohol or have friends try to start their vehicles on their behalf. The vehicle will not start if alcohol is present in a person's system. I fully support the bill. It has been Labor policy since the middle of last year and I am optimistic that the bill will reduce the number of fatalities on our roads. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [10.41 a.m.]: I speak in support of the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. Before I get to the substance of my contribution, I will briefly address the concerns that the member for Heffron outlined in his speech. Our Government has been advised by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office [PCO] that the appropriate place to locate the aid and abet offence is in the regulations where all other offences relating to tampering are located. This is the preference of the PCO and we have gone with its recommendation.

Mr Ron Hoenig: They have just done some amendments so they might have mucked that up.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: I acknowledge the interjection. We stand by the advice of the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. It beggars belief that when I first started driving in New South Wales, it was okay—

Dr Geoff Lee: Dinosaurs were around.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: It was okay for dinosaurs, like the member for Parramatta, to be granted a driving licence. The community deemed it okay that people had the right to drink and drive. We have lived with the consequences as a result. The consequences of that presumed right are the deaths and maiming of thousands of citizens of New South Wales. In some cases, it has caused the complete destruction of families. I have experienced this tragedy and I suggest to members that there would not be many families in New South Wales today who have not been touched directly or indirectly by tragedy caused by people in the community thinking drinking and driving was okay.

History has proven that drinking and driving is not okay. The measures implemented by successive governments, and now this Government, have resulted in a decrease in the number of tragedies that have drink-driving as their root cause. While alcohol-related fatalities and injuries are trending lower, the proportion of fatal crashes involving alcohol has remained stable at around 20 per cent each year. During the period 2007-2011 it is estimated that alcohol-related crashes cost New South Wales more than half a billion dollars per annum. We know that drivers convicted of drink-driving offences pose a particularly high risk to the community. Research has found that drivers previously convicted of drink-driving while intoxicated are four times more likely to be involved in a fatal drink-driving crash than an average driver. If it were left up to me, and many people would thank God it is not left up to me—

Dr Geoff Lee: Hear, hear!

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: I thank the member for Parramatta. Drink-driving has had such an effect on my personal life and family that if it were left up to me I would confiscate the vehicles of repeat drink-driving offenders. I would also introduce more serious punishments for those who make vehicles available to drink-driving offenders. I acknowledge that the current bill goes some way to addressing our concerns and the risk that drink-driving poses to our community. This Government has introduced a number of initiatives to address drink-driving and deter high-risk behaviour. The severe penalties for drink-driving include fines, licence disqualification and possible jail terms. Again, if it were up to me, I would confiscate and sell the vehicles of drink-driving offenders and use the money that was raised to fund road safety initiatives.

Mr Nick Lalich: Maybe crucifixion.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: That may be another step for a future date, but today we are talking about the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. The measures proposed in the bill target offenders who refuse to acknowledge the dangers of drinking and driving and other traffic offences. The bill sends a clear road safety message: Dangerous driving behaviour is not tolerated on New South Wales roads. Any drink-driver convicted of a serious or repeat drink-driving offence must demonstrate they are capable of separating drinking and driving through an interlock or rehabilitation program before they can be trusted with a standard New South Wales licence. Similarly, repeat traffic offenders must demonstrate knowledge of the road rules before being permitted back on the road. The bill will make it mandatory for the court to issue interlock orders to all repeat and serious offenders convicted of an eligible alcohol-related offence. All interlock orders will require the offender to serve an initial licence disqualification period and then complete a period of interlock participation.

However, to ensure that all offenders are dealt with fairly, the bill allows offenders convicted of eligible offences to be exempted from participation in an interlock program in two limited circumstances.

An exemption is available, first, if the offender has a medical condition that would prevent the use of an interlock device in a vehicle; and, secondly, if the offender satisfies a court that they do not have access to a vehicle. These limited exemptions will ensure that those offenders for whom an interlock order is not appropriate will be subject to the existing lengthy licence disqualification periods under the Act for their offence in addition to any other penalty the court may wish to impose. The interlock program will deliver road safety benefits to the offender and to the New South Wales community. Therefore, it is important that no offender be excluded from the opportunity to gain positive behavioural change from participating in the interlock program purely because of cost, particularly as the alternative to participation is a lengthy five-year disqualification.

For this reason, the Act will continue to include provision for a financial assistance scheme to support program participants who have difficulty paying for interlock services. Financial assistance will include concession rate fees for eligible card holders, to be absorbed by the providers, and a limited duration fee subsidy for offenders in severe financial hardship. This legislation represents the next step in combating drink-driving and repeat traffic offenders in New South Wales. It has been developed following extensive road safety research and consultation with key agencies, including the NSW Police Force—whom I commend for their outstanding work in enforcing the drink-driving regime—the Department of Police and Justice, and NSW Health. The measures proposed today were outlined in the Government's 10-year Road Safety Strategy released in March 2013. They have the support of NRMA Motoring and Services, and are consistent with the spirit of the NRMA's "3 Point Plan to Tackle Bad Drivers". I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [10.50 a.m.]: I speak in support of the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. As a former police officer who dealt with fatal and alcohol-related accidents, a lawyer who appeared in culpable driving trials, often representing people charged with drink-driving and also as the founder of the Traffic Offenders Program in Myall Lakes, I know the importance of this bill. I was extremely disappointed that the member for Heffron and the member for Cabramatta tried to politicise this matter when I would have thought they should have applauded the legislation. The member for Heffron said that in 2002 Victoria introduced a mandatory interlock program. At that time Labor was in government in New South Wales.

In 2003 the then New South Wales Labor Government introduced an interlock program but it was not mandatory. Despite Labor being in government between 2002 and 2011, it did not introduce a mandatory interlock program. Yet today Labor members are saying, "Hang on, this is our policy." They had 16 years to introduce the policy but they failed to do so. Despite Labor asserting that this is its policy, former Premier Barry O'Farrell had advocated for the introduction of a mandatory alcohol interlock program long before any such program was raised by Labor. Indeed, it was part of the Government's road safety strategy released in March last year. That puts an end to Labor saying that this Government is taking its policy. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, talking about Labor and truth is somewhat contradictory.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Cabramatta has had an opportunity to contribute to the debate. He will observe Standing Order 52, which provides for members to be heard uninterrupted.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The last Premier of New South Wales said the problem with the former Labor Government was that it had stopped governing for the people of New South Wales; it was governing for its own self-interest and not for the people of New South Wales. This Government is introducing a mandatory interlock program, something Labor neglected to do for 16 years. The object of the bill is to amend the Road Transport Act 2013 to replace provisions of that Act giving a court the discretion to order the use of breath alcohol interlock devices fitted to motor vehicles as an alternative to disqualification for drivers convicted of certain alcohol-related driving offences with provisions requiring the making of a mandatory interlock order imposing a mandatory period of disqualification together with such an interlock requirement; to provide for the accreditation of persons installing, removing, maintaining and carrying out other functions in relation to such devices, and for Roads and Maritime Services to enter into agreements concerning the exercise of such functions; and to enable the authority to require certain holders of licences who repeatedly exceed specified demerit point thresholds to undertake driver education courses and driver knowledge tests.

In his second reading speech to Parliament Mr Ray Williams, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads, on behalf of the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, Minister for Transport, told Parliament that the bill "represents the next step in combating drink-driving and repeat traffic offenders in New South Wales, and has been developed following extensive road safety research and consultation with key agencies". The

Parliamentary Secretary stated further that the measures proposed in the bill, which were outlined in the Government's Road Safety Strategy released in March 2013, have the support of NRMA Motoring and Services, and are consistent with the spirit of the NRMA's "3 Point Plan to Tackle Bad Drivers".

Alcohol interlocks are devices that are connected to the ignition of an offender's vehicle that prevent the engine from starting if a breath sample provided by the driver is above a set limit. Drivers who participate in an interlock program are restricted to driving only vehicles with these devices installed. Interlock programs help offenders to learn how to separate their drinking from their driving whilst enabling them to continue to access employment and essential services. However, while courts can currently make an order enabling certain drink-driving offenders to participate in a New South Wales interlock program, participation is voluntary and has a low take-up rate amongst offenders. The bill makes it compulsory for courts to issue interlock orders to repeat and serious offenders convicted of an eligible alcohol-related offence.

The member for Heffron referred to instances of aiding and abetting. He gave the example of another person breathing into the device to enable the car to be started and the offender then driving the car. Aiding and abetting offences are dealt with in regulations, not in the Act, and the same is proposed under this legislation. The interlock program is not just about preventing the car from being driven; it is also about educating drivers that they cannot drink and drive. Indeed, it goes further than education; it must involve behavioural change. It has been noted by experts and others that many people believe they can drink and drive, leading to a high recidivism rate in New South Wales. The community still does not understand the dangers of drinking and driving, which is why so many continually commit this offence. We must do more than just educate the community; we must promote behavioural change.

The Traffic Offenders Program includes lectures that involve showing the participants videos depicting all the gory details of a person with a spinal injury as a result of a drink-driving accident or the person talking to participants about how the accident has changed his or her life and having drug and alcohol educators speaking about the effects of alcohol on the body and their driving. Behavioural change is more important than education and the introduction of the mandatory alcohol interlock device will hopefully help to change the behaviour of many drivers and reduce the recidivism rate. While alcohol-related fatalities and injuries are trending lower, the proportion of fatal crashes involving alcohol has remained stable at around 20 per cent each year. During the period 2007-11 it is estimated that alcohol-related crashes cost New South Wales around \$660 million per annum. Drivers convicted of drink-driving offences pose a particularly high risk to the community.

Research has found that drivers previously convicted of driving while intoxicated are around four times more likely to be involved in a fatal drink-driving crash than an average driver. New South Wales has introduced a number of deterrent strategies, such as mandatory minimum sentencing and the like. However, while these deterrent strategies have generally been effective, there are still approximately 26,000 drink-driving offences in New South Wales annually. While the majority of offenders are deterred from reoffending by the comprehensive sanctions and penalties in place, one in six offenders reoffend and commit a subsequent drink-driving offence within five years. That is notwithstanding that penalties double if it is a second offence within five years.

A voluntary interlock program has been operating as part of the drink-drive sentencing regime in New South Wales since 2003. At that time New South Wales was the first jurisdiction in Australia to adopt an interlock program and enrolment in the program has remained constant, at around 300 new participants each year. Program participants will be subject to licence conditions which will restrict them to driving vehicles fitted with an interlock device. An interlock device is an electronic device connected to the ignition of a vehicle that prevents a vehicle from starting unless the driver completes an alcohol test. A reduction in the number of alcohol-related accidents in this State will be a good thing. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [11.00 a.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to improve the safety of our roads and our families by the introduction of a mandatory alcohol interlock program for serial offenders who are convicted of repeat and serious drink-driving offences. A driver licence is a wonderful privilege that should be respected; it is not a God-given right. A driver licence is a social contract that we enter into with the rest of the community that when we get behind the wheel of a car we will be both licensed and in a fit state to drive, showing care and respect for others. As a survivor of a fatal car accident and from my 27-year career in policing, which was devoted to peace through justice and protecting the community, I well know the importance of road safety.

The bill will allow for additional licensing requirements to be applied to driver licence holders who repeatedly exceed their demerit point threshold and show blatant disregard for drink-driving laws. At its core, the bill will outline the next step in combating repeat drink-driving and traffic offenders in New South Wales, those who place the motoring public, including our friends and families, at risk through their blatant and appalling disregard for their own safety and that of the public. It is a damning indictment that more than 20,000 drivers each year are charged with a variety of drink-driving offences and that alcohol remains a contributing factor in around 20 per cent of fatalities on New South Wales roads. From my experience as a police prosecutor I know that the Local Court spends a great deal of its time dealing with traffic offences, in particular drink-driving and licence-related offences. Sadly, in the past five years more than 340 people have been killed and many more have been injured in alcohol-related crashes.

While most offenders charged by police accept the consequences of their actions and do not reoffend, there are some for whom alcohol is an issue. It is my view that those who return for a second and third drink-driving offence often have an issue with alcohol. This bill will make it increasingly the responsibility of those repeat offenders to accept the outcomes of their selfish behaviour and to do something about it. The interlock program will assist offenders, through education programs, to separate their drinking and driving. This will allow them to continue with employment and daily activities that are crucial to maintaining a normal life. Through a strict program of re-monitoring the way back to holding a licence, interlock programs such as that outlined in the bill will reduce the chance that offenders will drive unlicensed, disqualified or potentially under the influence whilst disqualified.

The introduction of a mandatory alcohol interlock program in New South Wales will work alongside existing drink-driving countermeasures to further reduce alcohol-related offences and injury on New South Wales roads. Under the Road Transport Act 2013 any offender has the choice to enter the program, which will be administered by Roads and Maritime Services [RMS], or serve a lengthy licence disqualification period. The bill will make it mandatory for the court to issue interlock orders to all repeat and serious offenders convicted of eligible alcohol-related major offences, including any high range prescribed concentration of alcohol, commonly known as PCA, offences or refusal to submit to a breath analysis where it is a first alcohol-related offence, such a refusal is deemed to be a high range offence; and any other prescribed concentration of alcohol offence, including novice, low, mid or high range offences or refusal to submit to a breath analysis that is a second or subsequent alcohol-related offence within a five-year period.

All interlock orders will require the offender to serve an initial licence disqualification period where no licence will be available and then complete a period of interlock participation. The initial licence disqualification period, where the offender cannot apply for any type of licence, will be shorter than the current automatic disqualification periods in the Act. However, when the initial disqualification and interlock periods are combined, the total period will be comparable to, and in most cases longer than, the current licence disqualification period under the Act. The bill enforces the requirement that offenders subject to an interlock order may drive only vehicles installed with an interlock device and are subject to strict interlock program requirements.

The interlock periods outlined in the bill increase in accordance with the severity of the drink-driving offence—for example, minimum interlock periods prescribed in the bill range from 12 months for low range and novice offences to 48 months for serious, repeat high range offences. Giving our courts more powers to deal with repeat offenders is a critical element of this bill, with courts having the discretion to order a longer interlock period than the prescribed minimum if warranted by the circumstance of each individual case. Importantly, courts will also have the ability to enforce a disqualified licence order should the offender fail to enrol in the interlock program for the prescribed period and the offender will remain disqualified from holding a licence other than an interlock licence until five years has passed from conviction.

The bill will allow offenders convicted of an eligible offence to be exempt from participation in the interlock program in two limited circumstances. The first circumstance is where an offender has a serious medical condition so that they cannot provide a sufficient breath sample to operate the device—in that case they probably would not have sufficient breath to open a car door and drive that car. The second circumstance is where an offender does not own or have access to a vehicle in which to install such a device. To seek that exemption an offender would have to demonstrate that not only does he or she not own a vehicle but also that they do not have regular access to a shared, family or work vehicle in which the device could be installed.

These exemptions have not been included to introduce a way out for offenders, but are intended to provide the courts with an alternative order in the limited circumstances where it would be clearly and

manifestly unfair to order an interlock period. Additionally, Roads and Maritime Services will require any offender who is exempted and does not demonstrate his or her separation from drink-driving through participation in the interlock program to complete a driver awareness program and rehabilitation course such as the Sober Driver Program.

The New South Wales motoring public expects the Government to introduce legislation that will keep them, their families and friends safe. Although there has been a large culture change in society's approach to drink-driving, there is still some way to go. Drink-driving is a scourge on our society; it increases the risk of accidents, serious injury and deaths on our roads. Reducing the possibility of those who have been identified as repeat drink-driving offenders from reoffending is a good measure. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.08 a.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. I support the bill. Members well know the terrible carnage that occurs and, sadly, in our respective electorates we have witnessed innocent people being injured and loss of life on our roads. The repeat offenders simply amaze me and this bill will go a long way towards addressing that particular issue.

To personalise it a little, for the past eight years the Tweed-Byron Local Area Command has had the highest incidence of drink-driving per head of population in the State of New South Wales. I consider that a badge of shame. For eight consecutive years more people in my electorate chose to drive while intoxicated. The perception is that because it is a tourism spot the majority of people caught drink-driving are tourists but that is a fallacy; 80 per cent are locals. What is disturbing is that of that 80 per cent at least 70 per cent are arrested for medium to high range drink-driving: they are not just over the limit but well over the limit. Like many areas we have suffered carnage on the roads.

I have had the privilege on a number of occasions to observe the men and women in our Police Force administer random breath tests at all hours of the day and I am amazed at the number of offenders who are picked up. I do not have hard evidence but my observation is that the age of drink-drivers that continue to drink-drive varies from the young to middle aged and older people. This mandatory alcohol interlock program is sensible. A constituent of mine chose to voluntarily install an alcohol interlock system. I note that on many occasions he could not use his vehicle, even the morning after. That is a trap many motorists fall into. They will perhaps do the right thing the night before but alcohol is still present in their systems in the morning. I have personally observed random breath testing occurring at nine o'clock on a Saturday morning and there were people who were still over the limit. Drivers should be fully aware that alcohol stays in their system for some time.

The proportion of fatal crashes involving alcohol has remained stable at around 20 per cent, which is one in five. From 2007 to 2011 it is estimated that alcohol-related crashes cost New South Wales around \$660 million per annum. That is an extraordinarily high figure. While the deterrent strategy has generally been effective there are still 26,000 drink-driving offences in New South Wales annually. Whilst the majority of offenders are deterred from reoffending by comprehensive sanctions and penalties, one in six reoffends with a subsequent drink-driving offence within five years. People continue to offend out of bloody-mindedness.

In the Tweed electorate we have a local racetrack that has only one road in and out and every year on Melbourne Cup day there is a roadside random breath test on the way in and on the way out, yet every year at least 10 to 20 people are charged with driving under the influence. The logic of that escapes me. Not only are they putting their own lives at risk but of greater concern is the risk to the poor innocent child, mother or family and the lifetime impact a fatality or injury would cause.

A voluntary interlock program has been operating in New South Wales as part of the drink-driving sentencing regime since 2003. At that time New South Wales was the first jurisdiction in Australia to adopt an interlock program. Enrolment in the program has remained constant at around 300 participants per year. The interlock program participants are subject to licence conditions that restrict driving to vehicles with an interlock system fitted. An interlock is an electronic device connected to the ignition of a vehicle that prevents the vehicle being started unless the driver completes an alcohol breath test and has a reading below a specific level. The interlock device provides a physical barrier between drinking and driving.

Evaluations of similar programs show that it can reduce the drink-driving reoffending rate of these high risk offenders by approximately 65 per cent. An important factor to realise with the interlock device is that you need to be able to supply a breath sample on a regular basis otherwise the vehicle will cease to operate. It is no

use passing the breath test initially and then having a drink because during the course of driving that vehicle you will be required to submit another breath test. I am led to believe that the device can be fitted to motorbikes and heavy vehicles as well. I am sure that operators of motorbikes will take heed of that information.

I compliment the Minister and his staff for addressing cross-border issues. We recognise Queensland law and they recognise New South Wales law, particularly with those devices and road regulations. In my electorate cross-border issues are a major concern. Each day 50,000 to 70,000 Queensland vehicles drive through my electorate, so I am glad that issue has been recognised in this bill.

The key features of the new program to be implemented in New South Wales will include: a zero blood alcohol content for all interlock licence holders; monitoring drink-driving attempts during the program; early intervention regarding alcohol dependency based on interlock data; an administrative component to transfer those who are not ready to exit the judicial interlock program to be managed under the New South Wales licensing system; and a market-based user-pays model for accredited alcohol interlock providers to install and service the interlock device. I am advised that that could be about \$1,500 to \$2,000 per annum.

While the new program will be mandatory for serious and repeat drink-drivers, exemptions and hardship provisions for extenuating circumstances will be available to ensure that those who can participate in the program will be included. The bill also establishes a legislative framework for the new alcohol interlock penalty in the Road Transport Act 2013 and the amendments will come into effect from 1 February 2015. In full support of the Act the bill also increases traffic penalties. The bill introduces a new element into the New South Wales demerit point scheme that allows Roads and Maritime Services to require drivers who accumulate their full allocation of demerit points twice in a five-year period to complete a driver knowledge test and participate in a driver education course within a period specified in the notice.

Under these arrangements all unrestricted licence holders who exceed their demerit points twice in five years will be required to re-sit their driver's knowledge test and complete the appropriate driver education course. That is a responsible move and I commend the Government, the Minister and all who have been involved for making our roads safer for not only road users but also pedestrians, families and everyone in the State of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [11.18 a.m.]: I speak on the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. The intent of the bill is to improve road safety by introducing a mandatory alcohol interlock program for offenders convicted of serious and repeat drink-driving offences. The bill also enables additional licensing requirements to be applied to licence holders who repeatedly exceed their demerit point threshold and repeat drink-driving offenders. This bill establishes the legislative framework for the new alcohol interlock penalty in the Road Transport Act 2013. The amendments will come into effect from 1 February 2015. Under the new bill, all offenders receiving an interlock order will be disqualified from holding any driver licence, other than an interlock licence or a learner licence, for a period of five years following the date of conviction, unless the court-ordered interlock participation period has been completed. This ensures that offenders who do not comply with a court order to install an interlock are disqualified for an even longer period than those who are exempted from the program.

To support the new program requirement for interlock licence holders to have a blood alcohol content [BAC] of zero when driving a vehicle, the bill also amends the prescribed concentration of alcohol [PCA] offence regime to include interlock licence holders within "novice range" and "special category range" PCA offences. This will ensure that the zero BAC is enforceable and integrates with the existing PCA offence regime. Only New South Wales interlock licences issued after 1 February 2015 will be subject to the novice and special category PCA ranges. For current interlock licence holders under the voluntary scheme, the 0.02 BAC licence condition will continue to apply. The mandatory interlock program in New South Wales will target serious and repeat drink-drivers who are facing licence disqualification for drink-driving. These offenders represent a significant road safety risk as they are either undeterred by the traditional sanctions, such as fines and disqualification, or are unable to separate their drinking from their driving behaviour.

The bill also introduces a new element to the New South Wales demerit point scheme that allows Roads and Maritime Services to require drivers who accumulate their full allocation of demerit points twice in a five-year period to complete a driver knowledge test and participate in a driving education course within a period specified in the notice. Under the amendments, all unrestricted licence holders who exceed their demerit point limit twice in five years will be required to re-sit the driver knowledge test and complete an appropriate driver education course. When these proposed initiatives are implemented, there will be a significant public road

safety benefit to New South Wales by ensuring that these high-risk, repeat traffic offenders are required to demonstrate that they have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the road rules prior to returning to driving on New South Wales roads.

Drivers convicted of drink-driving offences pose a particularly high risk to the community. Research has found that drivers previously convicted of driving while intoxicated are around four times more likely to be involved in a fatal drink-driving crash than an average driver. The New South Wales Government has a number of initiatives to address drink-driving and to deter high-risk behaviour. They include severe penalties for drink-driving comprising fines, licence disqualification and possible jail terms. These additional initiatives for increased traffic offenders will ensure that all repeat traffic offenders are subject to additional penalties that ensure that, should they return to driving, they are aware of the road rules applying to them and the impact of non-compliant behaviour on road safety in New South Wales. In addition, NSW Police regularly undertakes extensive random breath testing, media campaigns—most recently the Plan B campaign—and educational material to attempt to change drink-driving behaviour.

While this deterrence strategy has been generally effective, there are still approximately 26,000 drink-drive offences in New South Wales annually. While the majority of offenders are deterred from re-offending by the comprehensive sanctions and penalties in place, one in six offenders re-offends with a subsequent drink-driving offence within five years. This legislation represents the next step in combating drink-driving and repeat traffic offenders in New South Wales. It has been developed following extensive road safety research and consultation with key agencies including the NSW Police Force, the Department of Police and Justice and NSW Health. The proposed measures target offenders who refuse to acknowledge the dangers to the community of drink-driving and other traffic offences. This bill sends a clear message that dangerous driving behaviour is not and will not be tolerated on New South Wales roads.

I take this opportunity to highly commend the New South Wales police officers and staff of the Camden Local Area Command led by our outstanding Local Area Commander, Ward Hansen. It was only last Thursday that I went to our Community Safety Precinct Committee meeting at Narellan Police Station and I must say how impressed I was with our command. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services was with me in my local area about a month ago and I know first-hand that he understands the outstanding job done by our local area command in Narellan. It is a great credit to the officers concerned. I would like to highlight some of the wonderful achievements of the police in my local area.

The command beat its business plan target for the following crime categories: assault, robbery, steal from person, break and enter dwelling, steal from dwelling, malicious damage, stolen vehicles, steal from motor vehicle, steal from retail store and fraud. It exceeded on-person searches and move-on business plan targets, and this is driven primarily by the Proactive Crime Team oversighted by the Operations Duty Officer, Inspector Paul Fryer. Paul is doing a tremendous job in driving proactivity and focusing on our repeat offenders and at-risk locations. Paul has been with the command for many years. He is a great leader and we are very lucky to have him.

With regard to public safety, the injury crashes police and the general duty police conducted in excess of 29,000 random breath tests and as a command detected 229 PCA offences, which was supported by the Traffic and Highway Patrol Command. The command continues to focus on reducing road trauma and on education and plays an instrumental role in support of Rotary in delivering the U-Turn the Wheel Program for high school students within the command. Youth Liaison Officer Mark Scambary continues to lead the way in the command's support of this very important education program for our community.

With regard to customer service, the command beat the business plan target for response times and customer complaints and exceeded targets for victim seven-day follow-ups. These initiatives are driven by Customer Service Duty Officer Inspector Mick Pearsell, who is also to be commended for his passion in this vitally important area. Mick has also been at the command for a number of years. His leadership of the younger troops is outstanding. At the meeting, the police presented an operational police officer and all the arms and appointments that they are required to wear. I could go on and on about the wonderful work of our local area command, because I am extremely proud of the work they do. In the 3½ years since I was elected I have heard only positives about our local police, which is fantastic.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Is it only 3½ years?

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: A bit longer, but it seems like only yesterday and I had a lot more hair when I started. This is a fantastic bill and the Government is to be commended. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [11.28 a.m.]: I support the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. The main purpose of this bill is to improve road safety by introducing a mandatory alcohol interlock program for offenders convicted of serious and repeat drink-driving offences. This bill was introduced by the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay. I commend the Minister for introducing this bill, which is one of many initiatives introduced by the Minister to reduce carnage on our roads.

As was mentioned by the member for Tamworth, this Minister, along with this Government, has taken the initiative to spend money on road infrastructure and other programs to ensure that road carnage is minimised. Unfortunately, it is the reoffenders who cause the problem. That is why this bill is being introduced. It is interesting to note that almost every time the Government introduces a bill Labor members claim it as theirs and say that they were going to introduce it. If they had introduced all these bills in their 16 years we would not have to introduce them at this time. That is the fact of the matter.

Dr Geoff Lee: The bottom line.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: It is the bottom line. At the end of the day, repeat offenders must be dealt with. Whilst the statistics on fatal road crashes involving alcohol have remained static at around 20 per cent each year over the past five or six years, it is estimated that alcohol-related crashes cost New South Wales around \$660 million per annum. That is the dollar cost but there is also a personal cost paid by families. People have to carry the burden of tragedies, deaths and injuries for the rest of their lives because reoffenders break the law.

As a previous speaker said, driving on New South Wales roads is a privilege and people must obey the law in order to drive. Firstly, a person needs to obtain a driver licence. Then they need to observe the laws, one of which is that people must not drink and drive. The unfortunate reality is that some people do drink and drive. This legislation targets the reoffenders. The statistics are glaringly obvious: There are 26,000 drink-drive offences committed in New South Wales annually and it is reported that one in six offenders commit a subsequent drink-driving offence within five years. That equates to 4,300 reoffenders per annum. Unfortunately, we in this place have to legislate for the minority who cause a problem for the rest of society.

The current voluntary interlock program has been operating as part of the drink-driving sentencing regime in New South Wales since 2003. New South Wales was the first jurisdiction in Australia to adopt an interlock program and enrolment in the program has remained constant at around 300 new participants each year. It is obvious that there is a shortfall if there are only 300 new participants per year but the findings show that one in six, or 4,300, of the 26,000 offenders per annum reoffend. That needs to be addressed. Interlocks provide a physical barrier between drinking and driving. Evaluations of similar programs show that they can reduce the drink-driving reoffending rate of high-risk offenders by around 65 per cent. We need to do something to protect our citizens in this State. This is good legislation that will go a long way to ensuring that lives are saved.

The proposed New South Wales mandatory interlock program will target serious and repeat drink-drivers who are facing licence disqualification for drink-driving. These offenders represent a significant road safety risk because they are either undeterred by the traditional sanctions such as fines and disqualifications or, quite frankly, they are unable to stop drinking and driving. We must change that behaviour. Key features of the new program to be implemented in New South Wales will include a zero blood alcohol content limit for all interlock licence holders, monitoring of drink-driving attempts during the program, early interventions regarding alcohol dependency based on interlock data, and a market-based user-pays model for accredited alcohol interlock providers to install and service alcohol interlocks.

While the new program will be mandatory for serious and repeat drink-drivers, exemption and hardship provisions for extenuating circumstances will be available to ensure that those who can participate in the program will be included. The legislative changes will include a framework for the new alcohol interlock penalty in the Road Transport Act 2013. The amendments will come into effect from 1 February 2015. A new part 7.4, division 2 will be introduced to replace current automatic periods of disqualification for high-level and repeat drink-driving offenders with a new mandatory alcohol interlock order to be made by a court, unless the court is satisfied that there are grounds for an exemption from an interlock program. The new mandatory alcohol interlock orders include a judicially determined period of disqualification followed by a period of participation in the New South Wales mandatory interlock program.

Under the bill all offenders receiving an interlock order will be disqualified from holding any driver licence other than an interlock licence or a learner licence for a period of five years following the date of conviction—which should be the case—unless the court-ordered interlock participation period has been completed. This will ensure that offenders who do not comply with a court order to install an interlock are disqualified for an even longer period than those who are exempted from the program. We need to penalise reoffenders because they clearly have not learnt their lesson. It is up to the Government to impose heavier penalties to ensure that they finally learn what they should do in order to be responsible citizens of this State.

The bill allows for the court to exempt offenders from an interlock program when it is satisfied that the offender cannot participate in an interlock program either because of an acute medical condition or inaccessibility to a vehicle. The bill also introduces a new interlock penalty for the court to apply to persons who have been convicted of dangerous driving offences under the Crimes Act 1900 where alcohol was present. The appropriateness of the interlock order will be assessed by magistrates on a case-by-case basis as alcohol is not always the aggravating factor in these offences. If an interlock order is made for these offenders it will be in addition to other sanctions imposed on the offender, which may include fines, imprisonment or licence disqualification.

Only New South Wales interlock licences issued after 1 February 2015 will be subject to the novice and special category prescribed concentration of alcohol [PCA] ranges. For the current interlock licence holders under the voluntary scheme the 0.02 blood alcohol content licence condition will continue to apply. The bill makes amendments to enable the implementation of an effective, customer-focused and market-based service delivery model for the new interlock program. This includes clearly defining the role of interlock service providers and including in the legislation an explicit power for the authority to enter into an agreement with accredited alcohol interlock providers for the provision of interlock services.

There will be increased traffic offender penalties for people caught by this program. Under the amendments, all unrestricted licence holders who exceed their demerit point limits twice in five years will be required to resit the driver knowledge test and complete an appropriate driver education course. The legislation contains other traffic offender penalties on which I will allow other members to elaborate. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [11.38 a.m.]: I support the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014. The bill is another example of the good Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, introducing sensible legislation to deter serious and repeat offenders who continue to flout the law against drink-driving. As a legislative body and as a community we must do what is required to reduce the number of repeat and serious offenders. Although this Government and other governments over successive years have introduced severe penalties for drink-driving, such as fines, licence disqualification and possible jail terms, this bill adds a further penalty for repeat and serious offenders of an interlock device fitted to vehicles so that the vehicle will not start if the driver has any alcohol content in his or her system.

It is unfortunate that, whilst alcohol-related fatalities and injuries are trending lower, the proportion of fatal crashes involving alcohol has remained stable at around 20 per cent a year. It is also unfortunate that around 26,000 people are charged with drink-driving every year, which has significant impacts both economically and socially. It is estimated that alcohol-related crashes cost New South Wales around \$660 million per annum, and that is apart from the social costs caused to families and friends and to victims' families, the innocent people involved in those accidents who are left maimed, scarred or hurt by the reckless and unlawful behaviour of people who choose to drink and drive. We must remember always that it is a privilege to have a driver licence and with that licence comes the responsibility to not drink and drive. We must instigate all possible initiatives to change people's behaviour, especially the repeat and serious drink-driving offenders. The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to replace provisions of that Act giving a court the discretion to order the use of breath alcohol interlock devices fitted to motor vehicles as an alternative to disqualification for drivers convicted of certain alcohol-related driving offences with provisions requiring the making of a mandatory interlock order imposing a mandatory period of disqualification together with such an interlock requirement, and
- (b) to provide for the accreditation of persons installing, removing, maintaining and carrying out other functions in relation to such devices and for Roads and Maritime Services to enter into agreements concerning the exercise of such functions, and
- (c) to enable the Authority to require certain holders of licences who repeatedly exceed specified demerit point thresholds to undertake driver education courses and driver knowledge tests, and
- (d) to make provisions of a consequential or savings and transitional nature.

In an ideal world these measures would not be required, but we must send the strongest and clearest message to those who continue to flout the law and drink and drive. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I know that you are a big supporter of this legislation, as are all members on this side of the House, and it is good to see that the Opposition is coming on board and providing its support for the legislation. One of the features of the legislation is that the interlock device changes people's behaviour. If a person has been drinking and he or she tries to start their vehicle the device will not allow the vehicle to start. For repeat and serious offenders the first step is for them to change their behaviour but if they choose not to this initiative will assist in a behavioural change.

This is one part of a suite of problem-solving initiatives to instil in the population the need for a cultural change. About 30 years ago, before random breath testing was introduced, it was socially acceptable for people to drink and drive. Over the past 30 years, through advertising, penalties, police patrols and random breath testing, we have seen a change in that attitude and people now know that it is not okay to drink-drive. That change in culture has led significantly to people not wanting to drink-drive.

I commend the Parramatta Precinct Liquor Accord, a general meeting of which I attended this week. Participants in the accord include licensed venues, restaurants, small wine bars and clubs in the Parramatta area and I commend it for its initiatives to control alcohol consumption. Parramatta is the capital of entertainment in Western Sydney and has the fastest-growing night-time economy in New South Wales. Of course, that can lead to particular troubles with thousands of people coming to the city every weekend and some of them choosing to drink too much. The Parramatta Precinct Liquor Accord has an approach of self-regulation and maintaining the good order of our city by the responsible service of alcohol and discouraging those who abuse alcohol and partake in antisocial behaviour.

The Parramatta Precinct Liquor Accord met on Tuesday morning to implement a policy of "one out, all out". If a person is barred from one licensed venue he or she will be barred from all licensed venues within the Parramatta precinct. That sends a clear message that it is not okay to get drunk and create problems and then move on to another venue. The people of Parramatta will not tolerate that behaviour. The Parramatta Precinct Liquor Accord is self-regulating, rather than using strong-arm tactics. The accord is looking at ways to implement a policy of "one out, all out"—that is, barred from one venue, barred from all venues. I commend the accord for its work in this area.

Superintendent Wayne Cox, the local area commander, is also supportive of the accord's initiatives, especially the "one out, all out" policy. I commend him and his liquor licensing officers, who work with the clubs, pubs, restaurants, entertainment venues and small wine bars in a collaborative way to reduce the problems of alcohol abuse. It is a whole-of-community approach to changing people's attitude not only to drink-driving but also to the culture of going out and getting drunk. It is about changing the attitude that people do not need to get drunk when they go out. It is about self-regulation and the individual taking responsibility.

This legislation is a great step forward. I commend the Parramatta Precinct Liquor Accord, the licensees and all those involved, and the Minister for Roads and Freight. This legislation is another piece in the puzzle. It strengthens the legislation and sends a clear message to repeat and serious offenders that it is not okay to drink and drive. This Government will take measures to ensure that people do the right thing and act responsibly for their own benefit and for the benefit of everyone in our community.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [11.48 a.m.]: The Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014 amends the Road Transport Act 2013 to introduce a mandatory interlock program for serious and repeat drink-driving offenders in New South Wales and to implement increased penalties for repeat traffic offenders. Through the introduction of a mandatory interlock program for offenders convicted of repeat and serious drink-driving offences, this bill will improve road safety and is another initiative of this Government to combat drink-driving. New South Wales has a range of measures to deter drink-driving that include breath test enforcement, with more than five million tests conducted each year; public education and awareness programs such as Plan B, which was introduced earlier this year by our very good Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay; and tough penalties, including fines and licence disqualification periods or indeed imprisonment for more serious offences.

The mandatory interlock program targets those repeat and high-risk drink-driving offenders so that alcohol-related trauma is reduced on our roads. Drivers convicted of drink-driving offences pose a particularly high risk to the community. Research has found that drivers previously convicted of drink-driving are around four times more likely to be involved in a fatal motor vehicle accident than is an average driver. An interlock is an electronic device connected to the ignition of a vehicle that prevents the vehicle from starting unless the

driver completes an alcohol breath test and has a reading below a specified alcohol limit. All interlock program participants will be subject to licence conditions that restrict driving to vehicles with an alcohol interlock fitted. Any driver who holds an interlock licence will be monitored by the Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] for the duration of the program. Any attempt to either start the vehicle or interfere with the interlock device will be logged by the interlock device and monitored by the RMS.

The New South Wales mandatory interlock program will also include a zero blood alcohol content limit for all interlock licence holders; measures to provide early interventions regarding alcohol dependency based on interlock data to monitor drink-driving during the program; an administrative component to transfer those who are not ready to exit the judicial interlock program to be managed under the New South Wales licensing system; a market-based user-pays model for accredited alcohol interlock providers to install and service alcohol interlocks, absorb reduced costs for concession card holders, and provide program performance data to the Roads and Maritime Services; and exemption and hardship provisions for extenuating circumstances.

This bill introduces a new sentencing regime in New South Wales for drink-drivers with a mandatory alcohol interlock order for all serious and repeat drink-driving offenders. The new mandatory alcohol interlock order will include a judicially determined period of disqualification followed by a period of participation in the New South Wales mandatory interlock program. When the program is implemented, there will be up to 7,300 participants on the New South Wales mandatory interlock program every year. The mandatory program can be expected to reduce the reoffending rate of high-risk drink-drivers from the current one in six to one in twelve, which equates to a reduction of approximately 500 offences per year. This bill also will implement new penalties for repeat traffic offenders in New South Wales. This adopts proposals brought by the NRMA to the New South Wales Government in 2013.

Specifically, the bill amends the current demerit point system in New South Wales to accommodate the following additional penalties: unrestricted licence holders who exceed their demerit point limit twice in five years will resit the driver knowledge test and complete a driver education course prior to having their demerit point suspension lifted; and provisional P1 and P2 licence holders who twice exceed their demerit point limit will sit the driver knowledge test prior to having their demerit point suspension lifted. In addition, the RMS will update its licensing policy and procedures to ensure that all drink-drivers who are convicted of a second or subsequent offence in a five-year period sit a specially created drink-driving knowledge test prior to returning to driving.

Following the legislative changes, regulatory amendments will be finalised later this year to ensure that the new interlock program is implemented in February 2015. This bill sends a clear message that drink-driving is extremely dangerous behaviour that can have tragic consequences and that it simply will not be tolerated on our roads. Drink-drivers convicted of a high-risk offence must demonstrate that they are capable of separating drinking and driving through an interlock or rehabilitation program before they will be entrusted with a New South Wales driver licence.

While I am on this topic, I will comment on two of the finest officers that the wonderful NSW Police Force has produced. I am blessed to have two local area commanders in my electorate—Superintendent David Swilks from the Tuggerah Lakes Local Area Command and Superintendent Brett Greentree of the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command—who are two of the finest gentlemen and police officers it has ever been my privilege to come across. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.55 a.m.], on behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian, in reply: It gives me great pleasure to close debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014, which I introduced in this House some time ago as the Parliamentary Secretary assisting both the Minister for Roads and Freight in the other place and the Minister for Transport in this House. I thank members who contributed to the debate: the member for Tamworth, the member for Swansea, the member for Strathfield, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Tweed, the member for Camden who no doubt will have his phone switched off in future when he is debating in this Chamber, the member for Clarence and the member for Parramatta. I foreshadow that the Government intends to move minor amendments, which are required to fix up publishing errors, for which I apologise, and to clarify the intent of the bill.

The main purpose of this bill is to improve road safety by introducing a mandatory alcohol interlock program for offenders convicted of serious and repeat drink-driving offences. The bill also will enable additional licensing requirements to be applied to licence holders who repeatedly exceed their demerit point

threshold and repeat drink-drive offenders. The bill proposes very significant changes to the way New South Wales addresses drink-driving and it is important to understand the context for the proposed amendments. The measures build on the range of coordinated measures currently in place to deter and address drink-driving, including intensive NSW Police random breath test enforcement, with over five million tests conducted each year, and by public education and awareness campaigns by Transport for NSW such as Plan B and Paranoia.

The new mandatory alcohol interlock program will work alongside existing drink-driving countermeasures to further reduce alcohol-related offences and trauma on New South Wales roads. By providing a direct link back to licensing, interlock programs reduce the chance that offenders will drive unlicensed and potentially under the influence while disqualified. This is particularly important for rural and remote offenders, who have a strong reliance upon their licence. Under the proposed amendments, all repeat and serious drink-driving offenders will be required to participate in the New South Wales interlock program, unless they are exempt by the court. I understand there may be some concern in the community that offenders who formerly would have been disqualified from holding any licence for a lengthy period now will be able to hold an interlock licence and be back on the road comparatively soon after their offence.

This is not about being soft on drink-drivers. I emphasise that any driver who holds an interlock licence will be monitored by the Roads and Maritime Services for the duration of their interlock program. All attempts to start the vehicle and any attempts to interfere with the proper operation of the device are logged by the interlock device, and this data will be monitored very closely, as I have suggested, by the Roads and Maritime Services. I also indicate that there currently exists a number of tampering offences for alcohol interlock devices in the Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Regulation 2008. We will be making consequential amendments to the Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Regulation 2008 which will include making it an offence for a person to assist a participant in getting around the interlock.

The other provisions of this bill relate to repeat traffic offenders. Any unrestricted licence holder who receives a licence suspension under the Act because they have exceeded their demerit point threshold twice in two years will be required to complete a driver knowledge test before their licence suspension will be lifted. Additionally, those offenders will be required to complete a driving awareness course to improve their understanding of traffic law and the road safety implications of their behaviour. The measures target offenders who refuse to acknowledge the dangers to the community of drink-driving and other traffic offences. This bill sends a clear road safety message: this driving behaviour is not tolerated on New South Wales roads. 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.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Ray Williams.

Consideration in Detail

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): By leave, I will propose the bill in groups of clauses and schedules.

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.01 p.m.], by leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 6 on sheet C2014-064B in globo:

- No. 1 Pages 9 and 10, schedule 1 [29], Table to proposed section 211. Omit "24 months" from Column 3. Insert instead "9 months".
- No. 2 Pages 9 and 10, schedule 1 [29], Table to proposed section 211. Omit "9 months" from Column 4. Insert instead "24 months".
- No. 3 Pages 9 and 10, schedule 1 [29], Table to proposed section 211. Omit "clause 16 (1) (b) of schedule 3" from Column 1. Insert instead "clause 16 (1) (b) or 17 (1) (a1) of schedule 3".
- No. 4 Page 11, schedule 1 [29], proposed section 213 (1), line 20. Omit "section 211 (1) (a)". Insert instead "section 211 (1) (a) (i)".

No. 5 Page 11, schedule 1 [29], proposed section 213 (5) (b), lines 39 and 40. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

- (b) ending on the later of the day on which:
 - (i) the disqualification period (or periods in total) equivalent to the incomplete disqualification period ends, or
 - (ii) the minimum interlock period (or periods in total) would have ended if a mandatory interlock order had been made against the offender under section 211 (1) (a) (i).

No. 6 Page 13, schedule 1 [29], proposed section 215A. Insert after line 17:

- (3) Any period during which an interlock driver licence held by a person is suspended is not to be taken into account in determining whether the person has completed the interlock period applicable to the person for the purposes of this section.

Since the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014 was tabled in the House, the Government has identified that some minor amendments are required to address publishing errors as well as clarify the intent of the bill. The first amendment rectifies a publishing error that resulted in incorrect maximum disqualification and minimum interlock periods included in the bill for offenders convicted of repeat mid-range prescribed concentration of alcohol offences. The correct interlock penalties for an offence under section 110 (4) (a), (b) or (c)—mid-range prescribed concentration of alcohol—that is a second or subsequent offence for an alcohol-related major offence is a maximum disqualification period of nine months and a minimum interlock period of 24 months.

The next amendment is to include appropriate reference to the table in section 211 to ensure that the interlock penalties applying to the new offence of refuse or fail to submit to the taking of a blood sample are identical to the penalties applying to the offence of refuse or fail to submit to a breath analysis in all circumstances. The refuse or fail to submit to the taking of a blood sample offence is a new offence proposed in the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014 that is currently before the Legislative Council. This amendment will ensure that the penalties proposed in that bill are accurately reflected in the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014.

A further amendment is required to refine new section 213 (5) to state clearly that offenders entering the interlock period following an exemption order must complete an interlock period that is equal to whatever is the greater period of either the period equal to the automatic interlock participation period applicable to the offence for which the offender was convicted or the remainder of the court ordered exemption disqualification period. The amendment will ensure that no exempted offender will be able to access a converted interlock period that is shorter than the automatic minimum interlock period that applies to the offence of which the offender has been convicted.

The final amendment will clarify that any period that an interlock licence is suspended is not counted as part of the participant's interlock period. This amendment will clarify that a period of licence suspension is not considered as participation in an interlock program. This will remove any doubt about the impact of a period of licence suspension on the time a participant is required to spend in an interlock program. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.05 p.m.]: I understand that the Opposition has been briefed on these matters and that we are not opposing them.

Question—That Government amendments Nos 1 to 6 [C2014-064B] be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Government amendments Nos 1 to 6 [C2014-064B] agreed to.

Schedule 1 as amended agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Ray Williams, on behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian, 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.

WATER INDUSTRY COMPETITION AMENDMENT (REVIEW) BILL 2014**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 18 June 2014.**

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.06 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014. I note at the outset that the New South Wales Opposition will oppose the bill. In 2006 the New South Wales Labor Government introduced the Water Industry Competition Bill to promote and encourage the development of alternative water supplies through activities such as recycling and stormwater harvesting schemes. In 2006 the bill was enacted. Section 10 (4) (d) of the Water Industry Competition Act [WICA] requires new applicants for a licence to supply water to obtain sufficient quantities of water from a source other than from a public utility. This provision was explicitly included to ensure that private for-profit operators do not simply purchase drinking water from public utilities and onsell it to retail customers at a high price.

Members opposite should seek guidance from the former Labor Government's enviable record when it comes to water conservation. Labor established the Water and Energy Savings funds in 2005 to provide funding for water and energy savings in New South Wales. The Water Savings Fund allocated \$43 million to 79 projects, saving an estimated 12 billion litres of water a year through many various recycling, water efficiency, harvesting and groundwater projects. Many councils and enterprises have been assisted by Labor to improve environmental sustainability and water conservation. The Water Industry Competition Act was introduced amidst the 2006 El Niño period to ensure that urban areas, and especially rural regions, had access to a sustainable water supply.

Section 10 (4) (D) resulted in private companies wishing to sell water to the public also providing a new source of water. New entrants to the water market, therefore, had to invest in water recycling infrastructure, boosting the overall supply of water and enhancing water conservation in times of drought. The Water Industry Competition Act was a key Labor strategy for a sustainable water future through harnessing innovation and investment of the private sector in alternative and waste water industries.

Approximately 10 companies compete in the market with public utilities in New South Wales, providing water for a variety of residential, commercial and industrial purposes. These companies predominantly source recycled water or harvest stormwater. Notably, they have a neutral impact on the public supply of water. Labor has a proud record when it comes to securing our State's water supply for the greater needs of water conservation. Residents in the Hunter have the highest household water conservation rates of any area in Australia. In 2009 water restrictions were lifted in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra and replaced with Water Wise Rules—measures introduced by the former Labor Government to regulate the ways in which drinking water may be used for activities such as washing cars and watering gardens—saving millions of litres of water each year. The New South Wales public embraced those measures.

Water is a scarce national resource; everyone in this House appreciates that. It is especially so in New South Wales where the supply can diminish significantly in times of drought. Labor has always been—and will continue to be—acutely aware of the importance of a strong commitment to water conservation. We live on the driest continent in the world. It beggars belief that the New South Wales Government has tabled this bill, which will significantly erode the development of alternative sources of water at a time when the Bureau of Meteorology and many scientists have made it clear that there will be another El Niño period in the Pacific, which will result in a dryer Australia and severe drought.

The proposed amendments will have serious implications for water conservation and drought security throughout New South Wales, resulting in a move away from regulation designed to promote alternative sources of water, towards a system of retail competition. Handing over our precious water supplies to big business is an affront to the people of New South Wales. If the requirement for private providers to source a sufficient supply of water through alternative measures such as recycling or stormwater harvesting were to be removed, there undoubtedly would be significant and unreasonable pressures on the supply of water, especially in times of drought.

A further environmental concern is that private sector water licences will not require the same environmental reporting, energy use, waste management and water conservation responsibilities that are imposed on Sydney Water. Without these standards, private operators would have no obligation to ensure

environmental sustainability. Private operators will purchase large amounts of water with the intent of onselling it to consumers for a significant profit. This could jeopardise the supply of water, especially in rural New South Wales and in times of drought.

The New South Wales Opposition fundamentally opposes this bill because it will significantly erode the achievements in water conservation by the last Labor Government through the introduction of the Water Industry Competition Act 2006. The public overwhelmingly wants to see water conserved. Members opposite, who shamefully support this bill, should be clear that the bill certainly clears the path for a future privatisation of Sydney Water—there is no doubt about that. This bill reveals what the Opposition has suspected all along: This Government's plans are to not only sell off our poles and wires but our water assets as well.

Mr Gareth Ward: We are not selling them. Here comes the rhetoric.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I know the member for Kiama, along with his friends on the other side—he does not have too many friends on the other side. The member for Kiama should take a strong stand for water conservation. I think he believes in water conservation. It will be interesting to see how he votes on this bill because, overwhelmingly, there are people in his electorate who are concerned about water conservation, as are many people across the State. This bill is privatisation of water by stealth—there is no doubt about that. The Government does not want to make its intentions clear to the public prior to the election. This is a cunning way of setting the path.

I encourage the public to read precisely what is in this bill because we can see the path is being cleared for a potential sale of Sydney Water. The Government wants to fatten up Sydney Water for sale, to make it look profitable. The member for Kiama knows that we will be debating this in years to come, and we will then see what is now proposed by the Government. The only objective of private suppliers of public water will be to make a profit at the expense of consumers. The only logical outcome is that families will be paying more for their water bills. I know that the member for Kiama would not want his constituents in Kiama forced to pay more.

However, families will be paying more for their water bills as private providers can only make a return on their investment by cutting costs, increasing fees, or by a combination of both. The removal of a provision such as section 10 (4) (d) from the Act will jeopardise water security in New South Wales, as private providers will have no requirement to invest in water recycling infrastructure to protect and secure New South Wales water resources. That will set the State back a decade and it is a real blight on this Government. I doubt that former Premier Barry O'Farrell would have engineered something like this, but the Baird Government is keen to do so and is clearly not supporting any measures in New South Wales that would conserve water for the future.

Private enterprises will be able to profit by bleeding our precious water resources with no obligation to develop infrastructure, innovate or have a neutral impact on water supply. This may lead to reduced investment and cost-cutting in the maintenance of water assets. This has been the experience in the United States where only 6 to 8 per cent of water services, including treatment and sewage collection, are delivered through private operators. Notably, in jurisdictions that have undertaken those measures the primary reason has been water quality. A significant decrease in water quality and service provision could be a likely outcome if this legislation were to be enacted.

The bill will increase costs, jeopardise water quality and security, and reduce innovation and investment in water conservation. These changes to the Water Industry Competition Act 2006 are a mere precursor to the main event—the widespread privatisation of public water utilities in this State, including Sydney Water and Hunter Water. It cannot be stressed enough that we on this side of the House are concerned that this is a precursor to the privatisation of Sydney Water and Hunter Water. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recently recommended that Sydney Water's efficiency targets be scrapped.

This recommendation would allow Sydney Water to scrap conservation targets in order to sell more water to private operators, which would boost its profits and therefore its attractiveness to a potential purchaser. I quote the Total Environment Centre Executive Director, Jeff Angel, who said that removing Sydney Water's conservation targets, while allowing it to sell more water to private operators and boost profits, was a bid "to increase its attractiveness to potential buyers". The bill is merely the next step in Premier Baird's quest to privatise Sydney Water and Hunter Water to fatten it up for sale. The public needs to be aware of that before we go to the election because we know those opposite are doing everything they can to suggest that they have no plans to privatise.

When the Water Industry Competition Bill was debated in this Parliament in 2006, Barry O'Farrell—the then Deputy Leader of the Opposition—supported restrictions to require companies to harvest stormwater

and innovative infrastructure to develop possibilities to recycle water. Leader of the Nationals Andrew Stoner also supported the legislation. It is interesting to note that, eight years later, those opposite no longer support water conservation in New South Wales. Instead, they are sending a strong message to the people of New South Wales that conserving water is no longer a priority for this Government. In February 2011 Minister Berejiklian made it clear that she was not going to support any sale of Sydney Water. Let us see how she votes on this bill.

Clearly Premier Baird has a very different agenda, which is probably why he is the Premier. This Government and the Premier have made it very clear that they believe in privatisation. The Premier has deceptively put forward a plan in relation to poles, wires and electricity, but he is quiet on hospitals and Sydney Water. The public needs to know that this legislation is being introduced quietly into this Parliament, and the Opposition believes it is for the sole purpose of clearing the path for the privatisation of Sydney Water. Members representing the electorates of Kiama, Oatley, East Hills, Granville, Strathfield and others across Western Sydney must be very clear—

Mr Gareth Ward: Kiama is in Western Sydney?

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: We let the member for Kiama come through every now and again. The member for Kiama is very nervous, but he has to be very clear to the people of Illawarra about where he stands on this issue.

Mr Mark Coure: Not as nervous as you are.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The member for Oatley is particularly nervous; he is shaking in this Chamber. The residents of Oatley and many other electorates across New South Wales believe in water conservation and want to keep Sydney Water in public hands. Everybody knows that.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: When Labor was in office it sold prisons, electricity—

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

Mr Gareth Ward: They sold everything they could get their hands on. I don't have one.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Kiama will resume his seat. That type of behaviour will not be tolerated.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I reiterate that the Opposition will not support this bill. It opposes this legislation. We encourage members opposite to rethink their view on the Water Industry Competition Act—we hope they will. We also hope that members of the crossbench in the Legislative Council have a very close inspection of this legislation and are aware of its implications to New South Wales and water conservation: It will potentially fatten up Sydney Water for sale.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.23 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak in debate on the Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014, which is long overdue. I commend the Minister for introducing it. I also commend our Government for bravely moving this amending legislation, which will provide competition amongst the sector that provides water and sewerage facilities across our great metropolitan area and more broadly across New South Wales. Importantly, it will provide competition and therefore better economic and environmental outcomes from a conservation point of view for preserving and conserving water for the many thousands of new homes that will be constructed across Western Sydney. I represent a large portion of The Hills shire where approximately 100,000 housing sites are planned to be released during the next 20 years.

The object of this bill is to make amendments to the Water Industry Competition Act 2006 to implement the recommendations of the Urban Water Regulation Review and, in particular, to separately provide for design and operation approvals for water industry infrastructure and for licences for the operation of water industry infrastructure. In plain speak, that means that this Government is enabling the private sector to provide water and sewerage infrastructure for residential housing across New South Wales, which is a good move. I believe that Sydney Water has been a closed shop. The Opposition just stated that it is heavily regulated, but I believe it is stuck in the nineteenth century. Whilst I believe Sydney Water provides a good service and does a good job it has not embraced current technology that is being provided by the private sector that will further conserve millions of litres of water into the future. That technology should be embraced in residential areas in the future.

I speak as an authority in conserving water. There is no greater conserver of water in this House than me. I have never lived with the ability to obtain potable water, apart from the water I capture on my property that is used for drinking, washing and farming. Even though I live on the outskirts of the Sydney metropolitan area I have never been connected to potable water. Therefore, I understand the importance of conserving water and what it means to life: Without water, life cannot be sustained. Importantly, I understand that new technology is available to provide water and sewerage infrastructure for new residential land releases.

The Rouse Hill Treatment Plant is very close to my own home. When it was developed almost 20 years ago by the private sector it was the first state-of-the-art recycling plant in this country. The plant recycles every drop of sewage and wastewater and then returns it to hundreds of thousands of residential homes right across the north-west areas of the city. Once Rouse Hill Treatment Plant was up and running it was handed back to Sydney Water to operate. Whilst the Rouse Hill Treatment Plant was state-of-the-art 20 years ago, we have moved on to better technology that conserves more water that can save this Government an enormous amount of funding and, importantly, also provide environmental benefits not only for residential areas but also more broadly across New South Wales.

I speak of none other than the Pitt Town development, which is also in my electorate, where Flow Systems is providing water and sewerage infrastructure for 1,000 homes. Flow Systems is also providing the same facilities at a development of a residential area I visited only three weeks ago in the Cooranbong area. Without being an authority on all the technology, I can say that what is known as a pressure system actually utilises the potable water from Sydney Water. Private companies pay the base rate of whatever is the potable water in the metropolitan area, exactly the same as all residential people, but save money by providing what is known as a pressurised system where they take wastewater and stormwater.

Private companies utilise the benefits of sending back stormwater to be used for washing water or in the yard, and wastewater to be used in backyards after it is treated. This represents an enormous percentage of the daily use of water in our current households. Enormous savings can be made by not having to provide the massive amount of capital expenditure that our Government will have to pay for under the regulated authority of Sydney Water for many, many years to come. The pressurised system is much cheaper, smaller and more compact. The absolute benefit is that we do not have to have massive areas for holding ponds to treat water, such as the ponds at Rouse Hill. Land has to be acquired for any area where there are to be holding ponds.

Whilst they may be nice wildlife areas because they are wetlands, the land still has to be purchased, which adds a huge cost to the New South Wales budget. That particular aspect involved in the acquisition of property is removed from the equation when smaller pressurised systems are used. The smaller pressurised systems satisfy the needs for sewage and potable water. They utilise and pay for the base rate of water from Sydney Water; therefore, the use of potable water remains exactly the same and dividends are still paid to Treasury. As I have said before, private enterprise makes money because it can provide lower prices. It does not have capital expenditure and it utilises the benefits of recycling waste water. Huge benefits are gained by stormwater run-off. It is now common practice to have reticulation tanks in the backyards of residential homes. The stormwater that is held on those properties is used as it is needed so water is conserved every day.

Private providers will send out a monthly bill to the consumer. I understand people do not like to receive bills. However, the great advantage of this particular aspect of their facility is that they can see whether there are any spikes in the use of water throughout each month, rather than when they receive a quarterly bill. For example, a leak in a toilet that is using water unnecessarily will be detected. Billing on a monthly basis ensures that we keep track of unexpected spikes in our water usage. Consumers who have reticulation tanks connected to their homes will see savings reflected in their bill and water will not be wasted. There are enormous benefits all round. This legislation is long overdue. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [12.32 p.m.]: The Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014 must be opposed. It is not in the best interests of the New South Wales community. Unfortunately, and sadly, this legislation represents yet another attempt by the Baird Government to privatise by stealth. It is designed from the ground up to help private, for-profit organisations enter the water market and it strikes down the requirement for those organisations to obtain water from a source other than from a public water utility. If we need further proof of this Government's malicious intent, we need only look at the troubling fate of Hunter Water. Despite incorrect claims by some of the very best spin doctors from Hunter Water in Newcastle, it is the first time in Hunter Water's history that a tendering process for the 25 waste water treatment centres has occurred.

This was followed by a sale and leasing back of Hunter Water's property in Honeysuckle. If any member of this House said to their bank, "I want to sell my house and lease it back for 10 years because I want to save money in the long run", the bank manager would say, "You are mad. That is not saving money in the long run." Hunter Water sold its property at Honeysuckle for \$26 million and it has leased it back for 10 years. The Hunter Water consumer will pay for it in the long run. Last week a wholly owned business set up by Hunter Water to manage the waste water treatment plant was sold. Recently the consultancy firm that was managed and operated by Hunter Water was also sold.

The privatisation of the waste water treatment plant has meant job losses in the Hunter. This is in addition to the Hunter manufacturing business death knell being sounded. No work is provided by the State and Federal governments for ship or boat building in the Hunter. We really do not need any more job losses in the Hunter. Wheels within wheels are leading to one outcome: the slow, creeping privatisation of an essential public service to the Hunter. The bill aims to do the same in Sydney. As much as this Government wishes to couch this creeping privatisation as asset recycling and competition, it is privatisation—pure and simple. Who benefits from this?

Certainly not the consumers, who will be left high and dry as private companies do whatever they want. I and many Hunter Water consumers are concerned about the quality of the water. Water safety is important for all of us. When we look at privatisation we are looking at for-profit. Does for-profit mean that the best interests of consumers are considered in terms of the safety and security of our water? That is a good question that the Government may like to answer. Finally, I will sum up by quoting a Hunter resident who is a Hunter Water consumer. That person said, "It shouldn't happen. It does nothing for us as residents. It only helps companies make a buck on something that should belong to everyone."

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [12.37 p.m.]: I support the Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014. It was very interesting to hear the Opposition's response to the bill. Members talked about the threats that are proposed for consumers of New South Wales. Obviously one big threat is that the union owned Sydney Water. The Auditor-General has highlighted the level of overtime and the way things were manipulated in Sydney Water to ensure that employees were able to maximise what was available to them. Obviously it highlighted some inconsistencies with the management of that organisation. If there is a proposed privatisation, it will certainly be in the best interests of consumers.

It is also interesting that we heard about the great work that was done by the previous Labor Government. The desalination plant was not one of its greatest achievements. It was highlighted at the start of the construction of the desalination plant that it was not required. This Government inherited that white elephant and took the initiative to lease it out, which is the only way that it will run. Obviously an incredible amount of money will be paid for the water that is provided out of that desalination plant. It is one of those situations that Labor does not want to talk about, but it certainly highlights its mismanagement. Bulk water purchasing and its resale is not new to New South Wales. Irrigation schemes across the Murray have historically purchased water from the State Government and used it to reticulate through irrigation schemes.

This legislation proposes to recognise that private entities can buy water and sell it to consumers and also provide reticulation means to consumers, which can only benefit home owners in this State. So, it is not new; it is about freeing up opportunities that might arise for those organisations prepared to make major investments in the supply and recycling of water and the treatment of sewage waste. These areas all require a great deal of capital. Obviously if the Government can hand over to private enterprise the development and ongoing management of that infrastructure into the future it will only benefit consumers. It will benefit consumers because the State is not making the investment. Organisations such as the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal will ensure that consumers do not pay over the top for that service.

There is considerable modelling in Victoria. Many of the developments in Victoria have been done by private enterprise. Major water projects in Victoria have been developed by private enterprise and to date I have not heard any complaints about consumers paying too much or not receiving a proper level of service. In addition, the opportunity to put up a competitive model is always available. With the proposed sale of the poles and wires we will have the interesting scenario of government-owned assets running alongside private assets. We will be able to look at the scare campaign run by Labor, the same scare campaign being run against this bill, and highlight exactly what it costs to run these assets under private enterprise compared to the government model. It will be our first opportunity to see a private entity managing assets on behalf of the Government and the Government doing it also. There will be a clear demonstration of whether there are efficiencies in the private enterprise model and whether the consumer is paying too much for the alternative.

The bill provides the opportunity for private enterprise to enter the essential utility supply market—water supply. The Auditor-General has highlighted the inefficiencies of some of these utilities. Other States

have given clear demonstrations of private enterprise succeeding in operating these types of utilities much more efficiently than the State. This does not pose a threat to State water. In areas designed for new residential development in Sydney, water and sewerage infrastructure has been provided by private enterprise, which can manage the supply of water, treatment of sewage, reuse of some water that comes via stormwater and recycle treatment water.

Private enterprise is in a great position to apply some of the latest technology and ensure that new projects in this State have the best and latest infrastructure without the State having to commit the vital capital required to build that infrastructure. It can be provided by private enterprise. There is no reason for anyone to think that this legislation has anything but benefits for people who want to be connected to a water supply and sewerage system. There is no reason for people to think they are under any sort of threat. It can provide great benefit for the State, for consumers and for the Government.

There have already been demonstrated efficiencies and companies are already willing to do it. In my electorate water and sewerage generally are supplied by local government, which I believe has managed to supply both those utilities to the satisfaction of consumers. It is already happening; it is nothing new. If private enterprise can build the infrastructure in a new development and provide what is needed, that should be allowed. Consumers will have protection. As long as we have a government-owned entity running alongside it, there will be a clear indication of what is the most efficient. The future privatisation of the poles and wires will clearly demonstrate how government-owned assets and private assets can run side by side and the effect it has on the consumer in respect of pricing. This is yet another example of increasing efficiencies and getting a better deal for the consumers of New South Wales.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [12.46 p.m.]: I speak in opposition to the Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014. Much to the annoyance of many of my colleagues, I am probably one of the more free-market advocates in our show. If this bill were simply about freeing up a market I would probably be a supporter of it. However, as a former water Minister I know that water policy is about far more than simply the efficient use of the market. When I became Minister for Water Utilities in April 2007 New South Wales and Australia were in the grip of a very serious drought. We were transferring water up from the Shoalhaven River and we had water restrictions in New South Wales.

Our dam supply was down to around 30 per cent of supply. If we had not been transferring water up from the Shoalhaven River and if we had not had water restrictions the water supply for Sydney would have been down to single figures. That means people would have been effectively drinking mud. It challenges the water treatment systems to an enormous degree. If we fast forward 20 years, with another one million people in the Sydney Basin, a drought anything like that last drought would mean that Sydney would run out of water. That has enormous indications for the Australian economy; it would fall over, frankly. Good water policy is not simply about a free market. Good water policy is about making sure that water is preserved for down the track.

One of the difficulties we faced—it is one of the difficulties this Government faces—before the 2007 election was the development of effective water policy. Members might recall that the then Leader of the Opposition, Peter Debnam, proposed the treating of effluent and for that treated water then to be put into the potable water supply. That was rejected outright by the people of New South Wales. Instead we took to the election a plan for a desalination plant, large-scale recycling and so on. As water Minister in 2007-08 it was my job to come up with regulations to make this Act work. We required new elements to obtain water from sources other than bulk suppliers such as the Sydney Catchment Authority or Sydney Water because it is difficult to retrofit water reservation and water reservoirs in the existing city.

To catch 20 per cent of the water that falls on Sydney city we would require something like 150 reservoirs, each one the size of 20 Olympic swimming pools, at a cost of around \$6 billion. Retrofitting existing areas, brownfields or infill sites is extremely expensive. On the contrary, putting those reservoirs in at the start of a development in greenfield sites makes enormous long-term sense. Water can be captured at the start and those reservoirs can be in place for the inevitable droughts that will occur in years to come in the world's driest continent.

Water policy needs to be seen not simply in the context of pricing but also in the context of a resource that will inevitably fluctuate in supply over the decades. If this bill is passed, instead of private operators being required to put reservoirs and other water harvesting vehicles in place on a new development site, they will be able to purchase water from Sydney Water or another catchment authority. In the short term that may be a

cheaper option but, particularly if it is a long-term contract, down the track if there is a drought—and inevitably there will be—and severe water restrictions are imposed, a two-tiered system at least will need to be introduced for the provision of water in the Sydney greater metropolitan region.

There may also be a move away from postage stamp pricing—namely, regardless of where one lives in greater Sydney one will pay the same amount for a kilolitre of water. If, however, a developer has a long-term contract for water they may be able to gouge that development, if their pricing arrangements are independent of those determined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART], for the purchase of water from Sydney Water. Whilst I have some sympathy for the free market intent behind the bill, the water market does not work like that—for example, we do not change the price of water when supply goes up or down because it is far simpler to have small business long-term plans and medium and large business commercial plans and outcomes when one knows that the cost of water is going to be relatively stable.

As a community we have already accepted that it is not sensible to let the market rule water pricing. We should require developers to make provision for those reservoirs and alternative means of water supply so that when drought inevitably occurs again we will have a greater range of options. It is a truism that as soon as one foresees a crisis the more options one has to deal with it, but when a crisis hits and one has not made any plans in advance then one has more limited options. Inevitably it will come down to much stricter water restrictions or much higher prices, neither of which is a good thing for the consumer.

Over the years I have been uphill and down dale on water policy. It is an extremely fascinating area of policy and something I have enjoyed a great deal. Our opposition to this bill is not impulsive or reflective; it is based on sound policy—namely, pricing mechanisms are a subgroup of water policy, they are not the reason for its being. I urge the Government to take a closer look at this. Unquestionably this bill will make things easier and cheaper for developers but that is not the aim of water policy. The aim of water policy in the driest continent in the world has to be the sustenance of supply over the long term and the distribution of a precious resource in a fair and equitable way that people can rely on and will not have a financial impost with a volatility that renders planning impossible. The Opposition will not support the bill.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.53 p.m.]: I follow the member for Toongabbie, a former Premier and Minister for Water, in my contribution to debate on the Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014. He is a little more pro-market than most on our side of politics. The member for Toongabbie probably understands the need for water more than anyone who will make a contribution to this debate. I make my contribution largely in the context of the electorate of Cessnock and its position couched in the great Hunter Valley. Proudly, the Hunter Valley can attest to being the lowest water users per capita in New South Wales—some might even say Australia. That is largely because following the terrible drought of the 1980s those in the Hunter Valley pay a price per litre amount for water.

The system, which was first introduced as an experiment, has never been removed. It has been in place for more than 30 years and led to very efficient use of water in the Hunter. I echo the sentiments of the member for Toongabbie as to the opening up of the market and removing the need for new players to be responsible for the catchment and supply of their water. Let me give the House a simple example. Hunter Water supplies approximately one million gigalitres of water and the power plants and coal industry in the Hunter provide power to about 90 per cent of the State. Those industries are water intensive and, being multinational industries such as Rio Tinto, BHP, Coal and Allied, they have enormous access to money.

Let us say those industries secured contracts for 500,000 gigalitres of the one million gigalitres supplied by Hunter Water, then that would leave half of Hunter Water's current supply to provide for our growing population. The price of water will either have to increase to discourage people from water usage or serious and significant water restraint will need to be implemented. So for coal to be dug and essential electricity supplies to continue, as a state-owned corporation Hunter Water maybe driven to maximising its profits and selling its water to the highest bidder and, as a result of the on sale of that water, the people of the Hunter may have extreme water restrictions placed on them. That is ludicrous, ridiculous and bizarre.

In this Chamber we have many flapping gums and hot air often floats around us, but there is no more important resource to human civilisation than water. Indeed, humans can sustain life for less than 48 hours without water intake. We cannot grow food without water, nor can our livestock survive. Water is the most important resource we will ever debate in this Chamber. This debate will probably last an hour or so. I remind the House that the Library Amendment Bill, a piece of legislation with 52 words, was debated for approximately 4½ weeks.

Today we are debating water security for the future prosperity of this State. In the second reading speech, which the Minister delivered in this Chamber on 18 June, it was noted that the 2006 regulations were introduced at a time of drought. That is to presuppose that in 2014 New South Wales would not be in drought. The Minister may or may not be aware but currently three-quarters of this State is in drought. During the winter recess I spent time in north-western New South Wales. It was incredibly sad to see the paddocks in which animals were grazing and the dry farms from which farmers are trying to make a living.

New South Wales is in extreme drought, yet we are debating the removal of these very important and sensible water restrictions. Those restrictions, which have been in place since 2006, were introduced at a time of drought. I can assure members that just as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow morning, there will be future droughts. We need to put this into context. The regulations that currently exist were introduced at a time of drought, we are still in drought and I defy any member to say there will not be a future drought in New South Wales.

These regulations are just as important, reasonable and fair today as they were and as they will be. We are talking today about deregulating and privatising the water industry so that water in the current catchment areas can be on sold to the highest bidder. That is not a good deal for the people of New South Wales or the farmers of New South Wales, but it is a good deal for developers and multinational companies such as Rio Tinto and BHP that have unlimited access to the dollars and finances. They will be the highest bidder in a bidding war for water and they will be assured of their water supply at the cost and expense of the rest of the community and population. It is ill-considered legislation and Labor will oppose it in this House and ultimately will lose the vote, but it will be reconsidered in the upper House and at that time there may be a different outcome. Labor opposes the bill.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [1.00 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to debate on the Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014. I was astonished by the contribution of the member for Murray-Darling, who lives daily with the vagaries of climate in the west of the State. I will reflect on the member's comments concerning the building of the Sydney desalination plant. At that time we were experiencing the worst drought for 100 years in this State. The Carr Government installed and built the desalination plant as an insurance policy. One might not think that was worth doing but, as the member for Cessnock stated, currently we are experiencing a drought and we do not know if or when it may occur again. Given Sydney's population, we may need to draw on that plant for our water and we will then have to pay extravagantly high prices for it because this Government has effectively flogged it off. In 2007, as part of my Commonwealth study tour—

Mr Kevin Humphries: Personal explanation.

Mr BARRY COLLIER: I did not go to the museums; I went to Malta and I spoke to the experts in desalination. They have three plants in Malta and they rely on that water for their very survival. I spoke to a United Nations expert who is involved in cleaning up the Jordan River and I provided him with all the publicly available documents on the Sydney desalination plant. Overnight I received an email from that expert saying that it is one of the best desalination projects he has ever seen—a world-class project—yet this Government has flogged it off.

Mr Kevin Humphries: We haven't flogged it off.

Mr BARRY COLLIER: The Government effectively has; it has leased it out to Veolia. You may not think we had a problem in 2007, but I can tell members that, as a regular visitor to Woronora Dam which supplies a lot of water to southern Sydney, the levels were so low that one could see the tree stumps where the land had been cleared to build the dam in the 1930s. That might occur again. Unless one is a climate denier, like the member for Murray-Darling, one can expect the El Niño and La Niña weather phases to occur again and we will need the water. It is an insurance policy and one which this Government will regret flogging off to Veolia.

The member for Toongabbie is correct when he said that we do not put the prices up and down; water supply is a natural monopoly and one that we should preserve and protect because, as the member for Cessnock said, water is life. I oppose this bill. This bill is the thin edge of the wedge to privatising Sydney Water. I ask the Minister not only to say that there are no plans to sell off Sydney Water but also to say categorically that the Baird Government is not selling or privatising Sydney Water.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garry Edwards): I welcome to the gallery 10 parliamentary interns from the University of Technology, Sydney, who are joining us today for their induction. Welcome aboard ladies.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western NSW) [1.03 p.m.], in reply: The Water Industry Competition Act 2006 was developed in order to regulate private entities providing water and sewerage services in New South Wales. The Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014 aims to facilitate the efficient delivery of these services while protecting public health, consumers and the environment. I acknowledge those members of the Opposition—or the perpetual scare campaign as they are known—who contributed to the debate—those members representing the electorates of Bankstown, Wallsend, Toongabbie, Cessnock and Miranda. I acknowledge the work that the member for Toongabbie did as the water Minister in the Labor Government during the drought.

In response to a comment by the member for Wallsend, the proceeds of the sale of the Hunter Water headquarters will go to the Burwood Beach Wastewater Treatment Works. The Government is recycling community assets in the Hunter. I acknowledge the contributions of my colleagues to this debate. The member for Hawkesbury lives in a fast growing area of the Sydney catchment. If this bill had been implemented several years ago another 100,000 new homes would have been built in the north-western part of the city. The member for Murray-Darling was rightly acknowledged by the member for Miranda as living every day, as I do, with fluctuating dam levels. At present most of the dams in our area are below 20 per cent capacity.

A five-year review of the Water Industry Competition Act was undertaken in accordance with section 104 of the Act and that process prompted a broader review of the related regulatory framework. The resulting urban water regulation review found that the Water Industry Competition Act differs in key ways from requirements on local councils and private entities providing water and sewerage services under the Local Government Act 1993. These differences created an uneven playing field in which public and private entities undertaking similar activities are subject to different standards and that creates risks to public health. This is particularly so in Sydney and the lower Hunter where local councils are not subject to any regulatory requirements in relation to water and sewerage services, unlike their regional counterparts.

In all, the urban water regulation review has involved three separate public consultation processes, more than 240 stakeholders, seven public workshops, 97 written submissions and innumerable meetings and discussions. This bill is the outcome of that review. It seeks to address current regulatory gaps, improve customer protection, cut red tape and remove unwarranted barriers to entry. The bill significantly strengthens the current last resort framework to ensure continuity of essential services in the event of retailer or operator failure.

The current Act, developed during the millennium drought, includes a requirement that licensees who are authorised to supply water are to source sufficient quantities of water other than from a public water utility. The objective of this requirement was that new entrants contributed a new commercial source of water. In turn, this was to ensure that existing water resources were not compromised through the introduction of competition. This requirement is imposed only on Water Industry Competition Act licensees, creating an uneven playing field and making it harder for new entrants to compete with incumbent water utilities.

The bill removes this requirement but makes other changes designed to honour the original policy intent of not compromising existing water resources. In particular, the bill requires that retailers provide services only in connection with the scheme approved under the Act and pursuant to an agreement with the owners of the infrastructure. That is, retailers will not be allowed to provide services to residential and small commercial customers unless there has been an investment in new physical infrastructure.

In this way the bill preserves the policy intent of encouraging new infrastructure investment and preserves the link between the network operator and the retailer—a link that is important to support efficient outcomes and one that has been broken in other markets with detrimental effects. In adopting this approach the bill seeks to avoid the adverse implications that can arise when markets introduce full retail contestability, as has occurred in the electricity market. Under this market model retailers have an incentive to increase sales in order to increase profits and are not responsible for the upstream effects of the rising demands, such as needing to invest in additional distribution capacity. The costs of such investment are ultimately borne by customers.

The Government wishes to avoid inefficient costs being imposed on customers and recognises the importance of preserving the enormous water efficiency improvements that have been made in recent years. Eroding those gains will be a costly and inefficient outcome with adverse implications for drought resilience, as has been raised—outcomes that would run counter to the newly inserted objects of the Act. While it has been considered, full retail contestability has not been introduced in any urban water market of which the Government is aware, locally or internationally. Adopting that model in the New South Wales water market is not considered warranted in the absence of clear evidence that potential risks are outweighed by potential benefits.

I am aware of stakeholder concerns—and they were raised in the Chamber this morning—that removing section 10 (4) (d) could result in less investment in recycled water. However, the Government and I think the discussion around this issue has not been well informed. An examination of schemes licensed to date strongly suggests that factors other than section 10 (4) (d) have driven investment in recycled water schemes. These factors include the desire to develop land in areas remote from existing sewage treatment plants, and compliance with Building Sustainability Index [BASIX] targets and the Green Star rating scheme for commercial buildings. Analysis of these factors is set out in the better regulation statement that has been prepared in connection with this bill.

Ironically, the current legal situation is that private utilities could readily avoid section 10 (4) (d) by opting for conventional sewage disposal with no recycling component. This is because it is only when a licence authorises the supply of water—which includes recycled water—that the requirement in section 10 (4) (d) applies. A licence to provide conventional sewerage services does not trigger it. Thus, if a proponent wishes to adopt a business-as-usual approach, section 10 (4) (d) will not apply. The reality is that if one loads up private utilities with lots of requirements that are not also imposed on public water utilities, the private utilities will struggle to compete. Developers may choose to work with public water utilities since, for a range of reasons, they are often able to offer more attractive terms.

As I have said, public water utilities are not subject to the licensing requirements in the Water Industry Competition Act and therefore section 10 (4) (d) does not apply to them. On the other hand, experience to date suggests that, if private entrants get a foothold in the market, they will invest in innovative approaches for reasons other than compliance with section 10 (4) (d). In short, where private utilities want to innovate, they will. If they do not wish to innovate, they can readily avoid section 10 (4) (d) and the goal underpinning it will not be achieved.

Clearly, a new approach is required—one that is effective, well targeted and can apply equally to public and private utilities. To this end, the Government will examine options to better align proposed schemes, both public and private, with integrated approaches to water cycle management. This will support the newly inserted object of "facilitating the efficient, reliable and sustainable provision of water and sewerage services, having regard for financial, environmental and social considerations".

Recent media reports and scare campaigns suggest that the removal of section 10 (4) (d) is part of a wider plan to fatten up Sydney Water for sale. This is nonsense. The removal of section 10 (4) (d) is designed to facilitate competition by creating a more level playing field, thereby allowing new entrants to compete effectively with incumbent utilities like Sydney Water. If we wanted to shore up Sydney Water's business, we would be seeking to stymie competition rather than facilitate it. Concern has also been expressed regarding water quality—this is not well founded. The Act already requires that licensees comply with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling. This will continue under the current bill. In fact, penalties for breaching the Act are being increased substantially to ensure compliance.

There have also been suggestions that customers will pay more for water. This is also nonsense. We are in fact including customer protection provisions to ensure that property purchasers are informed about who will service their property and who will prescribe the terms on which private utilities service residential properties. There is no conspiracy here. The Government simply wishes to ensure that the regulatory framework governing the water sector is well targeted, efficient and equitable. This bill does just that, and I commend it to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 59

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

Noes, 21

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

Pairs

Mr Baird	Ms Burton
Mr Brookes	Ms Hay
Mr Perrottet	Mr Park

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

By leave, community recognition statements postponed until the passage of the Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014 through all remaining stages.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Kevin Humphries agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garry Edwards): Order! Government business having concluded, community recognition statements will now be proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

MANNING BASE HOSPITAL NURSING AWARDS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.25 p.m.]: I inform the House that Colin Keen, who is the Nursing Unit Manager on level 5, has been named the Outstanding Senior Leader at Manning Base Hospital. Through his leadership he has made several positive changes that have directly impacted on nursing care. Colin has worked in hospital environments for 19 years and took on the leadership position about 12 months ago. Prior to that Colin worked in education as a clinical nurse educator at universities. Colin identified leadership qualities in team members and coached, supported and educated the staff to ensure that the best outcomes were achieved for his unit.

Susan Irvine was named the Nursing Unit Managers Choice of the Year in recognition of her ability to work collaboratively with colleagues and healthcare providers in all maternity services at Manning Base Hospital. Sue is described as a proactive person who maintains her educational requirements and demonstrates best practice in her daily work as a midwife. Sue has worked in maternity for seven years and enjoys facilitating the formation, blending and bonding of families through birth.

CESSNOCK COMMUNITY OF GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS EDUCATION WEEK AWARDS

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [1.26 p.m.]: I congratulate the great teachers in the Cessnock electorate who last week received recognition at the 2014 Cessnock Community of Great Public Schools Education Week Awards. The Excellence in Teaching award recipients were: Janine Robertson and Teresa Sheldon from Abermain Public School; Carolyn Deal from Bellbird Public School; Deborah Falconer from Cessnock High School; Sally Eagleton from Cessnock Public School; Alanna Black from Cessnock East Public School; Anne Barry from Cessnock West Public School; Anna O'Brien from Ellalong Public School; Rebecca Munday from Kitchener Public School; Simone Smith from Laguna Public School; Nathan Russell and Mavis Godber from Mount View High School; Amy Hill from Nulkaba Public School; and Beth Thompson from Paxton Public School.

KINDAMINDI PRESCHOOL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [1.26 p.m.]: I congratulate the Kindamindi Preschool in Inverell on being awarded a rating of "excellent" by the NSW Department of Education and Communities in a recent service assessment. It is an impressive effort by the staff and director as it is only the third time a service in New South Wales has received the "excellent" rating. Services are rated on seven different quality areas that cover things such as child safety, physical environment, education program and practice, leadership and relationships developed with the children and their families. Staff at Kindamindi have developed close relationships with the community and the service they provide has helped overcome some of the barriers that young Aboriginal parents may experience in accessing early childhood services. I congratulate Kindamindi Director Jan Carr and her staff members Tracey Tone, Ros Monckton, Sarah Jones and Michele Penberthy on their rating and wish them every success in the future.

CABRAMATTA ELECTORATE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.27 p.m.]: Three friends of mine from my community were recognised in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours List for their significant contributions to the Cabramatta area. Mr James Chan, Mr Thay Lim and Mr Harry To Ha Tang were each awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia. Mr James Chan, Chairman of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society, has helped lead the society, its Mingyue Lay Temple and the south-west Sydney Chinese community for more than a decade.

Mr Thay Lim, President of the Sydney Indo-Chinese Youth Sport Association, has provided significant support to numerous not-for-profit organisations including the Australian Chinese and Descendants Mutual Association, the Australian Cambodian Chinese Association Inc. and the Australian Chinese Teo Chew Association. Mr Harry To Ha Tang, President of the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel, is helping to meet the cultural needs of elderly people from Cambodian, Chinese, Lao, Vietnamese and South-East Asian backgrounds. I thank each of these men for their service to the community and congratulate them on receiving their Medals of the Order of Australia.

ALBURY ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [1.28 p.m.]: I congratulate Josh and Tania Corrigan, owners of Henty building company Cobberdog Constructions, on winning the "Best contract or project home between \$501,000 and \$750,000" award at the Master Builders Association Southern Central Regional Awards. The Holbrook Red Cross will celebrate 100 years of service to the community of Holbrook and surrounds at a luncheon on 14 August. Of the 26 members in the branch two have been members for more than 70 years. What a great achievement. I thank the dedicated members for their work over the years and wish them all the best for the future of the Holbrook Red Cross. On 22 July at a special ceremony 91-year-old Mrs Gloria Feuerherdt was presented with a medal for her 70 years of service to the Walla Walla Red Cross branch. Mrs Feuerherdt is a past president, and she reminisced about sending World War II soldiers parcels of warm clothes and pyjamas. She still attends meetings and bakes cakes when she can. I congratulate her on a marvellous achievement.

MANUFACTURING SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATION PROGRAM

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [1.29 p.m.]: I am proud to express my gratitude to Regional Development Australia for choosing the historical working-class high schools of Maitland and West Wallsend to initiate their pilot schools program called the Manufacturing success through Education [ME] Program in maths and science, in which Hunter students are getting above average results due to their taste for post-study work in the fields of engineering, maths and science. It is great to see the Hunter taking the lead in fostering passion for maths, science and engineering careers in our high schools that are participating in this program. I thank Regional Development Australia for this initiative.

TRIBUTE TO PASTOR PETER CHAN

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [1.30 p.m.]: I acknowledge and thank Pastor Peter Chan for his immense religious contributions to the Holroyd community. He has recently retired as the chair of Holroyd Christian Ministers Fellowship but will continue to serve on the steering committee for the organisation. Pastor Chan ran a Pentecostal church in Girraween and contributed regularly to prayer before Holroyd Combined Churches meetings. He is a great representative for this religious community and often presents on behalf of Christian churches to Holroyd City Council's citizenship ceremonies. Pastor Chan has worked hard within Holroyd council to build an accepting and inclusive evangelical Christian community. He devotes time and energy to preaching Christian values of kindness, compassion and faith. I commend Pastor Chan for his work and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

VESAK DAY 2014

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.31 p.m.]: On Vesak Day 2014 I had the great pleasure of attending the Bathing of Buddha ceremony at Freedom Plaza, Cabramatta, and the Ming Yue Lay Temple, Bonnyrigg, with the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society, Phuc Hue Temple members and local community leaders. The Bathing of Buddha ceremony honours the birthday of the Lord Buddha. The bathing of Buddha symbolises the elimination of evil thoughts, the cultivation of good deeds and the salvation of all living beings. I thank the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society and the Phuc Hue Temple for their kind invitation, and I wish the Buddhist community a very happy Vesak Day 2014.

ORANGE SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR DAVID OATES

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [1.31 p.m.]: I draw the attention of members to David Oates, who was last night announced as Orange Sportsperson of the Year at the Orange Credit Union Sports Awards. David took out the Sportsperson of the Year award ahead of six other finalists—all of whom were selected to represent Australia during 2013. David enjoyed success last year with several world, national and State pistol shooting titles. Representing Australia, David won a WA1500 World Championship in the Team Pistol division and silver in the Individual Revolver. At the Australian National Championships he brought home four medals, including one gold. He then went on to win three New South Wales State championships and two Australian Capital Territory State championships in 2013.

David also enjoyed team success last night, with the Orange and District Pistol Club taking out Team of the Year. The side is made up of David, Dean Brus, Max Wicks and Peter Brus. Peter Brus is a shooter of great potential. Congratulations to David on this very well-deserved award. The entire Orange community is extremely proud of his achievements. I lay on the table a photograph taken last night in Orange of David with three of the Wallabies squad—Rob Simmons, James Slipper and Scott, the strength and conditioning coach.

NETBALLER KIMBERLEE GREEN

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [1.32 p.m.]: I ask the House to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of netballer Kimberlee Green of Miranda. Kimberlee was a member of the Australian Diamonds netball team that stormed to victory against New Zealand last Sunday night to win gold at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. The gold medal is a crowning achievement in an illustrious sporting career for 28-year-old Kimberlee, who began playing with the Miranda-based Sutherland Shire Netball Association at eight years old. Kimberlee currently captains the New South Wales Swifts. She was first selected for the Diamonds squad in 2005, making her debut against the Kiwis in 2008, and she was a member of the team that won silver at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi.

Kimberlee is widely regarded as a strong and relentless player with a dominant midcourt presence, and her contribution to netball has been well recognised, not just internationally but at local, State and national levels. Her combination of raw talent, skills, commitment and dedication to netball are simply inspirational. Whilst recognising the valuable contribution made to her career by all involved, including her very proud family and the local Sutherland Shire Netball Association, I am certain the House will join me in congratulating Kimberlee Green and the Australian Diamonds netball team on their fabulous gold medal victory in Glasgow.

WANDA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB SUTHERLAND2SURF

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.33 p.m.]: I congratulate Wanda Surf Life Saving Club on another—the forty-third—successful annual Sutherland2Surf Fun Run and Walk on 20 July. There were 7,792 entrants and 6,915 finishers, who were undeterred by cold, windy, drizzly conditions in the shire's largest single participation sport event. Russell Dessaix-Chin of North Wollongong won the men's event and a constituent of mine, Belinda Martin of Sylvania, took out the women's event, having won the race several times before.

Over the past three years more than \$1 million has been raised for Wanda Surf Life Saving Club and various charities through the Sutherland2Surf. The relocated finishing line at Don Lucas Reserve provided plenty of extra space and the live entertainment and food outlets created a wonderful atmosphere. I congratulate the huge team of volunteers at Wanda Surf Life Saving Club, especially coordinators Mick Brannock and Anne Catterson. As a competitor, I thank them for organising yet another great event.

SOCCEROO MASSIMO LUONGO

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [1.34 p.m.]: I congratulate Massimo Luongo, a local Waterloo boy who was selected as a member of the Socceroos squad for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. Massimo made his international debut for the Socceroos off the bench in a 4:3 friendly loss to Ecuador in March this year and can now boast an international cap on his résumé. Massimo plays in the position of midfielder and moved straight from Sydney junior club football to Tottenham Hotspur's youth team at the age of 18, completely bypassing the academy-based training that many of his peers undertake. Massimo is a 21-year-old former student from Waverley College and is now signed to English football club Swindon Town. He has already been earmarked as a future leader for the team by Swindon Town manager Mark Cooper.

It is clear that Massimo is exceptionally talented and will be an exciting player to watch as Australia prepares for future international games and the Socceroos' campaign to qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia. Given his young age and early success, it is clear that Massimo's career is on a steep incline. His community is very proud of his accomplishments, particularly his family—father Mario, mother Ira, brother Titsiano and sister Angela—his friends and alma mater. I extend my congratulations to Massimo, who is a role model for young boys all over the country. I wish him the best as he continues with his exciting career.

MAITLAND YOUNG PERSON OF THE YEAR CORALIE CUMMING

OZZIE CARE SERVICES

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland) [1.35 p.m.]: Coralie Cumming, a 17-year-old Thornton resident and student at the Hunter Christian School, has earned the title of Maitland Young Person of the Year at this year's regional Youth Service Awards. Coralie was nominated for her passion and compassion for Third World causes. As a volunteer for the 40 Hour Famine, a passionate advocate for child sponsorship through non-government organisations and a compassion representative through her church, Coralie is an outstanding young Maitland citizen, and I look forward to seeing her achievements grow into the future.

Two other compassionate members of the Maitland community whom I am pleased to recognise today are Peter and Mel West of Thornton. They are the national directors of Ozzie Care Services, a not-for-profit organisation of "Ozzies helping Ozzies". Recently, I was proud to take Premier Mike Baird to visit Ozzie Care and see firsthand how the Wests and their team of volunteers help more than 900 families make ends meet each week. Peter and Mel are deserving recipients of the New South Wales community service awards they were presented with during the Premier's visit. Once again, I thank them and their staff for their dedication to helping others and for their vision in establishing Ozzie Care.

KEN AND LYDIA SIMPSON FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.36 p.m.]: I would like the Parliament to note an important anniversary of two of my constituents. On 22 August Kenneth James Simpson and his wife, Lydia Elizabeth Simpson, of Blackett will celebrate 50 years of marriage. Ken and Lydia are natives of Yorkshire, England, where Ken married Lydia Cade at Harrogate in 1964. They are a couple who do not like any fuss made about such events but I would like to acknowledge that both Ken and Lydia have been hands-on community members. I see this couple regularly. Ken has been involved in many community activities, especially involving issues with senior citizens, and I always look forward to the cards handmade by Lydia for special events in my life and that of my family. Congratulations are warmly sent to Ken and Lydia Simpson, and I wish them a happy fiftieth wedding anniversary.

CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR

ORDER OF ST JOHN REDEDICATION SERVICE

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.37 p.m.]: On 22 June I attended the laying up of the retired colours during a service of rededication for members of the order of St John and members of St John Ambulance Australia at the chapel for the Order of St John Ambulance, St Paul's Anglican Church, in Burwood. The practice of laying up colours has its origins in the military, where the old colours were laid up and left to disintegrate on the first Sunday after receiving a new colour. The Order of St John continues this practice as a Royal Order of Chivalry with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as its sovereign head. The Officiant for the St John Liturgy was Right Reverend Bishop Richard Hurford, Sub-Prelate of the Priory of Australia and New South Wales State Chaplain. He was assisted by the Deputy State Chaplain, Reverend Dr Douglas Parker.

This week marks the centenary of the start of the First World War and I am the Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for the Centenary of Anzac. Whilst honouring those who served, we should acknowledge the work of organisations that look after our servicemen when they return, their families when they are away, and their families when they do not return. Legacy takes a practical approach to honouring our defence service personnel, ensuring that Australia will help look after those who are left. Legacy supports more than 4,500 widows in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. It also supports the children of those who lost their lives while serving our nation and those with long-term disabilities. I congratulate Eric Easterbrook on his recent appointment as President of Legacy. I also acknowledge the work of Colin Dunston during his successful term as president.

GEORGE BASS SCHOOL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.38 p.m.]: I had the pleasure recently of attending the official opening of George Bass School. George Bass School, a \$14 million project of the former Labor Government, provides high-quality programs for K-12 students with an intellectual disability, with a focus on individualised learning for students to collaborate with our diverse community. The school is purpose-built, with specialised facilities designed to support students and provide them with a range of learning experiences in a safe environment. The official opening of the school was attended by the Hon. Jason Clare, Federal member for Blaxland, Uncle Harry Allie, and the many cheerful students of George Bass School, who put on an excellent dance display for the many parents and staff in the audience.

I extend my thanks and appreciation to the principal, Peter Skinner, for his invitation to the official opening of George Bass School and for his tour of the excellent facilities. Principal Skinner deserves commendation for his great work in building such a fantastic school spirit in such a short time, as do the teaching staff, who have been selected for their expertise, experience and passion for teaching and working with students with disabilities. I wish the students of the red and the blue success in the inaugural year of George Bass School.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES GOLD MEDALLIST SHELLEY WATTS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [1.39 p.m.]: The recent Commonwealth Games in Glasgow produced many new Australian sporting champions, and none that we in the Port Macquarie electorate could be more proud of than Laurieton resident Shelley Watts. Twenty-six-year-old Shelley Watts is a final-year law student who has been boxing for only four years but who made history by winning Australia's first boxing Commonwealth Games gold medal. She took up boxing as a sport for fitness while she recovered from a knee reconstruction. At that time she vowed she would never step into a ring.

Her road to the gold medal winning final left behind England's Natasha Jonas, who was the gold medal favourite in the first round, as well as Northern Ireland's Alana Audley-Murphy and Mauritius' Isabelle Ratna. She then went on to beat India's Laishram Devi in the final of the lightweight category. Initially, Watts was excited to go into the history books as the first Australian lightweight representative at the Commonwealth Games, but securing the gold medal makes her efforts even more significant. Fellow Australian gold medal boxer, Andrew Maloney, later said that watching Shelley's win was the inspiration for his own gold medal victory. Congratulations, Shelley Watts, on your inspiring and historic victory at this year's Commonwealth Games.

THE VOICE WINNER ANJA NISSEN

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [1.40 p.m.]: Congratulations to Anja Nissen, who is a former Winmalee High School student from the Blue Mountains electorate and the 2014 winner of the television show *The Voice*. Anja has been performing since she was 12, including on *Young Talent Time* and *Australia's Got Talent*, and she has been a regular performer at many Blue Mountains events. I had the pleasure of hearing Anja last year at the Lower Blue Mountains Rotary changeover dinner. Anja has also performed at many school events and has featured in the secondary schools Rock Eisteddfod Challenge. In 2013 she won three medals at the McDonald's Sydney Eisteddfod. Anja is a wonderful singer-songwriter and performer with a great career ahead of her. Everyone in the Blue Mountains is immensely proud of her.

NATIONAL GYMNASTICS CHAMPIONS VANESSA DILLON AND ETHAN BURTON

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [1.41 p.m.]: I congratulate 10-year-old Vanessa Dillon and 15-year-old Ethan Burton, who were crowned National Gymnastics Champions in the acrobatic mixed pairs competition held in Melbourne. Vanessa Dillon, who is from Glenmore Park, has been practising gymnastics for only two years and to become a national champion in that time is a remarkable achievement. She started gymnastics as a beginner, and to get to level six within 12 months is a superhuman effort.

Ethan Burton, who partners Vanessa, has been a gymnast for a year and a half. He was a highly successful swimmer, who made it to the nationals, but he gave up swimming for gymnastics. The duo trained four days a week at the Sydney Gymnastics and Aquatics Centre, Rooty Hill, in preparation for the nationals. They will now focus on competing internationally to gain a place in the world championships. I convey the New South Wales Parliament's congratulations on this outstanding result and wish the duo continued success as they work towards their international goals.

LAO NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [1.42 p.m.]: I was honoured to represent Minister Dominello at the Lao New Year celebration at Edensor Park's Wat Phrayortkeo Lao Buddhist Temple on 13 April 2014. More than 10,000 people attended this special event, with Buddhists, Christians and Muslims alike coming together to celebrate and learn about the unique Lao culture. Over the years it has blossomed into one of Fairfield city's major annual events, with dozens of scrumptious food stalls, market stalls and rides—not to mention the vibrant traditional Lao performances.

The Wat Phrayortkeo Temple was founded by a small yet dedicated and resilient group of Laotians who fled from the communist regime in the mid-1970s. Through the hard work and dedication of those volunteers and with the support of generous donors and members of the community, the temple has become a symbol of unity for the Laotian community, connecting everyone through tradition, culture and Buddhism. I sincerely congratulate the volunteers and organisers on the successful event and wish the Lao community in my electorate of Smithfield a happy New Year.

OPERA AUSTRALIA SINGER RICHARD ANDERSON

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [1.43 p.m.]: The Blue Mountains is renowned as a city of the arts—and long-term mountains resident Richard Anderson is no exception. Richard is one of the great success stories of Opera Australia. He is renowned for his lovely deep bass voice. He joined the Young Artist Program at Opera Australia in 2003. He has since become a principal bass with the company and has been working on many performances as well as performing all around Australia. I was very privileged to see him performing his latest role of Montano in Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello* at the Sydney Opera House and met him backstage. He is currently rehearsing for one of the principal roles, as Masetto, in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Richard is an unassuming person with a great talent. He is an artistic treasure in the Blue Mountains.

ARCHERY CHAMPION MATT TONOWICZ

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [1.44 p.m.]: I congratulate 18-year-old Matt Tonowicz on his archery achievements. In archery, Matt will be representing Australia overseas for the first time in the Junior Men's Division at the World Field Championships in Zagreb, Croatia. This style of competition is a much tougher competition as it is not simply about aiming at targets in an open and still environment. There is a lot of movement in the field. The fields are steeper and it is harder to shoot the arrows. The level of concentration and focus becomes heightened.

His achievements already include winning three gold medals at a national level. He shot in the Trans-Tasman Archery Challenge earlier this year in New Zealand. He was awarded gold, only to realise that the adding of points was incorrect and he had actually lost by one point. He was told that he could keep the gold medal or swap it for the silver medal. Being of such an excellent and integral class of sportsmanship, Matt chose to swap the gold medal for the silver medal. Matt's healthy sporting advice to other youngsters is:

Don't let the sport consume you or your life. Take it easy, no pressure and most importantly have fun, because that's how the sport was when you first started.

I wish Matt every success at the World Field Championships, which will commence on 19 August.

Community recognition statements concluded.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Garry Edwards) left the chair at 1.44 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the Speaker's Gallery members of a delegation from the Budget Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, led by their Vice-Chairman, Mr Su Jun, and accompanied by the Consul-General of the People's Republic of China, Mr Li Huaxin, as well as our Consul-General. I thank members who participated in sessions with us this morning, in particular the member for Davidson, Mr Jonathan O'Dea; the member for Oatley, Mr Mark Coure, who joined us at lunch time; and the Hon. Ernest Wong, MLC, who also joined us. I thank the members and the Clerk who joined us.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery today members of the Combined Probus Club of Engadine, guests of the member for Heathcote. I welcome also Gaye Murrills and Michael Tatam, guests of the member for Kiama. I welcome 15 members of Studio Artes, Hornsby. I particularly mention Oliver, Matt and Briana, who are in the northern gallery today. They will be competing in the City2Surf this Sunday in their wheelchairs. In fact, it is Oliver's fifth year of competing. They are guests of the member for Hornsby.

I welcome also to the gallery 31 year 11 legal studies students and their teachers from Cerdon College, Merrylands, who are guests of the member for Granville; 17 year 10 students and their teacher from Sutherland Shire Christian School, guests of the member for Menai; and four junior directors of Bendigo Community Bank, Wyong, accompanied by Bendigo Bank Director Ms Liz North, guests of the member for Wyong.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

TAFE NSW

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. TAFE counsellors, including those in the gallery today, do great work in supporting students with complex needs, learning difficulties and mental health issues. Will the Premier reinstate the counselling and careers positions that the Government has deleted as part of its cuts to the TAFE system?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We highly value the role of TAFE in the education system. It does a fantastic job. It has great staff doing a great job, providing a great community service, and we continue to support it. As the Minister for Education has said, as we deliver that service we need to ensure that we do it as efficiently as possible and that we provide the courses that are most used by the community. Contestability in that process is a good thing because it offers additional opportunities for additional courses.

Mr John Robertson: Is that a good thing?

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

Mr John Robertson: What about cutting positions, hours and courses? Is that a good thing?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Does the Leader of the Opposition want the answer?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Yes, we are absolutely committed to the TAFE system. We are absolutely committed to providing the best possible courses and facilities to the community.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I note that those opposite seem to have a great capacity for promising money that they do not have. They have a great capacity for promising services everywhere—to every part of this State. They seem to have a great capacity for making promises. It was a very quiet seven weeks for the Leader of the Opposition—we did not hear from him over those seven weeks. However, he did make a speech at the Labor conference. And in that speech, referring to services and infrastructure, he made a very interesting—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The question was about counsellors in the TAFE system looking after children and young people with real needs.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, we absolutely support a TAFE system that is working closely with the community and delivering services in an efficient way, and delivering services that the community would expect. We support that.

The SPEAKER: Order! I again ask the Leader of the Opposition to come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite have spoken about fees, but I make the point that the fees that we have put forward are lower than those recommended by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] and lower than those in most States. That is the position.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has had his opportunity to ask questions.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Leader of the Opposition needs to explain to the people of New South Wales where the money is coming from.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: At that conference I was talking about—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: —the solution of those opposite for the funding of services that they cannot afford and the building of infrastructure they are never going to build was put forward by the Auburn branch—and I am not sure why those opposite got rid of a good member. What did they want? They want more taxes. That is what they want—more taxes and more debt. That is exactly what they said they wanted to do.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is 129, relevance. The great deflector over there needs to say whether he will reinstate those positions.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has answered the question. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Everyone clearly understands that, if Labor ever got back into government, they would want to pursue the solution of the Auburn branch. That means more taxes and more debt. That is Labor's solution to everything. They are fantastic at spending money that is not in the budget. That is their skill. It is in their DNA. The Government is proud of the services and the infrastructure we are delivering. But we are yet to see the shadow Treasurer get his shadow Cabinet over the line and say, "By the way, team, if we want to go forward in this State what we need to find in order to get back to surplus is about \$4.5 billion a year." That is the fiscal fantasyland that those opposite live in. One cannot promise everything because one needs to have the money to deliver on promises. Those opposite have not worked that out yet and that is why they will remain in opposition. The Government is getting on with the job of delivering services, building infrastructure and being responsible with what we have, because that is what responsible governments do.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government getting on with the job of rebuilding New South Wales and delivering infrastructure?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What a great member for Camden, doing an incredible job.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Indeed, I would say he is the best member for Camden this State has ever seen. There is so much good news.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the first time. If members continue with this disruptive behaviour they will find themselves outside the Chamber without warning.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Last week it was a delight to join the member for Camden, together with the member for Campbelltown—the great opal—in Wollondilly to turn the first sod on the Narellan Road upgrade to six lanes. Hallelujah! A Government getting on with doing the job. That is what people expect—a \$114 million upgrade and 250 jobs on the ground, working towards reducing congestion. That is what this Government has done. If members look at our infrastructure record across the portfolios, they will see it is one that we can be proud of. \$61 billion on infrastructure—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Tony had to pay for it.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It was a joint project—\$61 billion over the next four years.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are happy about the infrastructure the Government is delivering. In regional New South Wales the Bridges for the Bush initiative was desperately needed and we are the ones delivering it.

The NorthConnex project—a missing link—was long needed and we are the ones getting on with the job of delivering it. With the road package for the second Sydney airport around Badgerys Creek we need to plan for the future and put the roads in first. With funding of \$3.5 billion, that is exactly what is being done together with the Federal Government—light rail networks for the central business district, south-east Sydney, Parramatta and Newcastle—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: —upgrades to the Pacific Highway and the Princes Highway. Members who travel up and down those highways know that finally we have a government that understands the need to upgrade those roads and we are continuing to deliver there.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I cannot talk about infrastructure without talking about Jillian the builder. She even has a hard hat to go with the title. \$1.3 billion in 2014-15 and new hospitals being built across the State. That is what we want to see delivered and that is exactly what this Minister for Health is doing. I also note the new Sydney International Convention, Entertainment and Exhibition precinct that the Deputy Premier is overseeing at Darling Harbour. They said it could not be done—well, the cranes are up in the sky, delivering for this great city.

We have also outlined a further vision to do even more, which those opposite are against. We have decided that infrastructure requires further improvement. At the moment congestion is crippling this city and we need to take action to address it. We have unearthed and delivered as part of our plan a 49 per cent lease of the poles and wires business, which will deliver \$20 billion in infrastructure that this State desperately needs to make it even greater. We are proud to put that forward to ensure that this State will be very different if this Government is given the opportunity to govern again. Unlike those opposite we will announce a plan, fund it and deliver infrastructure.

We also recently announced the Bay's Precinct Urban Renewal Program. We saw an opportunity to make the urban wasteland in that part of our city great so that this great city becomes even greater. We do not want to sit back and say, "Wouldn't it be great if something was done?" We will get something done by bringing the best minds in the world together with the best minds in the country and make that site fantastic. I could not talk about this subject without noting a revelation in the speech of the Leader of the Opposition in front of a couple of people. He made this claim, which was quite spectacular:

We are still waiting for the Government to deliver on its construction promises for the M4 extension, the M5 and the North West Rail Link. Labor will get on with the job of building the North West Rail Link.

Even members of the Opposition are laughing. They know they cannot do that. It is worth reminding the House of Labor's record on the North West Rail Link in particular.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Opposition has said it will back WestConnex but it is against providing the money to deliver it, which is classic hover board politics by those opposite. As the Opposition now wants to build the North West Rail Link I referred to the records to find out what it did in relation to it when it was in government.

Government members: Nothing.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: No, it did some things. In 1998 the Opposition announced it would be completed by 2010. In 2005 it was delayed but due to be completed by 2017—seven years later. In February 2008 it was axed. In March 2008 it was re-announced to be built by 2017. In October 2008 it was axed. In October 2010 it was re-announced with construction to start in 2017 and the line opened by 2024, and guess what? They did absolutely nothing. That is in stark contrast to what this Government has done. The Minister for Transport has shown that the North West Rail Link is underway. Although it is right next to his electorate the Leader of the Opposition does not even know about it. It is great to be part of a government that is doing exactly what it said it would do—build the infrastructure that was promised by Labor but never delivered, and that is the stark difference between them and us. We deliver, they do nothing.

WOMEN'S REFUGES

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. In regard to the Bega Women's Refuge in his electorate the Treasurer said it would remain open as a women and children only service and that if additional funding was required, he would ensure it was found and delivered. Will the Treasurer make the same commitment to electorates of other members and provide additional funding to ensure specialist shelters remain open as women and children only services, or is this just a case of the Treasurer looking after his own area and everyone else be damned?

The SPEAKER: Order! I caution the member for Maroubra on the wording of that question. It is argumentative.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I am glad the shadow Treasurer has taken an interest in this issue because—

Dr Andrew McDonald: I'm glad you went to Bega.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I am hoping the Bega electorate gets a visit from the Leader of the Opposition at some point in the next six months just to remind the electorate about old Labor. In relation to the issue raised by the shadow Treasurer I thought it was poor form that on Monday a Labor candidate stood at a women's refuge and protested, which again elevated and identified the location of the refuge.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer is answering the question asked of him. Opposition members should listen to his answer.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: How would a mother at risk with a child feel knowing that a political activist with placards is out the front of the refuge?

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer is being relevant to the question he was asked. What is the member's point of order?

Mr John Robertson: If you let me, I will say it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have asked the member to state his point of order. The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: If that is the type of instruction you are going to dish out to your candidates, mate—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat. The point of order cannot be based on relevance. Again, I ask the member to state his point of order.

Mr John Robertson: It is relevance, Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have said it cannot be based on relevance.

Mr John Robertson: —because he is misleading on this.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is quite obvious that the Labor Party's tactic is to stand at refuge sites and protest, which is putting people at risk. That is the type of tactic from those opposite—running a scare campaign across the State, making up lies that refuges will close when they are clearly not. The Minister for Family and Community Services is putting more than half a billion dollars into this program. All we have seen out of Labor is campaigns across the State that these refuges are going to close.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is not true. They are telling lies.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: The point of order is relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has been relevant from the beginning of his answer.

Ms Linda Burney: I am sorry, Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has been relevant. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Ms Linda Burney: The question was: Why was there a special deal—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

Ms Linda Burney: —for a refuge in the electorate of the Treasurer when other members are losing their refuges. That is the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time. When I ask members three times to resume their seats I expect them to do so.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The bottom line is that we are not seeing a diminished service in this program. In fact, the Minister is sensibly moving it away from crisis point to getting on to a proactive and preventative footing to try to minimise the impact of homelessness across the State. I remind those opposite that between 2006 and 2011 when Labor was in government homelessness increased by 20 per cent in five years. This Government makes no apologies for looking at service providers across the State and making sure that resources are allocated on need, not history. Quite frankly, as I have said, this Government wants to ensure that services are supporting in a preventative way to minimise the impact of homelessness across the State. In relation to the Bega refuge, which the Opposition wants to—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member's point of order is about relevance, I warn him that the Treasurer has been relevant to the question he was asked. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: In the Treasurer's own words—

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

Mr Michael Daley: It is Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled that the Treasurer has been relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr Michael Daley: I have asked him to make a commitment to other areas across the State.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not care what the member asked him. The member for Maroubra knows the standing orders. He knows that the only power I have is to direct the Treasurer to be relevant in his answer, and the Treasurer has done that.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The very clear commitment that I will give as Treasurer is to continue to support the Minister for Family and Community Services to roll out more than half a billion dollars to tackle homelessness across the State which the former Government failed to do. This Government has a terrific

program underway; tenders have been issued and proper evaluations have been done. As a result we have a breadth of services across this State focusing on prevention and making sure that we support those who are most vulnerable across the community. If members of the Opposition want to protest at refuge sites, and put at risk vulnerable people, go right ahead and we will continue to make that point to communities right across the State. Hang your heads in shame.

MAJOR EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS

Mr JOHN BARILARO: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government securing major events to boost the State's economy?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Monaro for a very good question. This Government is growing the New South Wales economy by rebuilding our infrastructure, by stimulating the housing sector, by supporting industries, by engaging internationally and by building a NSW Events calendar that is second to none in the nation. By securing high-profile events, we are not only making our State a better and more exciting place to live, we are helping to drive visitation and, with it, business and jobs growth in our hotels, restaurants, cafes and shops. I know the member for Monaro is especially excited because this weekend we welcome the Italian giants, Juventus, to Sydney. The member for Drummoyne—

Mr Guy Zangari: Spell it.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Of all people the member for Fairfield should be able to spell Juventus. The team affectionately known as "the Old Lady" to the member for Monaro and many others will take on the A-League All Stars on Sunday night in a Sydney exclusive.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber, particularly from Opposition members.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Also this Sunday, 85,000 runners will tackle Heartbreak Hill in the iconic City2Surf, with many people visiting Sydney for the race. Last weekend we saw our mighty Waratahs lift their maiden Super Rugby title. Rugby fans from around the world who were watching on television saw the magnificent blue fireworks explode in celebration over Sydney Harbour. On Saturday 16 August many of those champion Waratahs will take their place in the Wallabies team as they aim to achieve their long sought after Bledisloe Cup victory in the opening Test game at ANZ Stadium. This week the Wallabies are taking the Bledisloe Cup on a unique five-day rural road trip through the electorates of the member for Dubbo, the member for Bathurst, the member for Orange and the member for Penrith, who is also the Minister for Sport and Recreation, among other things. The tour includes an open training session in each town with a dinner hosted by each local council. It does not stop there. Today I announce that we have secured the current world number one and current Australian and British Open champion, Rory McIlroy—

Mr Nathan Rees: What about Vivid?

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Toongabbie wants Brian Eno back. I will take Rory McIlroy every day. We have secured Rory for the 2014 Emirates Australian Open at the Australian Golf Club. This is a huge coup for New South Wales and a great opportunity for local golf fans to see Rory McIlroy and a host of other golfing stars at one of Sydney's finest courses. Major events such as these provide a huge boost for the economy of New South Wales. A great example is the recent Opening Series of Major League Baseball. In total, more than 100,000 sporting fans attended the matches between the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Arizona Diamondbacks at the Sydney Cricket Ground in March, which included a whopping 37,200 overseas, interstate and regional New South Wales visitors to Sydney.

Not only did the visitors enjoy the world-class sport that was on offer but also they explored our harbour city and regions, spending money in shops, cafes, restaurants, hotels and tourist destinations, thus creating jobs. This event alone generated more than \$27 million in visitor spend for the economy of New South Wales. In stark contrast to those opposite who had 16 long years in office, this Government has worked hard to build one of the best major events calendars anywhere in Australia, let alone the Australia-Pacific region. Through it, the Liberal-Nationals Government is making New South Wales the number one events State.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. What progress has the Government made in growing the economy and repairing Labor's housing backlog?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for his question. A government can create a stark contrast in 3½ years when managing the budget. When this Government won the election, New South Wales was lagging behind on a whole raft of economic indicators including consumer confidence, retail spending and housing approvals. This Government has deliberately invested in jobs and housing through various programs, including the Jobs Action Plan and Building the State housing package. It is worth reflecting on the time those opposite spent in office.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: In 2009, when the member for Maroubra was part of the economics outfit of those opposite, housing approvals stood at 16,200. Today that figure stands at more than 50,000 housing approvals—

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: —which was brought about by the sound economic management of the Liberal-Nationals Government. It is particularly pleasing to see new homes pop up in key growth areas such as the north-west and south-west. In the past couple of weeks I have had the opportunity to visit Spring Farm in the Camden electorate with the local member, Meaghan Lambley and Matthew Jackson.

The SPEAKER: Order! Pursuant to Standing Order 249A the member for Macquarie Fields will remove himself from the Chamber for the rest of question time. After three calls to order he should think himself lucky it is only until the conclusion of question time.

[Pursuant to standing order the member for Macquarie Fields left the Chamber at 2.45 p.m.]

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Spring Farm is the hotbed of first home owner grants. Sixteen of the top 20 suburbs for residents taking up the first home owner grants are in Western Sydney. This Government is demonstrating its commitment to delivering the necessary jobs in housing construction and, pleasingly, the opportunities that arise for first home owners. Through the State budget this Government delivered further reforms in housing construction by lifting the threshold. Interestingly, those opposite have now devised a policy where they want to lift house prices even more for first home buyers. It is an absolutely ridiculous approach that would cost the State budget \$2 billion at a time when they do not have any capacity to raise revenue and they are going to reverse every savings and efficiency measure that this Government has adopted since coming to office. As a result, our economy would be back in the doldrums. Members opposite want to reverse the wages policy to ensure that wage growth is out of control, courtesy of public sector unions and the union bosses who work with John Robertson. It is a scary place for the State economy to go back to.

New South Wales has its mojo; it is buoyant. All conceivable economic figures show that we are leading the way. Recently retail spending figures were released, showing that \$21 billion went through cash registers in the last quarter. Retail sales growth in New South Wales increased by half a per cent while the rest of the nation went backwards. These figures have come at a time when our unemployment rate is well below the national average. This Government has been delivering on the jobs front. Since 2011 this Government has had a target of generating 100,000 jobs across this State and it has generated 126,000 jobs. By ensuring discipline is applied to our State budget this Government has delivered investment in jobs and housing, which has produced outcomes for communities across the State. The Government is achieving outcomes across New South Wales by investing in core services such as homelessness services, disability services and child protection services, which those opposite could not do when they were in office because they were too busy looking after their public sector union mates.

WOMEN'S REFUGES

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Given the Treasurer has looked after the women's refuge in his electorate of Bega, will the Premier take steps to keep women's and children's refuges open in other electorates across New South Wales?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am pleased to answer this question from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because the Government has rolled out a very significant reform.

Ms Anna Watson: Because you care about vulnerable people?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I actually do.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Government, in its budget, has determined to prioritise a range of initiatives. If the member for Shellharbour had read the budget papers she would have seen the three principles: services, infrastructure and supporting the vulnerable. We have done a great deal in that space. The member might have missed it.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are determined to continue to do that. I understand politics and that members opposite will try to make hay across particular issues but on this matter the Government is doing everything possible to work with existing services and the entire sector to deliver better outcomes across the State.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As the Minister will articulate, despite all the resources that were put into the sector, homelessness was increasing. The Government has taken the decision to redefine the way we spend the money, to look at intervention services as a comprehensive package, to work with all services not as a silo but across the sector, and to prioritise early intervention to try to break the cycle before people reach the homelessness crisis point. That is done by working together. In addition, tenders were called. Some applicants were not successful. A fund has been established to work with those services to provide opportunities to work alongside the existing providers for complementary and additional services for the homeless across the community. The facts are pretty clear.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: I appreciate the Premier's comments—

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

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Will other services get a sweetheart deal like that given to the member for Bega?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is no such deal like the one the member for Canterbury is talking about.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As the Minister will state, the department is working closely with every provider across the State.

Ms Anna Watson: That's not what they're telling us.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are looking genuinely for an opportunity to improve and increase the amount of services that we are providing for the homeless across New South Wales. I do not care what spin the members opposite put on it. They are the facts of the matter. Government members are very proud that we are putting more money, indeed over \$500 million, into homelessness over the next three years. This Government is delivering for the vulnerable. We are very proud of this but we understand there are difficulties in transition and we need to work through those.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We understand it is difficult for the services that missed out in the tender process but I assure the House that the department and the Minister are working closely with those services to ensure that we can deliver more homelessness services than would otherwise have been the case. That is a good thing the Government is doing and we are proud of that. Despite the comments of the member for Shellharbour, every single Government member is committed to doing what he or she can to look after the vulnerable and the homelessness sector. Women's refuges provide for the most vulnerable in our community and that is why we are very proud of our commitment to assisting the sector. These reforms are making a difference to those in this State who most need our support. We will assist them every day of the week because that is what a responsible government does. We are prioritising our funds and we are proud of our record.

URBAN ACTIVATION PRECINCTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning, and Minister for Women. How is the Government providing greater housing choices, increased amenities and improved services as well as public spaces through urban renewal?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has not even started to answer the question and members are interjecting. Members will cease interjecting.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for Strathfield for his question. I know that he came into this House in 2011 determined to be part of a government that would show leadership. Every member on this side of the House is committed to showing leadership, especially when it comes to planning for the future of the State of New South Wales. Leadership means facing reality; it means identifying challenges; it means finding the smarter solutions and then making decisions.

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

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Shellharbour left the Chamber at 2.54 p.m.]

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: One of the key challenges facing New South Wales is how to accommodate a population that is set to grow by two million by 2031, 1.6 million of whom will be in Sydney. That is why we need to be smarter about how we plan for future population growth. That is why we have to show leadership for the future and it is why we cannot go back to the bad old days when Labor was, at best, asleep at the wheel and, at worst, grossly negligent in its responsibilities to the electorate. We all remember the approach of Labor members to planning for population growth in New South Wales.

When the Federal Government was talking about increasing skilled migration—not even a growth of two million people—what was Labor's response? Was it, "Let's build more houses?" No, it was not. Was it, "Let's build more trains?" It certainly was not. Was it, "Let's build more houses on train lines?" Absolutely not. Labor's answer was "Sydney is full". Labor members buried their heads in the sand. Children are born, people are living longer and immigration is an inevitable part of life in Australia, yet under Labor New South Wales had a 50-year low in building approvals. They did not build the infrastructure to support population growth. They did not plan for growth. It was just too hard; they did not have the courage.

If there is any better example of a government abrogating its fundamental responsibility to the community I am yet to see it. This Government has not and will not shirk its responsibility. The population of New South Wales is growing and it is changing. The size of families is shrinking. The highest growth in household type is lone-person households. Almost half of all growth in new dwellings will be from lone-person and couple-only households, and that will continue to grow, increasing by an average of 2.1 per cent per annum for the next 20 years. The old days of releasing land for detached houses on Sydney's outskirts and leaving those residents to cope with urban congestion on our roads will no longer work. We came to government with a challenge to solve the problems and that is why we announced urban activation precincts.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: Families are changing and people want to live close to work, transport and community facilities. As we all know, Labor did not have a plan to deal with this; it just dumped people. We do have a plan and we are getting on with the job. We need to keep up with the demand for housing and we are planning smarter because we on this side of the House understand supply and demand.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Urban Activation Precincts program, announced in October 2012, is a key part of the Government's strategy to meet Sydney's expected growth. The program will revitalise existing areas to deliver homes and jobs in areas of Sydney where the demand for housing is highest and there is good access to transport, services and facilities.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Government can only achieve the best outcomes when it is working with local councils and communities to identify and plan for these precincts. We also have committed to supporting councils with a \$1 million precinct support program to assist them to deliver local infrastructure and amenity improvements to support the population. I am pleased to say the most recent Urban Activation Precincts [UAPs] I announced for Kellyville, Bella Vista and Showground in Castle Hill were received very warmly by the local councils and clearly demonstrate how we are working together for the benefit of the community. Those three precincts could support 19,000 additional jobs and 12,000 new homes with a mix of housing types, including townhouses, detached homes and apartments. Other UAPs announced to date—namely, the three precincts at North Ryde station, Epping town centre and Wentworth Point—have been rezoned and will deliver approximately 9,000 new homes.

Projects such as these can only be successful when the community is involved in planning for the future of their area. The Government is assisting that through workshops, feedback sessions, online questionnaires and engagement with councils. The current program of UAPs has the potential to provide more than 54,000 new homes and revitalise existing areas to deliver homes, jobs and infrastructure. That is 54,000 new homes near jobs and transport links in addition to the 100,000 new homes that have been built since we came to office. This Government is cleaning up the mess that was left to us by a party with no solutions and no leadership.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given the revelations at the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] today of systematic laundering of illegal developer donations and questions around \$18,000 being funnelled through the Free Enterprise Foundation, will the Premier immediately close the Millennium Forum, Free Enterprise Foundation and the new Federal Forum funds?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I must give the Leader of the Opposition credit because he has shown some front in asking that question. People who live in glass houses should not throw stones. I cannot be clearer: I will not comment on what is taking place at ICAC. It is important that those opposite understand that the Government is making decisions as and when required. I have told the Leader of the Opposition that we need to do this together. Politics in New South Wales needs to be cleaned up and the Government has given that commitment. However, there is a stark difference between the Government and the Opposition. We are taking action to ensure a return to confidence in politics in this State; those opposite did nothing for 16 years whilst in government and they continue to do nothing.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I will repeat what I have said in the past, in case those opposite missed it. The Government has taken action: the appointment of Michael Symons, a former ICAC director, to improve the governance of the party; Kerry Schott to lead an expert panel to examine the long-term impacts of donations and how to remove that corrosive influence in this State; and John Fahey, who will take responsibility for finance and fundraising—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. It is a very narrow question. Will the Premier close the funds or just keep talking about it? All the Premier is doing is talking about it; he is not taking any action.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question. There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is a bit of a spring in the step of the member for Maroubra today because he thinks he has half a chance of going back in.

Mr John Robertson: There is no spring in your step.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is. We are starting to clearly see a stark contrast in this State—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Government is taking action; those opposite are doing nothing. We have taken specific action with the appointment of Michael Symons, Kerry Schott and John Fahey—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: It is simple: If the Premier is taking action he should close the funds.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Members who take a point of order that is not valid will be placed on three calls to order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: For the Leader of the Opposition to attempt to prosecute this matter on ethics or probity is incredible. It is hard to believe that he has attempted to do so. The Government has taken the necessary action, in stark contrast to the actions of those opposite. Those opposite took down a Premier who tried to make improvements and stand up to some backbench members. I take my hat off to the member for Mount Druitt because he also stood up to Eddie Obeid.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Maroubra that this is not a debate.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That came out in the book: those on that side of the House took down a Premier because he stood up and tried to change the process. We on this side are taking action to improve confidence and return trust to New South Wales politics. The people of New South Wales deserve nothing less.

STRATA UNIT LEASES

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: I direct my question to the Premier. What action will the Government take to stop illegal short-term letting and dangerous overcrowding in strata buildings given councils can be refused entry to inspect premises, the process to get a warrant gives operators time to hide evidence, and there is no statutory definition of "overcrowding"?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Sydney for his question and his interest in this issue. The Government is listening to concerns across the local government sector and the Minister for Local Government is working closely with the sector to ascertain what enhancements can be made. The Government is also happy to engage with the member for Sydney as to his specific concerns. The Government is open to any additional actions that might be required, but local councils have existing powers. I encourage councils to use those existing powers to enforce the conditions of development consent and any relevant local environmental plans that may prohibit or set conditions on short-term lettings in a particular area.

Councils are able to specify the types of activities that constitute lawful use of lots, which include whether serviced apartments or holiday accommodation are permitted. Similarly, councils may limit occupancy numbers for a residential development as a condition of development consent. I have been advised—and I am to be advised by the City of Sydney council if this is not the case—that in 2006 the City of Sydney council introduced a condition of consent for newly built apartments limiting the number of adult occupants per bedroom to two. However, to date it appears that no court action to enforce this condition has been taken by the City of Sydney council.

As part of our deliberations I want to understand why that is not happening and whether that is common across other councils. I also want to be advised as to what action the State Government can take. The Minister for Local Government is listening to concerns across the sector. The member for Sydney can directly engage with the Minister but the Government is taking a twofold approach: Are councils using their existing provisions adequately? Can those provisions be strengthened and enhanced? The Government is happy to have that discussion and work with the sector.

COAL INDUSTRY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I address my question to the Minister for Resources and Energy. What is the Government doing—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Toongabbie will come to order. I cannot hear the member for Northern Tablelands. The member will repeat his question.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I address my question to the Minister for Resources and Energy—

The SPEAKER: Order! I asked the member for Northern Tablelands to repeat his question and the member for Cessnock interjected during the repeating of the question. I direct the member for Cessnock to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of two hours.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Cessnock left the Chamber at 3.08 p.m.]

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: My question is directed to the Minister for Resources and Energy. What is the Government doing to improve transparency and accountability in managing the State's coal resources?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for this important question. The New South Wales coal industry provides the foundation for our State's energy security. It is a fundamental platform upon which our international trading relationships have been and continue to be built and it forms the backbone of our regional economies, providing benefits to each and every New South Wales citizen. As members of this House are well aware the past management of the State's coal reserves by those opposite lacked transparency and accountability.

Whilst New South Wales Labor was only too happy to exploit the resources of this State for its own gain, this Government is determined to put an end to such practices. I am pleased to announce to the House today that the Baird-Stoner Government is taking important steps to improve the management of our valuable coal resources. It is important that we manage investment in this industry to continue to grow New South Wales into the future. Unlike those opposite, the Baird-Stoner Government supports the coal industry and recognises the benefits that it provides to this State.

As a first step to improve transparency and support for this industry, the Government has today released the strategic statement on New South Wales coal. The coal statement sets out seven guiding principles: transparency, sustainability, safety, best practice, coexistence, achieving value for the economy and taxpayers, and regional economic development. This statement recognises that the growth of the coal industry is linked and is viable for the growth of this great State. That growth must be environmentally sustainable and strike the right balance with landholders and communities. The Government takes most seriously the Independent Commission Against Corruption recommendations to improve management of the State's coal reserves. We have therefore taken further decisive action to improve standards and transparency in managing our important mineral resources.

As a second step in this process the Government has established the Coal Exploration Steering Group [CESG] to oversee the coal allocation process. The key role of the steering group is to make recommendations on where, when and how coal resources are to be released for exploration to suitably qualified companies. I am pleased to announce today the appointment of Mr Percy Allan, AM, as the independent chair for that group. Mr Allan brings a wealth of senior public sector administration experience to his role as chair of the CESG, which will guide evidence-based and transparent coal allocation processes. I repeat that for the people of New South Wales: an evidence-based and transparent coal allocation process. It is long overdue.

To inform the work of the steering group, public consultation will commence today on the guidelines for the allocation of coal resources. This third step will ensure that New South Wales has the best framework possible to determine when and how to release coal resources. Interim guidelines are currently in place and the steering group is prioritising a review of those guidelines. The interim guidelines are available on the NSW Trade and Investment website. Submissions concerning the guidelines can be made until 5 September.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government recognises the vital contribution the coal industry makes to New South Wales. The coal industry is one of the economic cornerstones of our State and a key economic driver for our State's future. Those on this side are determined to foster and maintain a robust and

transparent coal industry. We are determined to grow the New South Wales economy as we continue to rebuild New South Wales. We are determined to protect and create more jobs for New South Wales workers. We are delivering; the other side continues to dither.

Question time concluded at 3.14 p.m.

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 motion accorded priority:

- (1) Government business.
- (2) Private members' statements.
- (3) Matter of public importance.
- (4) The House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

FOREST AGREEMENT AND INTEGRATED FORESTRY OPERATIONS APPROVALS

Amendment

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 69H of the Forestry Act 2012, of amendment No. 4 to the Integrated Forestry Operations Approval for Riverina Red Gum, (including a Statement of Reasons), dated 27 June 2014, received out of session and authorised to be made public on 30 June 2014.

PETITIONS

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

Shellharbour City Hub

Petition opposing construction of the Shellharbour City Hub and the related sale of community assets, received from **Ms Anna Watson**.

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

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

Companion Animals on Public Transport

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

Edgecliff Interchange

Petition requesting the upgrade of Edgecliff Interchange to provide full access for all passengers, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Sutherland Shire to Kogarah Railway Station

Petition requesting the restoration of direct rail services from the Sutherland Shire to Kogarah railway station, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Como and Jannali Railway Stations

Petition requesting the restoration of train services from Como and Jannali railway stations, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

GyMEA College of TAFE

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

Coffs Harbour Slipway

Petition requesting that the Government maintain the Coffs Harbour Slipway for emergency and general use, received from **Mr Andrew Fraser**.

Retail Trading Laws

Petition requesting the retention of existing retail trading laws in their entirety, received from **Mr George Souris**.

Same-sex Marriage

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

Inner-city Social Housing

Petition requesting the retention and proper maintenance of inner-city public housing stock, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

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

Sutherland Shire Fire Stations

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

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 petitions signed by more than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:

English as a Second Language Program

Petition requesting the maintenance of and funding for the English as a Second Language Program in New South Wales, received from **Ms Linda Burney**.

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Reordering of General Business

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [3.17 p.m.]: I move:

That General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 3109 have precedence on Thursday 7 August 2014.

Under the Coroner's Act the Domestic Violence Death Review Team, consisting of 15 experts, must meet four times each year. Following the resignation last year of State Coroner Mary Jerram, the Domestic Violence Death Review Team has not met once. The Government has some explaining to do. Team member Betty Green, a women's advocate, voiced her frustrations in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stating:

We are unable to do any work and it is very distressing.

The New South Wales community is also very distressed. Sweeping changes to the State funding model for homelessness services has seen many women's shelters forced to close their doors. It boggles the mind that the Government can still call itself committed to or even interested in the domestic violence epidemic that we in Australia are faced with. Make no mistake, it is an epidemic. The Domestic Violence Death Review Team was assembled four years ago amid concerns that up to half of all domestic violence-related deaths were not recorded as such by the police. Do you know these startling figures? A woman is killed by an intimate or ex-intimate partner once a week. The statistics speak for themselves.

Analysis by the team and reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* indicated that between 2000 and 2009 almost every man who killed his female partner had been violent towards her previously. Why are there 31 cases waiting to be examined by the team, and yet still silence and inaction persists on this pressing life-threatening issue? In the same article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* a spokeswoman for the Attorney General was quoted as saying that the Government is continuing to work on a number of initiatives to improve agency responses to domestic violence. Why then have we reached the eighth month of this year and yet there has not been a single meeting of the Domestic Violence Death Review team?

Team member Betty Green said: "The legislation is very clear that the team must meet four times a year." There is still time for this Government to meet its legislative obligation. It is up to all members to make this Government act to demonstrate its commitment to addressing violence. I call upon all members on both sides of this House to support me in this motion. Domestic violence is too important an issue for any member of Parliament to ignore any longer. I commend the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Housing Supply

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.21 p.m.]: The motion that I seek to be accorded priority states that this House notes that in 2013-14 New South Wales recorded its highest housing approvals in a decade and that this House supports the New South Wales Government's policies to increase housing supply for the people of New South Wales. This motion should be accorded priority because—and there are not many times I get to say this—the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, said, "I will make housing affordability my issue." This is the Opposition's chance to get behind the Government's agenda, but they will not. They have dismissed this legislation because the only house they are interested in is a halfway house, the venue of choice when they finish their service in this place and society catches up with them. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition looks forward to speaking on this issue. It is an opportunity for him to come clean to the people of New South Wales about how his wrecking-ball policies will break the budget and increase housing prices.

The Opposition must understand that housing affordability is the biggest issue facing aspirational Australians. I am sure the Opposition looks forward to the opportunity to tell the people of New South Wales

that the Baird Liberal team is delivering policies to make housing more affordable now and into the future. The Baird Liberal Government cares about the development of New South Wales and making houses more affordable. The Baird Liberal Government cares about reducing the cost of living for the population that is expanding and needs to be serviced. Mike Baird and his Government care about people having a place to live. That is where the Opposition has failed.

Labor said Sydney was full, and it was because Labor was too lazy to build infrastructure, get housing approved and get anything built. We have delivered the highest approvals in more than a decade—more than 51,000 new housing development approvals in the 12 months since May. We have a plan to build more houses. We have identified more opportunities. As Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for homelessness I know that affordable housing is an important issue now and it will be in the future. The population of New South Wales is projected to rise. People will not find housing unless we approve new homes. In National Homelessness Week we should be thinking for the long term.

When I speak to young people across the State they are concerned about the cost of housing. We should do everything in our power to ensure that all those who work hard can buy a house, but under those opposite interest rates rose to 17 per cent. They sent people out of their homes looking for alternative accommodation. This motion should be accorded priority because we must ensure that housing remains affordable. To secure this we need approval to build more houses.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is on three calls to order.

TAFE NSW

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [3.24 p.m.]: This motion should be accorded priority because the Government is continuing to push on with its Smart and Skilled reforms, despite the enormous community concern about these reforms that are causing very real anxiety and distress for students. The Government is pushing on with the reforms despite the fact that this is a broken commitment by this Government. We know how many members on the other side of the House signed the pledge to invest in TAFE before the election. This Government is not doing that, but rather it is denying an investment in TAFE and clearly breaking that promise.

This morning members of this House were briefed on yet another disturbing aspect of the Smart and Skilled reforms—that is, the impact of these reforms on the TAFE Counselling and Career Advice service. I acknowledge in the gallery counsellors from this service who were at the briefing. The Counselling and Career Advice service provides essential educational support for students. It is an efficient and professional service where the majority of counsellors are registered psychologists. It is an essential service to ensure that TAFE can operate effectively and efficiently. Despite this, the Government's Smart and Skilled reforms have no funding for the counselling service from 2015. Already TAFE institutes in south-western Sydney, the Hunter, the Illawarra and New England are deleting counselling positions. I call particularly on members who represent those areas to stand up for the Counselling and Career Advice service and support this motion. This is a matter of priority and a matter of urgency.

We know that a critical issue confronting any vocational education and training system is the completion rate. Students who do not complete are a drain on resources. In New South Wales completion rates are going backwards under this Government. The Counselling and Career Advice service plays a critical role in supporting students to complete. It makes sure in the first place that students choose the course that is right for them and matches their career aspirations. It makes sure students have the necessary skills and aptitude to undertake that course. It also is a resource that students can turn to should they struggle while undertaking their course. It is, in fact, a lifeline for many students, the difference between dropping out of TAFE and completing the course. This is particularly true for students who are disadvantaged, those with mental health issues and those with a disability. I call on members to support this motion.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 63

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

Noes, 20

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I welcome to the public gallery Cynthia Lai from the MLC School, guest of the Deputy-Speaker.

HOUSING SUPPLY**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.37 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that in 2013-14 New South Wales recorded its highest housing approvals in a decade.
- (2) Supports the Government's policies to increase housing supply for the people of New South Wales.

This motion addresses what is probably the biggest issue affecting the people of New South Wales and certainly is the biggest issue affecting the current generation of aspirational Australians. The Baird Liberal team has been hard at work delivering on its commitments. The Attorney General and former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has just advised me that this Government is currently approving 600 houses, which is the equivalent of one suburb's worth of housing, each week. That is a pertinent figure for us to consider.

The Baird Liberal Government knows that the only way that housing will continue to be affordable is to increase supply. We know that when the population is expected to grow demand grows. We know that when demand increases we need more supply or else, as supply side economics would suggest, prices will go up. That

has happened under Labor governments around Australia—housing prices and interest rates have risen. Under Labor, housing for renters and owners is always less affordable. This Government has focused on increasing the supply of housing now and into the future. Glen Byrnes from the Property Council—a man better known to members opposite—has stated:

Sustained efforts to radically increase housing supply are the key to unlocking affordability in the State's residential market.

We are increasing supply and doing so at a much faster rate than Labor. Our average monthly approvals are 30 per cent higher than they were under the former Labor Government. Labor members may try to hide behind the global financial crisis, which they have subsequently boastfully alleged Kevin Rudd kept us out of, but we have achieved 21 consecutive months of delivering more than 3,000 approvals per month. That figure was last achieved in September 2004. What is Labor's excuse for not approving new houses? It does not have one. Labor members were simply too lazy to put in the hard yards to make anyone think that New South Wales was open for business.

But it is not just in approvals where we beat Labor; it is also in commencements and completions. Our average quarterly completions are 11 per cent higher than they were under Labor and they are currently, as I have mentioned, at 7,908. We are increasing supply. It is predicted that 1.6 million additional residents will live in New South Wales by 2031 and they will require an additional 650,000 homes. When Labor was faced with increased pressures it just said, "Sydney is full." But with that sort of attitude we would see prices rise, and in the long run we would see Labor's elitist culture of wanting Sydney to be for the rich. With Labor, prices rise.

Conversely, the Premier and the Minister for Planning have plans in place to address the future housing need in New South Wales. Urban activation precincts are a major part of the strategy to meet the growth in housing in New South Wales. The Urban Activation Precincts Program revitalizes existing areas and it supports maximising the use of existing and planned infrastructure, especially transport. Three of those precincts are in The Hills shire, taking advantage of the North West Rail Link as an important piece of public transport infrastructure, which Labor promised but never delivered and this Liberal team is delivering.

In Bella Vista, in my electorate, 4,400 additional homes and 10,500 jobs will be provided, public parks and streets will be improved and Bella Vista Farm will be kept as a key conservation and heritage area. In Kellyville 4,400 additional homes and 800 jobs will be concentrated close to the new station, and walkways and cycle routes will be improved. An additional 3,600 homes and 7,700 new jobs will be provided in the vicinity of Castle Hill Showground and the showground will be upgraded as an essential recreational space. Urban activation precincts improve local communities because we know that projects need to be consistent with local strategies, and have the support of the local community and council. We are creating new homes and new jobs, and the mayor is behind the project as well as the local members of Parliament.

Labor neglected The Hills and it neglected housing areas across the State. Labor never addressed housing supply. Since coming to office this Government has built more than 100,000 homes. CommSec's State of the State report labelled New South Wales as the strongest in the nation for new home construction. Housing affordability is an important issue. It is the Leader of the Opposition's issue because Labor never did anything to create housing affordability when it was in government. Labor did not plan for the future and it let housing approvals dwindle. The Leader of the Opposition put this issue on the public agenda and housing approvals are now double what they were in 2009. The Baird Liberal Government is promoting housing supply and it is going to make housing more affordable.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [3.42 p.m.]: Government members have the temerity to beat their chests over what they purport to be their achievements in record housing approvals. They stand in this place and say that they did something to achieve this result. I remind members of an article in a publication last year—a publication that has some substance in this country—the *Australian Financial Review*. On 30 March 2013, under the headline "NSW development approvals hit record low" the article stated:

Local development approvals in NSW have slumped to their lowest level since records started in 2006.

Did we hear from the member for Baulkham Hills what it is that the New South Wales Government has done in the past 12 or 15 months to achieve the figures he speaks of? Is there something the Government has done to achieve that? Has the Government said it is planning policies? Has the Government said it is State environmental planning policies? Has the Government said it is any statutory or administrative Act? All the Government has said is that there is something in the New South Wales budget that has magically achieved

these record housing approvals. Is there something in the Local Government Act? The answer is no. Is there something in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act? The answer is no. Is there something that the Minister for Planning has done? The answer is no.

What has affected housing approvals? The lowest interest rate in generations has affected housing approvals and that relates, consequently, to the entire world economic outlook. One of the tragedies in this State is that the New South Wales Government is a failure in implementing any planning reform that will address housing affordability and additional housing stock in this State. Simply relying on the national economy will not address the situation. I remind members, for example, that in relation to housing affordability, as at September 2012 rents had increased by 26 per cent—the cost of renting an apartment in Sydney is \$100 more than renting a house in Melbourne.

This Government has demonstrated its planning incompetence with its planning reforms when it had the opportunity to address this problem. Instead of doing something sensible—for example, asking the current Assistant Minister for Planning, who has a PhD in planning law, what the solutions might be to address housing affordability and housing supply and integrating infrastructure development—the Government decides to go down the developer's pathway of strategic planning certificates and have, effectively, part 3A on steroids. Addressing the problem of housing affordability and housing supply in Sydney requires planning policy, but that necessitates planning legislation being developed by people who have the intellectual ability to implement it. Where are the regional plans or the sub-regional plans? Where are these people going to live?

Is the Government simply going to rely on Labor's State planning policies of affordable housing—because that is what it is doing: it is building dog boxes—or is the Government going to pull out of its large intestines urban activation precincts where 22-storey buildings can be built in residential areas without approval? That is not the solution to bringing about housing affordability; it is simply a bonus for developers. These serious problems require serious intellectual solutions that are not driven by merchant bankers, the Property Council or developers but by an intellectual approach. The Opposition has said repeatedly to the Government over several years that we will work with the Government for a planning response, but there has been no movement. The Government has the intellectual ability within its ranks. The people of Sydney are going to be struggling with housing affordability in the future unless the Government uses the people within it who have got some brains.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.47 p.m.]: The member for Heffron implores this House to take an intellectual approach to the question of housing affordability and housing supply. The relevant intellectuals—the economists—will tell you that the way you increase housing affordability is not to artificially inflate demand but to increase supply, and that is what this Government's policies aim to do.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the member for Kiama that he is already on one call to order.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: With our stamp duty concessions and our First Home Owner Grant (New Homes) scheme we are giving direct incentives to construct new houses and increase the supply. With urban activation precincts we have the potential for 54,000 new houses and with our planning laws, which were opposed at every step of the way by that mob opposite, we have the potential to increase housing affordability. That lot opposite—the so-called friends of the working class, the so-called friends of working families—presided over the lowest number of housing starts in 50 years in New South Wales. What a disgrace, what a sellout and what treachery to working families.

Mr Michael Daley: Call it the GFC.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Instead, the Opposition tells us to look at interest rates and, we hear from the member for Maroubra, the global financial crisis [GFC]. But interest rates and the GFC affect Australia as a whole, not just New South Wales. It was not something unique to New South Wales, yet we have seen an increase in housing approvals in New South Wales of 29 per cent in the past 12 months compared with 18 per cent in the rest of Australia. Obviously, what we are doing in New South Wales is adding value to increasing supply, which is what an intellectual approach, listening to economists, would tell us to do.

We did not hear anything from the member for Heffron of how Labor would go about increasing housing supply or housing affordability, but we know from the Leader of the Opposition that Labor wants to drive up prices by having home grants for existing purchases as well as new home purchases. Labor wants to

spend \$2 billion of taxpayers' money blowing out the budget to force up house prices with a scheme that would inflate prices by allocating money to existing home buyers, which not only is bad economics and bad for working families—the ordinary mums and dads—but also is bad for the budget.

We saw the solar bonus blowout when a \$300 million scheme became a \$1.7 billion scheme under "Captain Solar" and we saw \$500 million wasted on the Rozelle metro, which was started but was later cancelled. Now Labor wants to spend \$2 billion over four years on a scheme to push up house prices—despite Sydney having one of the most expensive housing markets in the English-speaking world—and yet again wreck the budget. We are on the right track in New South Wales. We in the New South Wales Government have a record of which we can be proud.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [3.50 p.m.]: The Labor Opposition opposes the motion moved by the member for Baulkham Hills, which congratulates the Government in relation to housing starts. The motion asks all members of this House to support this Government's policies of increasing housing supply. The principal reason for defeating the second part of the motion was stated by the member for Baulkham Hills when he referred to the Coalition Government's economic policy of increasing housing supply to reduce prices. His argument is that the Baird Government has increased supply, but what is the end result of that? Where has the member for Baulkham Hills been? Does he get any local newspapers in his electorate? Do his local newspapers have real estate lift-outs?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Declare your interest.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I will. New South Wales, and Sydney in particular, has the highest real estate and housing prices in history. That in itself shoots down the argument advanced by the member for Baulkham Hills. People in the media who follow this debate should not let this Government take credit for housing starts and other economic spin-offs from the housing industry that is outside the Government's control. Where has the member for Baulkham Hills been over the past couple of years? The price of real estate skyrocketed at a time when he says this Government had increased demand for housing.

This Government takes credit for new suburbs and new housing starts. There has been an increase in housing, but where has it mainly been in Sydney? It has been in the north-west and south-west sectors. Somehow the member for Baulkham Hills thinks that that is to his Government's credit, but I know from closely monitoring that area over a number of years that well before the 2011 election, and his Government coming to office, housing estates from the back of his electorate in Baulkham Hills extended further than Old Windsor Road. Who released the north-west and south-west sectors for housing starts? It was the former Labor governments. That is where all the housing construction is taking place at the moment.

We got through the global financial crisis, thanks to the Federal Labor Government, and people are now starting to invest in properties. Why? It is because of the lowest interest rates in Australia's history. I will add to the list provided by the member for Heffron of legislation that this Government has not introduced and has led to the current situation. Can this Government boast of an increase in public housing construction? No, it cannot. Public housing construction is at a record low. The fact is that this Government's decision to ruin the first home buyers scheme for new home buyers, from which real estate agencies derived up to 50 per cent of their business, has resulted in real estate agencies deriving only 10 per cent of their business from first home purchases. This is an appalling record by a Government that can take no credit whatsoever. [*Time expired.*]

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.53 p.m.], in reply: For the life of me I cannot understand how any member of the Labor Party can spend any time justifying Labor's role in the housing market or take credit for any stimulation of the housing industry. Let us begin at the start. In 1985, when I was still at high school, Bob Carr came to The Hills district.

Mr Richard Amery: That was the best 20 years of your life.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: At least I went to high school. Bob Carr said that Labor would be bringing rail to The Hills district. Why did he say that? It was because north-western Sydney was where the growth in housing would take place. No less than 30 years later, we finally have action being taken on the North West Rail Link. The member for Mount Druitt said that, under Labor, development of housing on the western side of Old Windsor Road was commenced and stimulated to increase. Clearly, he has not been to north-western Sydney very often because those developments were stimulated and grew over the past three years since the Coalition Government was elected. It took ages for houses to be constructed and developments to commence because of

the repressive policies of the Labor Party. Labor members want to claim that stimulation in the housing sector is caused by low interest rates. We accept that because it was a Federal Coalition Government that kept interest rates low.

Mr Richard Amery: Rubbish!

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: Labor members cannot get away from the fact that it was a Federal Labor Government that gave us an interest rate of 17 per cent, which destroyed families across Western Sydney—Western Sydney working-class families that Labor claims to represent. I know all about those 17 per cent interest rates because I am from Western Sydney. I had forgotten how many families were thrown out of their homes because of the repressive economic vandalism that the Labor Party used to dish out to people it allegedly represented. Home ownership is the highest aspiration that any person in Australia seeks to achieve. Most people in the real world in New South Wales—not the dodgy types of people that Labor members opposite might want to pretend they represent—want one thing from their Government, and that is for it to provide an environment in which owning one's own home is easy and in which there is surety in the housing market. With that in mind, this motion should be agreed to. Members opposite should be grateful that we are cleaning up their mess.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 55

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

Noes, 20

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

Pairs

Mr Baird	Ms Burton
Mr Humphries	Ms Hay
Mr Issa	Mr Park

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to sessional order Government business proceeded with.

MINING AMENDMENT (SMALL-SCALE TITLE COMPENSATION) BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anthony Roberts, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [4.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Mining Amendment (Small-scale Title Compensation) Bill 2014 amends the Mining Act 1992 and the Land and Environment Court Act 1979. The bill implements the key legislative measures set out in the New South Wales Government's final response to the Wilcox report into Lightning Ridge opal mining. The amendments are intended to establish a framework to streamline and clarify interactions between landholders and opal miners, particularly in Lightning Ridge. The Mining Act is the primary piece of legislation regulating opal mining in New South Wales. It establishes a titles framework specifically for opal mining activities. Two types of titles are available under this framework: mineral claims and opal prospecting licences, which the Act refers to as "small-scale titles".

Lightning Ridge may be the birthplace of Crocodile Dundee but its most famous export comes from under the ground. The Lightning Ridge region is the heart of opal mining in New South Wales. It produces 95 per cent of Australia's black opals—one of the most valuable opals in the world and the official gemstone of this great State. A thriving tourist industry exists off the back of opal mining. More than 80,000 visitors, from all walks of life, visit Lightning Ridge each year. Some come to try their luck at opal mining; others come to simply experience an outback mining town.

The region is home to vast tracts of grazing and cropping land and has a long history of primary production. That history is reflected in the name of the town. It is said that Lightning Ridge got its name when a bolt of lightning struck a flock of sheep, killing more than 200 and scattering the others in terror. I encourage members to visit this area at least once. It is truly a unique part of New South Wales. I was fortunate to visit Lightning Ridge this past weekend as part of its annual Opal Festival, where I crowned Skye Holland as the 2014 Opal Queen.

I met many people in Lightning Ridge. I pay tribute to some of those wonderful people—great leaders of that community and people who are passionate about seeing Lightning Ridge move forwards. To name a few, I acknowledge the work of Sebastian Deisenberger, the President of the Lightning Ridge Miners Association [LRMA]; Maxine O'Brien, the Secretary of that organisation; and Ian Woodcock, the President of the Lightning Ridge Opal Festival. I also acknowledge some of the farmers that I met—Doug and Penny Lehmann, Rick and Helen Hall, Ross Slack-Smith and Wayne Dunford—at meetings facilitated by Danica Leys of NSW Farmers. I met many miners and farmers at Lightning Ridge. I thank them for their hospitality and for their ability to present their points of view on the matter of coexistence.

By way of background, there are around 3,200 small-scale titles in Lightning Ridge on 26 properties. Some landholders have hundreds of titles granted over their properties. It is unsurprising that there is a need for a streamlined regulatory framework to ensure there are positive relationships between landholders and miners. Opal mining is also undertaken in White Cliffs, a small township some 300 kilometres north-east of Broken Hill. White Cliffs is famous for its white opal and also for its local member, who is in the Chamber today. In contrast to Lightning Ridge, there is not known to be tension between landholders and opal miners in White Cliffs. That is because the vast majority of small-scale titles are granted over unoccupied Crown land at White Cliffs.

Despite the commissioning of four reviews, previous governments have failed to adequately establish the tools to support landholder and miner dealings. I proudly say that this Government has taken action and this bill is about implementing a solution. Members in this place may recall Murray Wilcox, QC, a former Federal

Court judge who was commissioned to undertake a review into issues of concern about opal mining in Lightning Ridge. In 2011 Mr Wilcox delivered his report with recommendations for resolving these issues. In 2013, following an extensive consultation process, the New South Wales Government released the document entitled "Final NSW Government Response to the Wilcox Report into Lightning Ridge". This bill implements the key legislative measures set out in the final response. These measures balance the interests of Lightning Ridge residents, farmers and miners alike.

I now turn to a more detailed consideration of the proposed amendments in the bill. The bill amends the Mining Act 1992 to establish a standard compensation scheme for landholders affected by opal mining. This implements a key recommendation of the Wilcox report. It is the centrepiece of the bill. As announced last year in our response to the Wilcox report, the standard compensation rate for the Lightning Ridge area will initially be set at \$100 per annum for mineral claims. The rate for opal prospecting licences will be \$100 per annum, plus 10¢ per hectare. At this time there is no intention to set a standard compensation rate for opal miners in White Cliffs.

The bill enables the standard compensation rate to be indexed to keep up with inflation. Beyond that, the rate can be varied only every five years, after an independent review. This provides certainty for opal miners. It will ensure the goalposts do not keep shifting. I stress that the standard compensation scheme will not prevent parties from making their own arrangements for compensation. Opal miners will be able to choose to either pay standard compensation or make a private compensation agreement with a landholder. Standard compensation will be collected by the Government and distributed to landholders. This will provide a streamlined way of processing payments associated with opal titles for both landholders and titleholders. If landholders receive standard compensation and believe it is too low they will be able to seek assessment by the Land and Environment Court. The court cannot award an amount that is less than the standard compensation rate. In the event there is neither a standard compensation rate in place for a particular area, nor a compensation agreement, a party may also ask the Land and Environment Court to determine compensation.

To complement the standard compensation scheme, the bill introduces a new process for granting titles. The new process will ensure that standard compensation is paid, or a private compensation agreement is in place, before a small-scale title is granted or renewed. In practice, this means that, before a decision-maker grants a title, they will need proof that the applicant has paid standard compensation or made a private compensation agreement with a landholder. An existing agreement between an opal miner and a landholder will be recognised for this purpose. However, proof of this agreement will be required before a title can be renewed.

The new process will ensure that landholders receive timely notification of the applicant's intention to exercise their rights under the title. The bill also allows the Minister, by order published in the *Government Gazette*, to impose levies on opal miners, or classes of opal miners, for particular purposes. The purposes for these levies are set out in the bill. They include the provision and maintenance of roads servicing small-scale titles, off-title rehabilitation and environmental maintenance work, and the rehabilitation of mullock dumps. Other purposes may be prescribed in a regulation. The levies will enable these works to be undertaken on behalf of miners collectively. This is more efficient than each miner doing the work individually. There is broad support from landholders and opal miners in Lightning Ridge for introducing these levies. Once again, I cannot speak too highly of the farmers' representatives I met there and the representatives from the Lightning Ridge Miners Association.

The work funded by the levies will benefit not only opal miners and landholders but also the broader community. The bill enables levies to be targeted at a particular class of small-scale titles. This will enable levies, for example, to be set in respect of Lightning Ridge only and not White Cliffs. This flexibility reflects that shared infrastructure needs can vary between areas. The Government will administer the funds collected from the levies. The bill establishes a process for people to apply for funding from the levy to undertake works. Funding will be available if the works are consistent with the purposes of the levy and are appropriate and reasonable for achieving those purposes.

The Land and Environment Court plays a central role in resolving conflicts between landholders and opal miners. However, as noted in the Wilcox report, there is a general unwillingness to elevate local disputes to the court. In its final response the New South Wales Government proposed a range of measures to facilitate ease of use of the court. As part of these measures the bill amends the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 to introduce a mandatory conciliation and arbitration process for proceedings relating to small-scale titles. If this does not resolve the matter the parties will proceed to a normal court hearing. This process will apply across Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs. It will enable opal mining disputes to be dealt with in a more informal and cost-effective way. A similar process is already in place for environmental planning appeals.

Historically, around 1,700 mineral claims were granted in Lightning Ridge which gave miners the right to reside on a claim. Several years ago a program was established to phase this out by giving miners a separate leasehold title to the land. This involved paying holders of overlying western land leases to surrender parts of their leases and then granting opal miners smaller residential western land leases in those areas. As part of this program a levy was imposed on these miners to fund the associated costs. While the program had widespread support the levy lacked a legislative basis. The bill validates the previous collection and use of moneys from this levy.

This bill addresses some key issues of contention facing the Lightning Ridge community, issues that for so many years have been neglected. These changes balance the interests of opal miners and landholders alike. Opal mining and agriculture are the lifeblood of Lightning Ridge. This Government is committed to the prosperity and coexistence of both of these industries and to the fantastic community of Lightning Ridge. I commend the Mining Amendment (Small-scale Title Compensation) Bill 2014 to the House.

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

**CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDERS REGISTRATION) AMENDMENT (STATUTORY REVIEW)
BILL 2014**

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

Second Reading

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.20 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The amendments to the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2014 will improve the operation of the Act and strengthen the framework for monitoring child sex offenders living in the community. As required by the Act, the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services has reviewed the Act. This review found that the policy objectives of the Act remain valid and that its terms remain appropriate for securing those objectives.

In summary, the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill includes the following amendments: new objects have been inserted which set out the key purposes of the Act: to protect children from serious harm, including physical and psychological harm caused by physical or sexual assault; to ensure the early detection of offenders by recidivist child sex offenders; to monitor persons who are registrable persons; and to ensure that the registrable persons comply with this Act.

The definition of a class 2 registrable offence is being expanded to include the following: first, the manslaughter of a child, except as a result of a motor vehicle accident which will make it consistent with the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 and, second, wounding or causing grievous bodily harm with intent to a child under 10 years of age. The offence will not apply when the person committing the offence is a child themselves. The third offence, which is child abduction, will apply when the person committing the offence has never had parental responsibility for the child.

Inclusion of these offences will ensure that offenders who may continue to pose significant risk to children are not omitted from ongoing monitoring. An offender who is originally charged with murder of a child, a registrable offence, but is ultimately found guilty only of the lesser offence of manslaughter, will now be captured by the reporting obligations of the Child Protection Register. Definitions of and references to "sentence" and "government custody" will be amended to clarify the relationship with other Acts. Currently the terms "sentence" and "government custody" refer only to an order of detention under sections 27 or 39 of the Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act 1990.

The review recommended amending the Act to provide that these terms include an order under section 24 of the Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act 1990 which causes a person to be kept in custody. As section 39 of the Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act 1990 also includes orders that do not involve detention, the new definition relates only to an order that "causes a person to be kept in custody". If a court finds

a person guilty of an offence which is not registrable the court may, on application by the police, make a Child Protection Registration Order requiring the person to comply with the reporting requirements of the Act. These orders can be made only if the court is satisfied that the person poses a risk to the life or sexual safety of a child.

There have been instances involving matters warranting an application for a registration order where compliance with the time frame has precluded police from making the application. In the interests of improving the ability of the police to apply for a registration order after the conclusion of criminal proceedings, the time frame will be extended from 21 days to 60 days. Section 3F will be amended to provide that police may apply for a registration order for a person who was previously sentenced for any of the additional registrable offences, unless he or she was a child at the time.

The review accepted that there is merit in including a framework to more effectively enable the courts to consider relevant factors when making a registration order. The Act will be amended to include the following criteria for the court to take into account when determining whether a person poses risk to children, and to make a registration order: the seriousness of each registrable offence committed by the person; the age of the person at the time each of those offences was committed; the age of each victim of each of those offences at the time that the offence was committed; the seriousness of any other offences committed by the person; the impact on the person if the order being sought is made compared with the likelihood that the person may commit a registrable offence; and any other matter the court considers to be relevant.

The review accepted submissions that legislative reform should clarify when notifications should be made and when reporting obligations should commence for forensic patients. Forensic patients are persons who have been found not guilty of committing a crime by reason of mental illness, as well as people who are found to be unfit to stand trial. During the course of their treatment a forensic patient can be granted different types of leave. The Act currently provides that when a person ceases to be in custody, written notice must be given to police and the person must be given information on his or her reporting obligations and consequences. Therefore, the Act will be amended to require the Ministry of Health to notify the Commissioner of Police under section 6 on each occasion that a forensic patient is subject to an order that allows the person to be absent from a mental health facility, correctional centre or other place on a regular and unsupervised basis and clarify that notice to the person of his or her obligations is not required to be given in those circumstances. These changes will mean police will know when registrable persons who are also forensic patients are in the community, on leave unsupervised, but the person will not be subject to formal reporting requirements until released.

Section 9 of the Act will be amended to ensure that police are aware of the name and date of birth of each child who lives in the same household as a registrable person, and details of children with whom they have unsupervised contact on more than one occasion. The term "contact" for the purposes of the Act will be taken to include both the modes and circumstances in which the contact occurs, such as physical, verbal and written contact, supervising, caring for or forming a relationship with a child. However, it will exclude any one-off contact the offender may have with a child, such as when the registrable person is on public transport. As a result the definition of "regular unsupervised contact" at section 9 (2) (c) of the Act is repealed. Section 9 will also be amended to clarify the personal information that a registrable person must provide to police.

Currently this information includes such matters as details of vehicles the person generally drives and his or her phone number. It is proposed that this information will now also include the full details of any hire car used by the person, and the details of any mobile phone or landline numbers used or intended to be used by the person. Additional personal information will be included under a new section 9 (1A) to clarify the circumstances involving contact with a child by the registrable person. A registrable person must report contact with a child if that person is supervising or caring for the child, visiting or staying at a household where the child is present, exchanging contact details with the child or attempting to befriend the child.

In establishing the parameters for what constitutes "contact", a further amendment gives the courts discretion where the court is satisfied there is not increased risk to children, in balance with the needs of a young offender. An amendment to section 9 provides that the sentencing court, or a court imposing a registration order, or a Local Court or Children's Court on application by the police, may modify the reporting obligations to assist with a young registrable person's educational or other needs. These young offenders need not provide all information regarding contact with peers. This ensures that a young registrable person attending school need not report the contact details of all his or her classmates.

The review accepted that there are a number of provisions relating to corresponding registrable persons, those from other jurisdictions and overseas, woven throughout the Act that may be confusing. To simplify the

Act's administration and ensure the full suite of requirements are clearly identifiable by police and registrable persons alike, the requirements relating to corresponding registrable persons are being placed in a single division. The current varying time frames in the Act were raised by stakeholders as complex and potentially confusing.

Division 3 of the Act will be amended to provide that a registrable person must report any changes to his or her relevant personal information to police within seven days of that change occurring. Some time frames remain as currently provided in the Act including the names of children in the registrable person's household must be reported within 24 hours; the intention to travel outside New South Wales must be reported 24 hours prior to travel when circumstances make it impracticable to make the report seven days before the person leaves; and the intention to change the place where the registrable person generally resides must be reported 14 days prior to the change.

Section 15 of the Act will be amended to provide for extensions to the reporting periods, now to be known as "countable periods". If a registrable person fails to report, there is currently no power to order any commensurate extension of his or her reporting period. The review accepted extending the reporting period when a registrable person fails to make a report to demonstrate sufficient consequences for non-compliance. Police will be required to inform registrable persons of the potential extension of their reporting obligations as a consequence of failing to comply.

The bill amends section 19E to increase the penalties for unauthorised changes of name without reasonable excuse by a registrable person to five years imprisonment, or \$55,000, or both. A registrable person may apply to change his or her name. This may be rejected when the name change is likely to be regarded as offensive by the registrable person's victim, or where it may undermine the ability of police to monitor the offender. The multiagency monitoring and risk management of high-risk registrable persons is undertaken by interagency child protection watch teams. Section 19BA allows schedule 1 agencies that are on child protection watch teams to collect and use personal information about a registrable person and to disclose that information to other scheduled agencies.

Schedule 1 is being amended to include the current titles of, or the specific appropriate part of, the relevant departments. Schedule 2 provides for savings, transitional and other provisions comprising matters of a machinery nature to provide consistency with other Acts. I am advised that the NSW Police Force will take steps to ensure that current registrable persons are aware of these pending amendments. This bill strikes the right balance between maximising compliance with obligations under the Act and ensuring there are sophisticated and effective monitoring procedures in place. Following the statutory review, these amendments continue this Government's strong focus on ensuring that children who are vulnerable in our community have the appropriate level of protection that they deserve. The registration of people of interest is important to the community and these amendments will continue to ensure that this Act stays modern and the safety and protection of children remains paramount.

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

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2014-15

Debate resumed from 19 June 2014.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [4.33 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the 2014-15 State budget. The Camden electorate is one of the fastest growing areas in New South Wales and the demand for infrastructure and services is also growing. Currently we have approximately 70,000 people and over the next two to three decades that figure will blow out to nearly 300,000. That is why this Government realises the need to provide infrastructure not only to accommodate the new people arriving in the Camden electorate but also to look after existing residents. I am proud to say that the \$280 million upgrade of Camden Valley Way was one of the first infrastructure projects started by this Coalition Government. Camden Valley Way was known as the goat track within the Camden electorate and for many years there had been promises of fixing it and promises of upgrades.

Mr Acting-Speaker Evans has a good memory so I am sure he will recall some 3½ years ago members spruiking about how wonderful their electorates were in their inaugural speeches. I remember saying that

I would not spruik about Camden's benefits until Camden Valley Way was upgraded and then I would be spruiking from a soapbox. I am looking forward to doing so because in the near future Camden Valley Way will be completed ahead of time. After many decades of promises there will be dual lanes from Narellan to Liverpool. It will be a proud day when that is accomplished.

The start of the upgrade of Narellan Road was another vital infrastructure project. I am pleased to say that the first stage of that project has been completed. The Premier has been an outstanding supporter of the people of my electorate, first as Treasurer and now as Premier. The people of Camden thank him for his support and for the time that he spends in our electorate. The Premier, Federal Treasurer Joe Hockey and Prime Minister Tony Abbott announced stage two of the upgrade of Narellan Road with joint funding of \$114 million from the State and Federal Coalition governments. The project will deliver a safer and more efficient road for the travelling public. It was great to be present with my State parliamentary colleagues Minister Jai Rowell, the member for Campbelltown, that opal of the south-west, and Federal member Russell Matheson who has been extremely supportive of this project.

I thank the people of Camden for their patience in regard to Narellan Road which was built by the Labor Government as a 2007 election promise and which has struggled from day one. When the Coalition Government came to office in 2011 it recognised the need to upgrade Narellan Road and it now has that responsibility. I am also extremely proud of the South West Rail Link which has a 2016 completion date but I hope it is completed much earlier, definitely in 2015 or perhaps by the end of this year. A fantastic achievement by Minister Berejiklian will be the completion of that project \$300 million under budget.

The construction of the South West Rail Link was announced by four former Premiers. Premier Bob Carr first announced that the project would cost \$500 million but that figure blew out to \$2.1 billion. That project is now near completion. I thank the Minister and the Government for that \$2.1 billion piece of infrastructure in our backyard that will accommodate growth in my electorate. At a recent long weekend public holiday the new Premier visited the South West Rail Link, along with Minister Berejiklian, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Campbelltown and me. It was great to have their support. Premier Baird had been Premier for only a few days when he visited my electorate in the south-west to support my constituents, which was fantastic.

The purpose of the South West Rail Link is to take cars off the road. It will tie in with Camden Valley Way, Narellan Road and other infrastructure to become a fantastic jewel in the crown for the area. New suburbs such as Oran Park, Gregory Hills, Spring Farm and the Leppington to Catherine Field developments will see the volume of traffic on our local roads increasing. It is expected that some 42,000 homes will be built in the area and many new residents will still need to drive to their places of residence, which will place a lot of pressure on the roads. Over the past 3½ years my constituency is finally seeing a government that is getting on with the job it was elected to do. I am proud that the Government sees the need to deliver for the people of Camden and the people of New South Wales. I congratulate my colleague Treasurer Andrew Constance on his vision for our State to continue to be number one. My electorate, more than any other, has benefited from the first home owners grant.

One of my suburbs, Spring Farm, was the highest ranking suburb for first home owners taking up the grant this year. I thank the Treasurer for taking the time a couple of weeks ago to visit Spring Farm to meet with a young family that will take up the grant and build in the not too distant future. Matthew Jackson and Meaghan Lambley expressed gratitude to the Treasurer that the increase in the grant from a threshold of \$650,000 to \$750,000 will enable them to build their dream home in a magnificent suburb. Spring Farm will have a new primary school, once again planning for future residents and having infrastructure in place before residents arrive. Indeed, Bob Carr coined the phrase "infrastructure before people". It is wonderful that under former Premier Barry O'Farrell and now Premier Baird the Government is delivering infrastructure before people. I thank it for that.

Camden's most popular tourist attraction and one of which I am most proud would be the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan. On the first weekend following the 2011 election Premier Barry O'Farrell introduced free entry to those gardens. It had always been free to enter the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney but one had to pay to see the gardens in Western Sydney. I remember the Premier visiting the area and saying that the people of Western Sydney should have the same advantage of being able to see their gardens for free. Visitor numbers to the gardens increased by 400 per cent as a direct result of removing the entry fee. Approximately 50,000 people visited the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan in September last year, which is outstanding, although I accept this included the Fathers' Day weekend.

The Australian Botanic Garden comprises 1,000 acres of beautiful gardens but also located on the site is a \$19 million seed bank with world's best technology. People from around the world source this seed bank,

which has 250,000 species. This will ensure that many of the world's flora will live on for future generations. The budget also includes funding for upgrades to the amenities blocks and barbecue facilities to ensure that the thousands of people who use these facilities on a weekly basis have a wonderful experience at the gardens.

The \$139 million redevelopment of the major hospital at Campbelltown is going unbelievably well. Minister Skinner attended with me for the turning of the first sod and for the "topping out" ceremony a few months ago with the member for Campbelltown and Minister Rowell. Although the hospital is in the electorate of Campbelltown, it services many people in my electorate. I am probably more proud of that hospital than I am of most other things. In the lead-up to the 2011 election we promised \$40 million for a minor upgrade to the hospital but on coming to government Minister Skinner and her team realised that \$40 million would not be enough and another \$100 million was allocated to ensure that the people of our area receive the services they need. When the redevelopment of Campbelltown Hospital is completed, it will be a fantastic asset for the area, which is growing rapidly.

The upgrade of Bringelly Road and The Northern Road will give new residents in the Badgerys Creek and Bringelly areas something they said would never come along in their lifetime. This is not merely a promise; the project has been brought forward and it has commenced. It will add to the connectivity of Narellan Road, Camden Valley Way and the South West Rail Link, with the next part of the puzzle being Bringelly Road and The Northern Road. I thank the Treasurer and Premier for bringing forward this project in the budget and supporting my community. A police citizens youth club [PCYC] is being built with the assistance of Camden Council, a fantastic initiative. Former Leader of the Opposition Peter Debnam and I, as a former candidate in the 2007 election, promised the PCYC if elected. Clearly we lost the quinella on both those things and nothing came to fruition.

However, I am pleased that Premier O'Farrell has honoured that commitment and \$2 million was set aside for a PCYC after the Coalition won the 2011 election. I commend Camden Council, which has been extremely supportive, under the leadership of Mayor Lara Symkowiak. The State Government has allocated \$2 million and council has matched that \$2 million and provided the site at Elderslie. This project has probably had more starts than Tulloch but the project is finally underway. Only a month ago the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for Sport and Recreation came to the area to inspect the site and expressed his extreme satisfaction with the location. The Minister, the Premier, the mayor, the council and the community all agree that this will be an outstanding asset for the community.

I pay tribute to David Shorrocks, who is a retired policeman and former PCYC commander. He was born and bred in Camden, along with his children, and his grandchildren also live in the area. Dave's vision was to have a PCYC in Camden. He is now chair of the PCYC committee. Last Friday I spoke to him at a function at the South West Sydney Academy of Sport where I introduced him to Minister Ayres. It was probably 10 years ago when as mayor he first came to see me about this project. I say to members: watch this space. I believe that something very positive will happen with this site in the not too distant future but I will perhaps save any announcement for a press release.

The Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for Sport and Recreation also looked at other council projects. One exciting initiative is the proposal to build a sports hub, including a netball complex, which is the most popular sport in the area. It is fantastic that every Saturday some 2,000 women play the sport but new facilities are required. Therefore, I wanted to show the sports Minister this fantastic project for the area and to highlight that it had the total backing of Camden Council, which is doing a great job. It has my support and I hope it receives Government support. There will be not only 44 new netball courts but also an athletics complex and the current hockey field and other sporting fields will be included. The Camden community needs this social infrastructure and, in view of the growing population, both levels of government have a responsibility to existing and future residents.

The Camden electorate is steeped in history—for example, Belgenny Farm, the "birthplace of Australia's agriculture" has the most historic group of farm buildings in the country. It was the first home in Camden of agricultural pioneers John and Elizabeth Macarthur. It is still used for many functions. The Macarthurs also built Camden Park House. Construction of the house began in 1832 and it was completed in 1835—sadly, the year after John Macarthur's death. It is still a working farm and is overseen by John and Edwina Macarthur-Onslow, who reside there. Each year there are several opportunities for the public to visit the home and see how it is kept in its original condition—inside and out. John and Edwina are outstanding members of our community and I thank them for bringing joy to so many by opening Camden Park House to the public.

"Camelot" stands on the site of explorer John Oxley's Kirkham Mill. "Camelot" was reportedly built with the winnings of the racehorse Chester. Chester, owned by James White, won the Melbourne Cup in 1877. The home was designed by John Horbury Hunt. It was constructed from brick and has a romantic silhouette of turrets, chimney stacks, gables, arched verandahs and projecting bays. The home was featured in the now cancelled—we will be talking to Channel 7 about this—but highly rated television series *A Place to Call Home*. "Camelot" is very dear to my heart. I live in Camelot Close so I get to see it every day. Many locals were thrilled to see "Camden" featured in this outstanding Australian drama. Sadly, Channel 7 axed the program after the second season and there has been an outcry about this in some Sydney media. It was undoubtedly a wonderful show and I urge anyone from Channel 7 who reads *Hansard* to consider making a third season. It is a myth that only those aged over 50 watched the program. Channel 7 has let a good program get away. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Onslow Park, our local showground, will soon become famous. Onslow Park was also donated by the Macarthur family. Angelina Jolie found the site perfect for the filming of *Unbroken* because of its original fencing and buildings. The locals were proud to see that the first trailers of the film depicted Onslow Park being used as an athletics field. The site is still used by our local Camden Athletics Club, which is one of the largest athletics clubs in New South Wales. The Camden Athletics Club committee does an outstanding job.

Mr Nick Lalich: Name them.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I have been invited to the club's opening in September so I will name the committee members at a later date. Considering the amount of work required in our area, as the local member I am extremely proud to showcase what can be achieved in getting on with the job of delivering major housing and infrastructure to the people of Camden. The Government understands that roads, transport, health and tourism infrastructure must be provided in all growth areas across New South Wales, including my electorate. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that local communities are supported in the delivery of those outcomes. Finally, it is a privilege and an honour to be the member for Camden.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.53 p.m.]: The member for Camden is one of the nice guys on the other side of the Chamber, and I thank him for sharing the history of his electorate with the House. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to it, but this is a budget take-note debate. I have visited beautiful "Camelot" many times. It is a pity it is not opened more regularly to the public. Interestingly, in my electorate of Cabramatta a boys' orphanage was opened in 1820 but closed in around 1850 because the young kids were better off living on the streets of Sydney than at the home. I am happy to listen to any history lesson but we should not try to change history. For example, Camden Valley Way—the so-called "old goat track"—is being upgraded by the Liberal-Nationals Government but the work was started under Carl Scully, as were the M5 and M7 projects.

The widening of the M5 to Campbelltown was commissioned by Carl Scully. The South West Rail Link was started by the former Labor Government. In fact, if that rail line had not been started by Labor the money would have gone north. Indeed, it is unfortunate for those Government members who represent northern electorates that the South West Rail Link project started first. It was all commenced by the former Labor Government and Carl Scully, and the current Government is carrying on that work. I am happy to listen to anyone who wants to give the House a history lesson—

Mr John Sidoti: You have 17 minutes.

Mr NICK LALICH: That is why I have diverted a little in this take-note debate. Once again, Cabramatta has been ignored and neglected by the Government in this budget. We got a bit of money to meet a tiny fraction of the huge demand for social housing in our area, and a bit of money for social housing and roads maintenance. The most significant funding we received was for a \$6 million upgrade to Cabramatta High School, which was budgeted for and had commenced under the former Labor Government. I thank the Liberal Government for continuing and finishing the project.

If work had not already started on this project in 2011 no doubt this Government would have axed it, just as it axed the Cabramatta community car park that the former Labor Government had budgeted for. That was one of the first things the Liberals axed when they came to government. They axed the hard fought for free No. 88 community shuttle bus service that connected three important areas in my electorate. The bus service was free for pensioners and those who were doing it tough, and transported residents between Canley Heights, Canley Vale and Cabramatta to shop for food. Every time I saw the bus it was three-quarters full with passengers. The Minister reported that only a handful of people were using the bus but that is not true; it was always quite full.

The Government also axed the Cabramatta Street Team, a highly successful program that helped to steer young people in our area away from a life of crime. The people of Cabramatta had hoped to see additional investment in this budget for infrastructure and transport to stimulate jobs; funding for Fairfield and Liverpool hospital upgrades and expansion; funding for local schools and TAFE colleges; resources for our police local area commands; reinstatement of the free 88 shuttle bus service; construction of a lift at Canley Vale railway station; and a commitment to build a new commuter car park in Cabramatta. Instead, this Liberal Government has continued with its program of cuts, cuts and more cuts.

Mike Baird has failed to stand up to Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who ripped \$1.2 billion from New South Wales hospital funding over four years. Mike Baird's budget will leave a \$554 million black hole across the New South Wales hospital system. On 12 June the Australian Medical Association said that the New South Wales budget needed to provide at least \$1.4 billion in extra funding to "keep the New South Wales health system going: Anything less than that will cause a standstill." That is truly frightening. Fairfield and Liverpool hospitals are still reeling from Mike Baird's previous \$3 billion cut to the health system. Patients are being forced to wait to be seen by local doctors for up to 11 hours in the emergency department at Liverpool Hospital and eight hours at Fairfield Hospital. This \$554 million black hole will put a lot more strain and pressure on the already struggling nurses, doctors and support staff at Fairfield and Liverpool hospitals; not to mention the patients who will be let down.

As well as health, education is an important issue for those in my electorate. Many parents in the Cabramatta area want to give their children the best start in life and opportunities that they never had. To them, education is the key to the door of opportunity. Those parents are appalled by the Liberal Government's continued decimation of the TAFE budget. Another 375 TAFE teachers will lose their jobs in 2014-15, bringing the total number of job losses to 1,088 since the Liberal Government came to power in 2011. This is in addition to cutting TAFE courses and astronomical increases in student course fees, which families will struggle to pay. These cuts will do nothing to improve Cabramatta's appalling youth unemployment rate. In fact, it could make it far worse.

The Liberals have also taken the razor to the Education budget, cutting \$21 million from the schools capital expenditure budget. That means that thousands of students in the Cabramatta electorate will have to continue sitting and learning in ageing demountables that are well past their use-by date. Across New South Wales almost 5,000 demountable classrooms need to be replaced but it seems that the Government will not be replacing those temporary classrooms any time soon. Once again, this Liberal Government is showing us how little it cares for the people and families in Cabramatta who are doing it tough. There is nothing in this budget to help families give their children the opportunities that they want so desperately. There is nothing in this budget to help build jobs in Cabramatta. There is nothing in this budget to help families in Cabramatta with the increasing cost of living.

But am I surprised? No. This is a budget from a Premier who, as Treasurer, had trouble adding the numbers. Who can forget that in 2012 this Premier delivered a budget that contained \$1 billion worth of mistakes and miscalculations. Mike Baird announced a \$337 million deficit when, in fact, the numbers added up to a surplus of \$680 million. At the time Mike Baird stated, "I will take every action possible to make sure they"—the mistakes—"are minimised going forward." I hope there is a mistake in this budget because perhaps then we can find some money to help the people of Cabramatta.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [5.04 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I speak in the take-note debate on the State budget and share with the House some of the record roads and transport infrastructure spending contained within it for the Northern Tablelands electorate. Northern Tablelands communities will receive more than \$61 million for local roads, transport infrastructure. More importantly from my perspective and that of the communities of Bundarra, Inverell, Warialda and to the west of the Northern Tablelands electorate, the budget contained the remaining \$3 million that is required to construct the replacement Emu Crossing Bridge at Bundarra. I pursued this matter vigorously on behalf of the community during last year's by-election campaign and, in partnership with the community and an absolutely superb Minister for Roads and Freight, I am pleased that we have been able to secure the money that will ensure the project comes to fruition.

It was with great pride and pleasure that I joined the Mayor of Uralla Shire, Mick Pearce, towards the end of last month to turn the first sod and commence construction on the Emu Crossing Bridge. It is a \$4 million project of which the State Government is providing \$3.5 million and Uralla Shire Council is providing \$500,000. It is on Thunderbolts Way, which is a key strategic freight link that runs east to west through the

Northern Tablelands electorate. It carries a huge amount of freight and essential produce from our region to the Port of Newcastle and other distribution centres. It is also an important link for school students to the education centre of Armidale and for those who travel by plane to the city, which is the gateway to the Northern Tablelands region.

The new bridge will span the Gwydir River. The existing low-level Emu Crossing will be replaced with a higher, longer and wider structure that is designed to cope with flooding events and keep the region's freight moving. It was a momentous occasion for the Bundarra community on 25 July, when we turned the first sod. There was a huge turnout by the community that has been fighting for many decades to have the temporary crossing built in 1919—95 years ago—replaced. The crossing was never meant to be permanent; it was supposed to be replaced with a permanent bridge. But that never happened. It took this Government and this roads Minister, the Hon. Duncan Gay, in partnership with a wonderful community that worked hard to campaign, fundraise, design and lobby for the construction, to see that project commence.

I am pleased to report that we were able to secure the money required. Earlier in the year Newcastle-based company Civilbuild Pty Ltd won the contract to construct the bridge. That happened in May and, with the first sod turned towards the end of last month, construction has commenced a month early. The community is very happy about that. The project has commenced ahead of schedule and the bridge should be completed by June next year, weather permitting. As the current bridge is a low-level crossing it is topped easily by floodwaters and when it is covered people must drive an extra 95 kilometres to reach Armidale. That adds a lot of time and cost for the freight industry and prevents students getting to and from school in a timely manner. The current bridge has more than 550 vehicle movements each day, and more than 30 per cent are heavy vehicles.

While doing research for the sod turning I was interested to discover that the old Department of Main Roads has representations dating back to 1935 from the then Gostwyck Shire Council asking for the Emu Low Level Crossing to be replaced, and calling on the then State Government for financial assistance. I am very pleased to say that 70 years later not only have we provided that money but the work has started. The community will not have to wait too much longer for the bridge to be completed. I acknowledge some of the people who have been critical in achieving the money allocated in the State budget and getting the construction underway. I pay tribute to the Mayor of Uralla Shire, Mick Pearce, and his former General Manager Tom O'Connor and current General Manager Damien Connor.

I have found working with the council constructive, and Roads and Maritime Services has complimented the council on the ease of working with it to deliver this project, particularly at a practical level. Uralla Shire Council will do the roadwork and the approaches to the bridge, while Roads and Maritime Services will control construction of the bridge. I acknowledge the Deputy Mayor of Uralla Shire, Bob Crouch, who is a resident of the Bundarra area. He headed the community committee that took around petitions and lobbied the Government. The committee was pivotal in getting the Minister to the site and it worked hard with the council to make the process much easier. I also thank local businessman Spencer Hall and Kim and Ian Harvie, who have worked hard, as well as the proprietors of the Bundarra General Store David and Melissa Lowell and the publicans of the Bundarra Hotel Geoff and Rose Higgins—two businesses that are directly impacted when the low-level crossing is topped and Bundarra is cut off.

I have spent much of my contribution talking about this project. The money in the budget is important, but the project will have an impact on the economic viability of the community and the broader Northern Tablelands region. It has been a pinch point for freight and normal vehicular access that will finally be no more. That is extremely exciting. The Emu Crossing Bridge project dovetails into a number of strategic road upgrades in the Northern Tablelands that are being funded in this budget. The realignment of the New England Highway at Bolivia Hill is critical for freight. I have talked about Thunderbolts Way that runs east-west. The New England Highway runs north-south through the spine of the electorate. It carries a huge amount of freight from Queensland to the heart of New South Wales. That is a critical project and another \$5 million has been allocated in the budget to match the Federal funding. The project will soon go to tender, which is exciting for the people of the Tenterfield area. Too many lives have been lost on that highway and soon it will be fixed.

The budget also allocated \$900,000 to the Tenterfield heavy vehicle bypass, which is essential for taking heavy vehicles out of the main street of that community and allowing the continuation of beautification work. I commend the Mayor of Tenterfield Shire, Peter Petty, and General Manager Lotta Jackson, who are committed to this project. The council has spent considerable funds to restore and enhance the central business district in anticipation of the bypass. More than \$24 million will be spent to improve roads in the Northern

Tablelands electorate over the next 12 months. Money has also been allocated to repair sections of the Waterfall Way, which is a key link between Armidale and the coast. This is important to attract people from your electorate, Mr Assistant-Speaker, to the Northern Tablelands region. Lots of money has been allocated to fix parts of the Gwydir Highway and other sections of the New England Highway, where there will be road widening and patching repairs.

There is \$2.6 million for road widening on the Fossickers Way north of the Gwydir River near Bingara, which is an important project. Gwydir Shire Council has been lobbying for this project for some time. There is also \$1.5 million for upgrading the Dry Gully Bridge on Fossickers Way. The Gwydir Shire Council area, which is almost entirely rural, has a large road length per capita so this injection of funds is important. For me, the most exciting allocation in the budget is the prioritisation of the long-awaited Armidale Rural Referral Hospital redevelopment. Pending the finalisation of the plans later this year, this project will receive a share of the new \$50 million Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, which was created under this budget. For the first time Armidale Hospital has appeared in the budget papers. This follows excellent progress on this issue. Earlier this year the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, came to Armidale—it was her third or fourth visit to the hospital precinct in the past 18 months—and I thank the Minister for taking a keen interest in this project.

Mr Daryl Maguire: She is a fantastic Minister.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: The Parliamentary Secretary is right: She is a brilliant Minister, as evidenced by the number of rural hospital upgrade projects.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Jillian the builder.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: The people of my electorate are looking forward to the Minister building on her reputation with the redevelopment of Armidale Hospital. While the Minister was in Armidale in April to open the \$8 million ambulatory care building, complete with an expanded oncology unit, she announced \$400,000 to progress planning to the next stage of the redevelopment. Earlier this year I announced the appointment of the planning team for the planning stage and I met the team, hospital management and clinicians on site along with Hunter New England Health staff. The planning process is well underway and everyone, including the community, will be consulted as part of the process. It is an essential project for the electorate.

The hospital services a huge catchment area and, with the University of New England investing in constructing its clinical school, we will have a state-of-the-art health precinct with the capacity to take medical students from the start of training to their fifth year and into their intern year. We will be able to train and retain our own medical staff in the heart of New England. It is an exciting time for our region on the health front. This is welcomed not only by the people of Armidale but also by those in the wider electorate, whether in Inverell, Guyra, Glen Innes, Uralla or Walcha. Most people come to Armidale Hospital at some point to access acute care services.

The planning stage of that redevelopment is going along smoothly. Some important items in the planning include a new emergency department, new and expanded operating theatres, a new medical ward and a new intensive care unit for acute care patients. This is a key priority for the electorate. As the local member, I remain determined to see this critical infrastructure project materialise. I look forward to continuing to work with the Minister on this project. When the plans are finalised, in late November or early December, I will be lobbying the State Government and the Commonwealth Government for a share of the Health expenditure so that, like the Emu Crossing Bridge, this project can get underway. This budget was very good for the Northern Tablelands not only because of its record spend on road infrastructure but also because of its prioritisation of some of our region's key health needs. The budget also provides a big lick of money for councils in our region.

Importantly and excitingly, the budget provides funding for something about which I am passionate but which does not get as much attention as the blue ribbon projects. That is the \$800,000 that will be provided for the commencement of two five-bedroom group homes in Armidale for people living with disabilities. Everyone in this place recognises that never enough money can be spent on support services for people with disabilities. There is certainly a need for those services in our region, where the current population is ageing and the services are at capacity. The two five-bedroom group homes in Armidale will provide a great service and be wonderful facilities for the people most in need in our community.

The budget provides money for local Home and Community Care [HACC] services, community transport, and social housing upgrades as well as upgrades to a number of courthouses across my electorate. The upgrade to the Emu Crossing Bridge is fantastic and I again thank the Hon. Duncan Gay, the Minister for Roads and Freight, for the wonderful spend on roads in our region. I again acknowledge Minister Skinner for the

prioritisation of the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital redevelopment. I look forward to continuing to work with her to make that project happen. As I said, this is a very good budget for the people of Northern Tablelands. I look forward to working over the next 12 months and I hope beyond with communities in my electorate to ensure that we continue to get our fair share of expenditure for our priorities.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [5.19 p.m.]: Every year in this place I have taken the opportunity to make what is often referred to as a budget speech, or a take-note speech in more recent years as the structure of the debate has changed. I took that opportunity each year because electorates like mine are always pretty high on the electoral pendulum. My political opponents always say that the Mount Druitt electorate is taken for granted; it always returns a Labor member. Because that is the catchcry of Liberal candidates in my area I used my speech to put on record the projects that were going on in and around my electorate as well as those that serviced my electorate.

Over the years I have been proud to speak about the easy access upgrade to Mount Druitt railway station, which involved the installation of a lift, escalators and a bus terminal at a cost of \$12 million. I have also spoken about the Mount Druitt courthouse, which opened in 2006 and was another million-dollar project. Mount Druitt TAFE was extended and road widening projects and other roadworks were completed in the area. Schools were also upgraded and in this debate I have always given credit to the member for Marrickville and former Minister for Education, Carmel Tebbutt, who is still a member in this House. Prior to the 2007 election she came to my electorate in response to community campaigns involving three schools in particular: Rooty Hill High School needed a new library; Eastern Creek Primary School needed a new library and upgraded childcare facilities; and Colyton Public School had been calling for a new hall for many years.

I highlight those historical points because they are the reason I always spoke in the budget debate. My speeches took 20 minutes and if I got the chance I asked for an extension of time. My speeches refuted the silly arguments made by conservative politicians and candidates that nothing was ever built in electorates such as Mount Druitt. I do not have enough time tonight to talk about all the projects that have been completed in Mount Druitt but they include new facilities at Mount Druitt Hospital, upgrades to the police station and the motor registry and—going back to the time of Neville Wran—quadrupling the railway line. The list goes on and on. This year I will not make a 20-minute speech because I could not speak for that long if I related this budget only to the Mount Druitt electorate.

The first thing I will talk about is the Budget Speech of the new Treasurer, who I should congratulate on his appointment. He said the budget surplus was \$900-odd million or \$1.2 billion if the Government brought forward some Federal money. He explained how the surplus changed if it did this, that or the other thing. The fact is the Government seems to put forward a different surplus figure five or six times a year, but we cannot blame it for that. On at least two occasions the Government has miscalculated the budget by a billion dollars so we must not be too hard on the current or former Treasurer.

Bearing in mind that there are a couple of ways to calculate this year's surplus depending on how much time we have, how good our calculator is and whether we bring forward or defer Federal grants, what was the surplus when the Government came to office? I do not want members to rely on anything I have said on this; I want them to listen to the words of the former Treasurer. His name is Michael Baird and he is now the Premier of New South Wales. In his first Budget Speech he said that the surplus as at 30 June 2011 was approximately \$1.3 billion.

Mr John Sidoti: Rubbish.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Did the member for Drummoyne say that his Treasurer was speaking rubbish? That is an appalling interjection.

Mr John Sidoti: You left a black hole.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The black hole made for an interesting debate for about six months, did it not? Apparently somebody shone a light on it. I have quoted the Treasurer's 2011 Budget Speech in which he said the surplus was \$1.3 billion in the last financial year of the Labor Government and the member for Drummoyne has said that is rubbish. That is a terrible attack on his new Premier. We have now had three budgets from this Coalition Government. Some 15,000 jobs have gone, the Police Death and Disability Scheme has changed and we have hacked into workers' rights. We are cutting back on government departments and we

have hacked about \$3 billion from health and \$1.7 billion from education. We have endured all this pain and what is the new surplus? It is about the same as it was in 2011. One really has to wonder how the Government is managing the budget.

Mr John Sidoti: That tells you there was a deficit.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: These are the Government's figures. When Treasurers make speeches in this place members opposite should at least have the courtesy to read them—although we do not expect that they will understand them. I will now make a couple of brief comments about my electorate. I say "brief" because there is very little to say about State funding for the Mount Druitt electorate. The member for Northern Tablelands referred to the list he got from the Treasurer. We got our list too, and it is padded out well. All schools need painting, recarpeting, maintenance and building work each year. That is, of course, the type of expenditure Government members are talking about. Similarly, when they talk about money for Family and Community Services they are talking about salaries for public servants in their electorates. But the question that remains is what iconic projects is the Coalition Government building in members' electorates?

I have spoken about previous upgrades to the courthouse, railway station, hospital, TAFE and libraries in my electorate. Those are the types of projects we want members opposite to talk about in their speeches. They should give us a list of big projects in their electorates. I know the member for Wagga Wagga will talk about his hospital; I will talk about my hospital shortly. My electorate in the western suburbs of Sydney has been the beneficiary of substantial State Government funding over many, many years—

Mr Mark Coure: Mostly under this side though.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Sorry, I did not realise that school is out. I will slow down. This must be a 40-kilometre an hour zone because the kids are crossing the pedestrian crossing. In relation to my electorate, the first thing that the Government will speak about is the upgrade of the—

Mr Mark Coure: What about Blacktown hospital?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I will tell the House what you said about the Blacktown-Mount Druitt area in a polling booth if you do not behave yourself, lad. In the meantime why not take some advice: Go to your room. I want to talk about Mount Druitt Hospital—a great iconic project of the Wran Labor Government. The hospital has had a number of upgrades over the years and I recall prior to the 2011 election, with doctors and a number of people, announcing part of this upgrade which is continuing currently. The upgrade will increase the number of rehabilitation beds and dental chairs, expand the ambulance reception area, make some cosmetic changes to the entrance, and increase parking and so on.

To the Government's credit, that project was not cancelled when it came to office. The project had been announced and I do not know whether or not it was contracted but, to be fair to the Minister, the Blacktown Mount Druitt project continued. The Government can take credit for funding the project although it is hard to say that any Coalition member would proudly say, "That is our project. We talked to the medical profession and the community and we planned it." To the Government's credit, it is funding it but it is not really a Coalition iconic project.

What is happening to Mount Druitt taints the project the Government has undertaken to continue. The Government has supported a political position of the member for Mulgoa and removed the methadone clinic from the main street at St Marys and built a new facility. I am trying to keep a cardiac ward in Mount Druitt Hospital but the Government has built a substantial building right at the entrance to Mount Druitt Hospital for a new methadone clinic. I know that is going to be an issue in the community and I know I will be talking to the local police about the constant monitoring and policing of that facility. I think we could have handled a methadone project if it was in the confines of the hospital and therefore monitored by closed-circuit television cameras and security guards, but the facility is on the fringe of the hospital, about 200 metres from existing houses, and it is a problem.

Getting a methadone clinic in Mount Druitt Hospital is not a fair exchange for losing the cardiac ward. If the Government wanted to take some credit for continuing the funding of the two hospitals, which was announced many years ago, it would have been nice if it had at least left the cardiac ward in place. Unfortunately, I cannot speak positively about the upgrade project going ahead because we are going to lose our cardiac ward—a life-saving facility at Mount Druitt. Hopefully some people in the community will not pay for that with their lives.

Another issue is the Rooty Hill railway station. I raised this issue during debate on the Passenger Transport Bill yesterday. It is a very old station on the Western Line. Back in about the late seventies when the level crossing was closed a ramp was put up both sides of the railway station so that people could walk across. Unfortunately, coming off that ramp are a couple of flights of stairs to the platform and that is the only way to get onto the platform to catch a train. They are quite steep stairs and they are very difficult for the elderly, the disabled and young mothers with prams to negotiate. A newspaper this week highlighted how people in wheelchairs have to go to Mount Druitt railway station, which has easy access. I again urge the Minister for Transport to keep this in mind.

I know every member is fighting for improvements to railway stations in their electorates but, as I have argued many times, the issue at Rooty Hill railway station is not only about access to the platform; it is about linking the two sides of the town—it is the only way pedestrians can get from one side of the town to the other. Installing lifts will assist elderly people, the disabled and people with children in prams to access the platform and to get from one side of town to the other.

This is probably one of the briefest contributions I have made to a debate on budget estimates but it is only because allocations in the budget to the Mount Druitt electorate are so disappointing. I got the list that all members received but it is all about putting a bit of pavement over a couple of roads and the general maintenance of public assets and so on. It is about doing some work on Richmond Road, which is part of a substantial commercial development that will bring in big stores such as Bunnings. But currently there is nothing in my electorate that a Coalition Government can point to and say that it is a 100 per cent iconic Coalition Government project. I hope we will get the railway station upgraded, I hope we will keep our cardiac ward and I hope we will be able to get the bypass at Rooty Hill and the bridge upgraded. The Minister gave me some information in reply to a question on notice in relation to that matter but the upgrade is a long way from giving the bridge an extra lane.

The only brand-new project that has been finished by the State Government in my electorate is the commuter car park at Mount Druitt. The member for Cabramatta gave the House a very good history lesson on the south-west of Sydney. His commuter car park was approved by the former Labor Government but the contract was not signed and the new Coalition Government came into office and cancelled the project. I was luckier: the Mount Druitt commuter car park was announced around the same time as the announcement of the Cabramatta commuter car park but the tender for the Mount Druitt commuter car park was let and the contract signed before the Government went into caretaker mode prior to the 2011 election; therefore, this Government was contracted to the project.

Mr Mark Coure: But you had 30 years to deliver it.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: That is about five years longer than you have been around. The Mount Druitt commuter car park came about because it was contracted before the election and, unlike the Cabramatta commuter car park, we did get it. If it was the case that the Government could have stopped the project I certainly thank the Government for not doing so. It was a disappointing budget for the whole State, with a lot of pain involved in reaching a budget surplus position that has not changed. There is certainly nothing for my electorate and electorates like mine in Western Sydney.

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland) [5.34 p.m.]: Unlike the member for Mount Druitt, I am absolutely delighted with the work that the Liberal-Nationals Government is doing in New South Wales to bring us back on track and deliver and to continue to do so. Since taking office in 2011 the Government has made unprecedented improvements to infrastructure and community facilities, and my electorate of Maitland is a great beneficiary in that regard. It is about managing our resources well and ensuring that our back office bureaucracy is as streamlined as possible in delivering infrastructure on the ground. We came into office with a commitment to get New South Wales moving and to make New South Wales number one and we are continuing that commitment with this last budget.

Maitland was a big winner. If electorates have energetic and enthusiastic local members all sorts of great things are delivered for them. Criticism of a lack of largesse in the budget is an indication of a member's inability to get the Government to listen to the needs of his or her constituents. In the last budget my constituents in Maitland received improvements in the areas of health, education, emergency services, transport and roads. Within three years the Government has got New South Wales under sound management. New South Wales is back on track and that means the Hunter economy, and Maitland in particular, is a beneficiary in a number of ways. We have seen improvements to infrastructure that Labor was never able to deliver in 16 years of government.

One of the major boosts for the Hunter was an extra \$100 million allocated to the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund. The Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund started with \$365 million to ensure that once and for all there was an opportunity to ensure some of the benefits, resources and infrastructure created and supported by the Hunter economy—which too often under the former Labor Government we saw going into infrastructure in Sydney—were returned to the Hunter.

The Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund, which is known locally as the HIIF, is an ideal avenue for distributing funds right across the Hunter in an equitable and fair manner by having local people making local decisions. It has been a key tenet of our Government that says, "Let's make our decisions locally. Let's use local people with expertise to make those decisions for the Hunter, well away from government and the Sydney bureaucracy." It is being managed under the auspices of the Hunter Development Corporation. Right across the Hunter we are seeing benefits from the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund, which has provided much-needed infrastructure. The Hunter region was lagging behind, and the fund is about returning a fair share to the region.

I was delighted to see a top-up in the budget of an additional \$100 million to the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund. In Maitland, major allocations in the budget included a significant contribution towards the final piece in the upgrade of the New England Highway roundabouts, which are known locally as the hospital roundabout and the railway roundabout. A lot of the work already has been done by Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] on slip lanes and improvements to those roundabouts, but completion of the projects will ease bottlenecks and make it easier for traffic to get through. The last stage of infrastructure is an overpass. Tenders have been called and \$15 million has been allocated to construction. I expect that work will commence by the end of the year or more likely by January next year. I look forward to the announcement of the tenders.

An allocation of \$3.2 million was made to continue planning for the new public hospital in Maitland. I emphasise that this Government made an election commitment of \$20 million that was not matched or even thought of by the previous Labor Government for construction of a public hospital in Maitland. The funding was used to identify a site, begin planning, and commence construction of the new public hospital, recognising that Maitland is one of the fastest-growing regional cities in New South Wales, is rapidly expanding and certainly is a key hub in the Hunter region. Following the allocation of \$20 million, a site has been found and planning for a new public hospital has begun. Approximately 32 sites were identified and selection narrowed them down to two sites and then finally to one site, which is approximately eight times the size of the current Maitland Hospital. It is well situated in regard to public transport, road linkages, a health precinct with a private hospital that is not far away, news services and shopping centres. There is demographic growth in that area and the site will provide access for people from other areas, such as Port Stephens.

The new public hospital at Maitland will take a lot of pressure off John Hunter Hospital and will mean that the people of Maitland will be able to obtain acute care close to where they live at a teaching hospital, and certainly when it comes to chemotherapy. The project is well ahead of schedule, but the \$20 million allocation has been the key to unlocking the project and getting started on building that infrastructure. I expect that a master plan that is being created now will be completed in the second half of this year. We are not building a bus shelter but, rather, a hospital that is between the size of the local Mater Hospital and John Hunter Hospital. The project will involve well over 1,000 jobs in construction and there will probably be 1,500 jobs when the hospital begins to function. There is potential to expand that project. I must say it is very exciting. I was delighted to take Premier Baird to look at the site recently.

The hospital is on a brilliant site in regard to its size and location. I emphasise that it will be a public hospital and will be delivering public hospital services. The Labor Opposition is attempting to run a scare campaign, at which it is expert, by suggesting that this somehow will be a private hospital. That is not at all true. I note the Opposition Health spokesman has been visiting the Hunter and Maitland and has not hidden his enthusiasm for public-private partnerships.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I welcome to the public gallery members of the Normanhurst branch of the Liberal Party, who are guests of the member for Hornsby.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I am aware that the member for Hornsby is delivering great health outcomes for people in his electorate. We refer to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, as Jillian the builder, and we hear from every member about the fantastic work that is taking place to rebuild our health infrastructure. In Maitland \$200 million has been allocated from the Hunter

Infrastructure and Investment Fund to refurbish the mental health ward at Maitland Hospital. When I first visited that ward I was absolutely stunned and appalled at the conditions that patients and their families as well as staff had to endure.

On top of great news in the Health portfolio, this year's budget has allocated \$1.4 million to construction of the new state-of-the-art fire station at Rutherford; extra buses as part of the \$91 million statewide budget for growth and replacement buses and new bus routes; and allocations of funds to continue upgrades of Maitland TAFE, which is a large drywall and plastering facility at Maitland TAFE at Metford. Maitland residents will benefit also from an allocation of \$150 million towards construction of the Newcastle inner-city bypass, \$14 million for 616 new car parking spaces at John Hunter Hospital and 272 car parking spaces at Calvary Mater Hospital at Waratah. We still use those hospitals and car parking spaces at a premium, as they are at every hospital.

In addition, the budget allocates \$9.3 million to commence redevelopment of John Hunter Children's Hospital paediatric and neonatal intensive care unit, which will benefit Maitland families because it will increase the number of front-line workers, such as nurses. Maitland was recently identified as a regional community that has been affected by mining activity. It took a little while for that identification to come through, but I am delighted that Maitland is now able to be in the mix to apply for funding to the extent of millions of dollars under the New South Wales Government's resources program into 2014-15. I know that Maitland City Council is asking for funding for revitalisation of the central business district [CBD] in Maitland, which includes a new walkway. I hope the council will be successful and point out that other electorates around the Hunter will benefit from it, notably Cessnock, Singleton and Muswellbrook in the Upper Hunter as well as Newcastle have already been part of the Resources for Regions funding.

Resources for Regions funding is about making sure that we put money back into the regions where money has been generated. When communities are impacted by mining, we want to ensure that they get a little share of the revenue to ensure that the area keeps up its infrastructure. In Maitland that means keeping up with the rapid growth in housing that leads to requirements for schools, et cetera. This Government has allocated an additional \$100,000 to the Maitland electorate for the Community Building Partnership program, which will give more community groups and councils the opportunity to receive funding. I am always delighted to visit new projects under the Community Building Partnership program. I know that the program is an initiative of previous Labor governments and they deserve a pat on the back for that program, which really is about building communities in partnership with government. It is a great way to deliver small infrastructure projects.

The budgetary allocations and projects I have outlined are only the tip of the iceberg in Maitland in terms of the overall program for rebuilding New South Wales, but I am delighted that this Government is looking after vulnerable people. I was delighted to see that Carrie's Place, which is a local refuge, was a successful tenderer in the recent round of funding for homelessness services. We know that Carrie's Place offers an extraordinary service to women, families and children across a broad area of the Hunter. I am delighted that it was successful.

Since coming to office we have done a great deal of road infrastructure work in Maitland. As to school upgrades, we are almost completely rebuilding Rutherford Technology High School. That work is underway. Hunter Community School has been completely rebuilt, having been moved from a temporary site with temporary buildings. For 10 years the previous Government promised changes; this Government has delivered. We have built a completely new school next to Metford Public School, using remaining Building the Education Revolution funds effectively. The new school is astounding. Instead of constructing buildings that people did not want or need, we consolidated the funding to provide the state-of-the-art Hunter Community School.

Recently we secured extra funding for road upgrades, particularly along the New England Highway. We secured \$3.5 million to upgrade the New England Highway between Racecourse Road and Regiment Road, funding for concrete barriers along the New England Highway, and an extra \$1.4 million to upgrade Lindsay Street at East Maitland to make it a safer and smoother road. Some \$250,000 has been provided to resurface other roads in Rutherford, and a \$3.1 million project is underway to upgrade Raymond Terrace Road. That is particularly important because a new housing development is growing rapidly along that road. With an increased allocation to the Regional Road Block Grant program, the Government has committed nearly \$27.5 million in 2014-15 to upgrade and maintain road projects across Maitland.

At times in the past I have been frustrated about roadworks. Now I celebrate when I see roadworks in Maitland because it is a sign that the Government is getting on and delivering. We are spending \$2.3 million on

upgrading and painting the Luskintyre Bridge and Maitland City Council has received a grant of almost \$1.2 million for works on regional roads. I have worked hard with the roads Minister, Duncan Gay, who is doing a fantastic job, to get Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] to take over the management and responsibility of Long Bridge in Maitland. The previous State Government refused to accept responsibility for the bridge, despite the council's initial case presentation. I am delighted that the State Government has now included that project in State Government funding priorities.

Maitland also has an extra \$15 million for road safety officers, and we are continuing to roll out flashing lights in all school zones. We have already rolled out flashing lights at an extra 18 schools in my electorate. The second phase is underway and in November this year another 19 schools will benefit from flashing lights. The Government is committed to delivering flashing lights in every school zone in the State by the end of 2015. Under the last Government, it would have taken many years before we finally saw flashing lights in all school zones. In just 4½ years this Government will have covered all school zones in New South Wales. Whether it is the Hornsby electorate, the Maitland electorate, the Gosford electorate or wherever, one could not find a better, more effective use of funding by the Government to deliver on this project.

As to health, I have many examples of incredible results for Maitland but I do not have enough time to talk about them. I simply say that we are getting on with the job of delivering for Maitland. An extra resource allocation of \$4.5 million has been received for a number of schools in Maitland. It was important that the resource allocation was provided to the schools that needed it most. For example, Francis Greenway High School received \$723,000 and Telarah Public School and Maitland High School also benefited from the resource allocation grant funding. As part of the redevelopment of Rutherford High School, which I have mentioned, Maitland Tutorial Centre will be moving onto the site. Given that one principal manages both schools, it is logical to combine the schools in order to provide greater mainstream opportunities for the students.

Maitland schools will continue to do well under this Government, which is about effective resource allocation and management. We also are about increasing the number of front-line workers. As members know, we have already increased the number of police, teachers and front-line nurses, and that will continue. In particular, I am delighted with the police capacity in the Maitland Local Area Command. I am also pleased that two new rural fire stations have opened this year: Lochinvar rural fire station and Thornton rural fire station. These state-of-the-art fire stations have been provided for our volunteers, as well as an amount of \$442,000 to house the brigades' trucks and for other facilities. The Maitland electorate continues to benefit and I am delighted to be the member for Maitland, representing this Government. I congratulate the Treasurer and the Premier on the 2014-15 budget. The Government will continue to manage the budget effectively. Most importantly, I am delighted for my constituents because this Government is reshaping Maitland, the Hunter and New South Wales.

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

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ELECTRICITY ASSETS

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [5.58 p.m.]: Tonight I put on the record my concern that the New South Wales Liberals are trying to soften up the people of the Illawarra for a sell-off of electricity poles and wires through an up-and-coming so-called consultation process to be held late in August in Wollongong. We already know that the Premier is ready to knock out the sale of the poles and wires. The big con job proffered by the New South Wales Liberals will be that they can use the proceeds from the electricity sell-off to fund infrastructure, and to buy the votes of people in rural and regional areas. In effect, the New South Wales Liberals will blackmail voters in regional areas with a simple choice: They can have a new hospital or a new road but only if they agree to sell off the electricity poles and wires.

Members of the New South Wales Liberals are starting that blackmail campaign in regional areas such as the Illawarra. What will they do when there is nothing left to sell? My message to the people of the Illawarra is simple: Do not fall for this con job. We have already seen the New South Wales Liberals sell off our assets

through the sale of Port Kembla. Two years ago the New South Wales Liberals announced that they would sell off Port Kembla in the Illawarra region. From the proceeds of that sell-off we got what the NRMA's Michael Tynan recently described as a pittance—only \$100 million. But it gets worse. Newcastle, which also had its port sold off by the New South Wales Liberals, was offered a much better deal than that offered to the Illawarra. Two years later—despite the so-called consultation process that the New South Wales Liberals intend to run again later this month—not one cent of the \$100 million has been spent on any of the approved projects in the Illawarra. Not one cent of that \$100 million—a pittance but it was promised—has been spent. The member for Kiama, who is in the House, knows that what I say is correct.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order—

Ms ANNA WATSON: Points of order are not taken during private members' statements.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: Attacks on members must be made by way of substantive motion, not during private members' statements. And we did not sell any of those things; they are long-term leases, as the member for Shellharbour knows.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Although Standing Order 73 does apply, it is customary not to take points of order during private members' statements.

Ms ANNA WATSON: The faceless Minister for the Illawarra cannot even answer the most basic questions about how much money has been allocated to the projects and whether contracts have been signed in New South Wales.

Mr Geoff Provest: Did you write this, Anna?

Ms ANNA WATSON: Yes, I did. A government agency is responsible for the tracking of milestones and jobs commitments. This is despite the Minister for the Illawarra saying at the time of the announcements for the approved projects that he wanted to see the money flowing as quickly as possible. Two years after the announcement was made to sell off the port, we are still waiting for the money. We are still waiting. According to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART], electricity prices in the Illawarra have increased by 35.1 per cent since 2011. We know three things about the sell-off of public assets.

First, we know that prices will go up; secondly, we know that jobs will be slashed by the razor gang opposite; and, finally, we know that investment and maintenance will decrease. That is what we can expect because that is what has happened in Victoria and South Australia—the two Australian States that have flogged off the natural monopoly that is electricity. The New South Wales Liberals will seek to use the March election next year as an opportunity to bribe and blackmail. In the *Daily Telegraph* of 8 December 2011 in a report headlined, "No magic pudding—poles and wires won't pay for infrastructure needs" says Barry O'Farrell", the former Premier and member of the New South Wales Liberals said:

The sale of electricity poles and wires is "no magic pudding" for building infrastructure in NSW, Premier Barry O'Farrell said yesterday, claiming it is worth "half" of what commentators say.

The Premier claimed a sale of the poles and wires would not even touch the "tip of the iceberg" of New South Wales' infrastructure backlog.

"The numbers I've seen that people put up around poles and wires make it look like the magic pudding. There is no magic pudding", he said.

I will remind the people of my electorate of these wise words by the former New South Wales Liberal Premier in the lead-up to the 2015 election.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I remind members that the Solomon Islands Pan Pipers are performing in the Fountain Court, guests of the Asia-Pacific Friendship Group. I am told they are worthwhile listening to.

JOSHUA CHANT AND 33 SOUTH RACING

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [6.03 p.m.]: Joshua Chant of St Ives, in my electorate of Davidson, started out sailing on Sydney's Pittwater with a school friend at the age of eight. He went on to successfully campaign in many dinghy classes around the globe at a number of national and world

championship podiums. Joshua's passion for sailing has continued to grow and has led him to a role as head coach at the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron at Kirribilli. This has allowed him to pass on his extensive knowledge and insights to another generation of sailors.

Ever passionate about Sydney and Australia, Joshua founded and manages a professional race team named after the latitude at which our beautiful harbour city lies, 33 South Racing. The team includes some of New South Wales' best sailors, including Olympic medallists. The mission of 33 South Racing is to develop into the premier one-design racing team in Australia, a team that is able to produce significant benefits for its sponsors across multiple objectives and platforms.

The team of 33 South Racing also provides a youth sailing scholarship to Australian sailors and supports increased opportunities for talented and dedicated sailors to reach their highest potential in their sailing careers. It believes scholarships are a unique way to say "We believe in New South Wales' youth". Joshua and the team of 33 South Racing launched a scholarship in March 2014, providing two New South Wales teams with coaching and mentoring support. They are able to support and grow this scholarship through the commercial leveraging of their commercial sailing activities. Through revenue generated via sponsorship partnerships, they can apply resources back to the grassroots sailing community.

The support that Joshua and 33 South Racing deliver to these sailors is designed to complement their current club coaching and to provide recipients with race mentoring, campaign advice, leadership development, goal setting, nutritional and fitness monitoring, and sponsorship and fundraising ideas, as well as a team kit. Joshua is heavily involved in the development of the team and in exploring commercial opportunities. Specifically, Joshua's main goal is to secure further sponsorship for the 33 South Racing team, bringing Australian brands to the world as the team fulfils its quest to enter the exciting Extreme Sailing Series.

The Extreme Sailing Series, as its name indicates, is extreme. Racing is dynamic and close to shore, making for an exciting visual spectacle. With up to eight fast-paced races per day, it is an action feast for onshore spectators. The extreme sailing series is similar to a Formula 1 competition, moving from city to city. Four days of racing take place, including other racing classes, and bands and live entertainment, and at the end of the four days the event is packed up and shipped to the next city for the next stage of racing. Eight stages make up the global Extreme Sailing Series. In 2014 the annual series will conclude on the magnificent Sydney Harbour near the Opera House.

This December should see 33 South Racing take up the challenge to compete as a wildcard team and in 2015 to race the whole series of eight events. The team of 33 South Racing is an exciting entity that will represent our unique harbour city and our State. It has the opportunity to help showcase New South Wales to the world while simultaneously mentoring young local sailors. I wish Joshua Chant and his team all the best with their very worthwhile aims and endeavours.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.08 p.m.]: I compliment the member for Davidson on his ongoing support and encouragement of sport. The power of sport to influence our youth in a positive manner should never be underestimated. I wish 33 South Racing and its founder, Joshua Chant, well in the Extreme Sailing Series. I am led to believe the member for Davidson might participate in that event, and I look forward to seeing that. I commend the member for Davidson for his interest in sport, which plays an important role in enhancing the health of our youth. I wish Joshua Chant all the best in the extreme sailing event.

KAREELA FLYING FOX COLONY

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [6.09 p.m.]: Members will recall my statements to the House of 8 and 28 May regarding the colony of 18,000 grey-headed flying foxes that has established itself in Kareela, adjacent to residents' homes and within metres of Bates Drive school, Sylvanvale, ASPECT and the Mikarie Child Care Centre, all of which cater for vulnerable young children with special needs. I noted the serious health risks that the bats posed to these children and I said that we must put the needs of these vulnerable children before the needs of vulnerable bats. I called on the Minister for the Environment to meet with me as a matter of urgency and further called on the shire mayor and local State and Federal Liberal members of Parliament to adopt a bipartisan approach and work together to disperse the colony.

I will now update the House. By late last week significant work had been undertaken by the council in clearing the vegetation to establish a buffer zone between the colony and the adjacent residents' homes and

schools. The colony numbers were well down because breeding pairs had temporarily left the roost for the Royal National Park. Just before dusk on Monday, I returned and spoke to council contractors involved in the clearing. To minimise the risk to the animals, the clearing is done each night after the bats leave their roost for the evening and must be completed by the end of August, when the bats return to the site from breeding. A representative of the Australian Wildlife Rescue Service has been present to supervise the work and liaise with nearby residents. I received a letter dated 23 July from the shire council, which states:

Dear Mr Collier

Thank you for your role in assisting and supporting the management of the Kareela grey-headed flying fox camp. This letter provides an update on Council's progress in actioning the Kareela flying-fox camp Plan of Management. With your assistance, Council has achieved the following:

- gained support from both the State and Federal Government MPs and State and Federal Government Environment Ministers to streamline the S91 licence application process for vegetation removal at the camp;
- gained a declaration by the Department of the Environment that removal of vegetation at the camp is not a "controlled action" if conducted in accordance with the application Council submitted and that the Department of the Environment is not required to give approval in this instance;
- gained an approval from the Office of Environment & Heritage (OEH) for removal of vegetation at the camp creating a 20 metre buffer between all adjacent schools and residential properties and the camp. These works commenced on 21 July; and
- received \$30,000 in funding from the OEH, to be matched by Council in order to achieve Step 1 (a), (b) and (c) actions from the Plan of Management.

These achievements will help improve the local environment for special needs schools and long-suffering residents adjacent to the Kareela camp. These actions will also assist Council in progressing Steps 1 and 2 of the Plan of Management. I would like to reiterate Council's appreciation for your significant contribution.

Yours sincerely
Councillor Steve Simpson
Mayor

I have quoted this letter not for the purpose of self-promotion or to seek praise but to acknowledge all those who have played a role in getting this important work underway and to give credit where credit is due—something we should all do, regardless of political persuasion. I acknowledge and thank the Principal of Bates Drive Public School, Ms Robyn Crompton, and her staff for their dedication and commitment in meeting the needs of their vulnerable pupils every day. I acknowledge the role played by the Bates Drive Public School parents and P & C, led by Mrs Marisa Severino, for their hard work, day in, day out, in the best interests of the children of the school. I also acknowledge the many parents associated with Sylvanvale, ASPECT and the Mikaree Child Care Centre. I thank the many locally affected residents who contacted me about the problem.

I especially thank the Hon. Rob Stokes, Minister for the Environment, who quickly recognised the unique nature of the problem and met with me as a matter of urgency. He responded very promptly and positively to my calls for action to protect the vulnerable children and the local residents. I also thank the Minister's staff and his department for their assistance to council. I thank the local State Liberal members of Parliament who joined me in meeting with the Minister and supported my representations, as well as the local Federal Liberal members of Parliament who offered their assistance. I also acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the former Minister for the Environment, Ms Robyn Parker, who gave me preliminary advice on this problem.

I thank the Liberal shire mayor, Councillor Steve Simpson, for his hard work and for acknowledging my role in what, I repeat, was essentially a bipartisan approach to an extremely important community issue. I thank him for such a generous letter. In thanking all those I have mentioned, I know full well the work being undertaken by council is not the ultimate solution that was sought by the schools, the residents and me. The ultimate solution, of course, would see the dispersal of the bat colony altogether. I also note that the 20-metre buffer zone is less than the 30 metres initially sought by council and me. However, given the strict requirements of Federal and State legislation, the clearing and establishment of the current buffer zone is a step in the right direction. I also understand that the council will take the next step of attempting to disperse the colony, under stage 3 of its plan, if the current work proves unsuccessful. This of course remains to be seen.

My second purpose in quoting the mayor's letter is to provide the House with a concrete example of what we can do when we work together, put aside our political cudgels, suspend our finger pointing and adopt a

bipartisan approach to problems and issues that confront our communities. After all, we come to this House to represent our communities to the best of our abilities and to provide solutions to the problems that confront them. Yet we seem to devote more time to winning arguments than to solving problems. I know full well that there is no escaping the political divide and no doubt the differences between us will be emphasised and magnified as the 2015 State election approaches.

But, all too often in this place we descend into childish personal attacks and reject good ideas simply because they originated on the other side of the House. At times we should recognise that the other side might just have a point. It is important that we do not look at bipartisanship as a weakness and that we show our true worth as politicians by putting aside the petty and the trivial and work together to solve the big problems that confront our communities. The steps we have taken together at all levels to solve the Kareela flying fox problem are just one example.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): I add my thanks to the former Minister, Ms Robyn Parker, the member for Maitland, as well as to the current Minister and councillors for listening to the concerns of local members and coming, hopefully, to a positive conclusion.

BARRY EVANS AND THE BUTTERY

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina) [6.14 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the retirement of Barry Evans. Barry is not an actor or famous. He is an ordinary man who has done extraordinary work, heading an organisation that has saved hundreds of lives and shaped the futures of thousands more—that is, The Buttery at Binna Burra, near Bangalow in the Ballina electorate. Barry Evans recently retired from The Buttery after 31 years with the organisation. The Buttery is one of Australia's leading non-profit facilities helping people overcome their drug, alcohol and gambling addictions.

The Buttery, named because it is located in the old NORCO Buttery near Bangalow, has been around since the 1970s, originally opening its doors to provide outreach services to troubled young people who had flocked to the far North Coast around the time of the Aquarius Festival. Barry Evans started work at The Buttery in 1983 as an art therapist and was appointed as the director of the facility in 1988. During the past 26 years, under Barry's guidance, the programs offered at The Buttery have changed and expanded to reflect the needs of the people it was helping.

The Buttery currently offers four community outreach programs and two residential addiction rehabilitation programs, including its Maintenance to Abstinence Program, which is designed to help people break their addiction to opioid substitutes. Barry Evans once told me that opioid substitutes, like methadone, are called "liquid handcuffs" because addicts need them at a certain time every day. The places they can be obtained are limited and many find that this addiction, and the regime associated with it, makes living a normal life very difficult.

The Northern Rivers has the highest number of people on opioid maintenance programs outside Sydney. Until The Buttery's Maintenance to Abstinence Program there were no options in the Northern Rivers for people wanting to get off drugs such as methadone. This program is fully booked and there is a waiting list of people desperate to get help to break their addiction. Barry and his team provide outreach programs for adults and teenagers needing help with drug and alcohol problems. They also run the Northern Rivers Gambling Counselling Service and a family program that offers a free counselling service for family members of The Buttery residents.

There are few problems more cruel and debilitating than drug addiction. Whilst helping people to break their addictions and face their demons would be incredibly rewarding, I am sure it would be emotionally draining as well. In his 31 years at The Buttery, Barry has seen more than 3,000 people pass through its doors. He says his team is committed to helping chemically dependent people realise a sense of self-worth and teaching them the skills they need to make safe and satisfying choices about the way they view themselves and live their lives. I feel very privileged as the local member of Parliament to have visited the facility that Barry has developed and to see the results of the vision he had for the wounded people who pass through its doors.

Thousands of people in Australia, not just the Northern Rivers, have benefited from the care provided by Barry Evans and staff at The Buttery. Many people owe their lives to Barry. After arriving at the doors to The Buttery hopelessly addicted, they leave, after months of treatment, ready to resume and rebuild their lives in the community. The Government has contributed more than \$1 million to The Buttery in recent years, and

I assure the House it has been money well spent on the Maintenance to Abstinence Program and the Northern Rivers Gambling Counselling Service. I am sure if The Buttery clients, their families and friends were asked they would say that is a small price to pay for the scores of people who have been saved.

The motto of The Buttery is "Addiction is not a consequence of choice—recovery is". In his 26 years at the helm of The Buttery, Barry Evans implemented programs that gave people hope that with hard work and commitment their lives can and will get better. He has shown that teaching people simple life skills, which they never had or lost during their addiction, will enable them to survive and thrive in the world beyond the boundary of The Buttery. I recently had the honour of attending a surprise farewell at The Buttery for Barry and his wife, Wendy. I estimate that more than 300 people were there, including many former clients who have Barry and his staff to thank for their lives. People told stories about Barry and his tough-love approach to rehabilitation. Grateful clients made speeches and a former client read a clever poem. It was a great celebration of Barry's wonderful contribution to turning around the lives of people with addictions.

I also pay tribute to Wendy Evans and thank her for sharing her husband with the community and allowing us to have so much of his time. Barry had a difficult job and Wendy's support allowed him to touch the lives of so many. Barry Evans leaves big shoes to fill but I am sure that The Buttery, under the direction of new director John Mundy, will continue to grow and to demonstrate excellence and innovation in helping people overcome their addictions. I wish Barry Evans and his wife, Wendy, all the best in their new life and again I thank Barry for his wonderful contribution to our community.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.19 p.m.]: I commend the member for Ballina for his support of Barry Evans and particularly The Buttery at Binna Burra. We all know it is a not-for-profit organisation. The member for Ballina has been a big supporter of the great work it does on the Northern Rivers. The organisation runs the Northern Rivers Gambling Counselling Service and the clubs donate to it on a regular basis. As the member for Ballina pointed out, its services have helped to change and save a significant number of lives, which comes down to the efforts and direction of Barry Evans, and the commitment of his great staff and his lovely wife, Wendy, to the local community. I wish Barry all the best in his retirement and wish The Buttery all the best in the future.

MAITLAND ELECTORATE ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland) [6.20 p.m.]: Last week I was delighted to join with the Minister for Roads and Freight, Duncan Gay, to announce the call for tenders to build an eastbound overpass at Maitland railway station roundabout. This is the next step in the Government's \$45 million Maitland Roundabouts Project, which is an election commitment that is being delivered. The overpass is the last piece of infrastructure; we have already received improvements to the roundabouts. This commitment was not matched by the former Labor Government, which thought it was unnecessary. The people of Maitland certainly do not think that and they are pleased with the work so far. Since being elected in 2011, the Liberal-Nationals Government has made an unprecedented investment in road infrastructure in the Maitland electorate. Major improvements have been made to the road network and these improvements, coupled with the opening of the Hunter Expressway, have culminated in enhanced safety, and better traffic flow and journey times for Maitland and Lower Hunter residents.

The Maitland Roundabouts Project is being carried out at Church Street near the Maitland Railway Station and High Street near Maitland Hospital. It is being funded through the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund, which is a great fund that is delivering more resources to the Hunter region in an equitable manner, with local people making decisions. I was delighted to see an extra \$100 million allocated in the last budget for more infrastructure. The project will cater for future traffic growth in the area. Maitland is growing and over time it will have increased traffic coming onto the roundabouts. Community consultation has been paramount in developing the options for the roundabout. I thank the Maitland community for its ongoing feedback and congratulate Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] on the way in which it has kept the community informed.

The first part of the works involved removing the roundabout entry on Walker Street. A new U-turn has been implemented and additional funding has been allocated for safety barriers to be installed along Maitland Park. There is increased street lighting. There is provision for a left-turn lane from Cessnock Road onto the New England Highway and left-turn lanes have been introduced at the hospital roundabout, with new traffic lights at Johnson Street. After liaising with Maitland constituents recently I have achieved additional funding for a new concrete barrier. The existing 130-metre safety barrier has temporary fencing behind it that will be replaced with

a permanent structure once the Maitland roundabout upgrade has been completed. The safety barrier will prevent cars from going through the fence into Maitland Park where the children's playground is located. The new overpass will carry two lanes above the Church Street roundabout and will pass over the flood plain area to the north of the highway at the eastern end of the bridge. I am pleased to see that the call for tenders is the next part of the project. I expect the project to commence by January next year, which will improve the roundabout.

Along with that project, \$3.5 million has been allocated to upgrade the New England Highway at Rutherford, which is nearing completion. In five years to March 2013 there have been 16 crashes on that short stretch of road. The upgrade is a valuable piece of work and it will alleviate pinch points. An allocation of \$1.4 million will go to upgrading Lindesay Street in East Maitland to make it safer and smoother. Almost \$250,000 has been provided to resurface a section of road between Dunkley and Arthur streets at Rutherford on the New England Highway. An allocated \$3.1 million will be spent on upgrading Raymond Terrace Road to enable Maitland motorists travelling between Thornton and Maitland to have a safer journey. To 30 June there were 16 crashes, including a fatal crash, on a 1.5-kilometre stretch of road. The upgrade will make a big difference.

New housing is being constructed along that road, which will result in increased traffic. I never become frustrated waiting for roadworks because I know it means that this Government is delivering record funding to road infrastructure in Maitland. This Government is committed to delivering upgrades and new projects across Maitland. I am delighted to see roadworks occurring in my electorate and I am pleased with the work that RMS is doing. I congratulate the Minister for Roads and Freight, Duncan Gay, on his fantastic work in this portfolio. Maitland is the great beneficiary of roads funding and a fantastic State Government.

NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [6.25 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to inform the House of the decade-long success of the New England Conservatorium of Music [NECOM], which is based in Armidale and has a campus in Inverell. In 10 short years, NECOM has become the bastion for music, music education, and performances in Armidale and the greater New England community. It is the jewel in the cultural crown of the Northern Tablelands electorate. When NECOM first opened its doors in Armidale 10 years ago, it had just two viola students. Now it finds itself as one of the five Tier 1 regional conservatoriums in New South Wales. Its development is nothing short of remarkable. It now delivers an estimated 21,000 hours of music services annually. This is an astonishing achievement for the conservatorium, which is situated in a large region with a small population.

More than 5,500 school students, their families and community audiences take part in NECOM programs every year. As a regional conservatorium operating in a very large area, NECOM has always been a conservatorium without walls because it provides many programs as outreach services outside its campuses in Armidale and Inverell. Apart from the core programs that keep hundreds of students and teachers busy every week, NECOM's music programs traverse an astonishing array of places and genres such as violin lessons in Bellingen via videoconference; woodwind lessons in Bingara and Warialda schools; weekly music classes at Ross Hill Primary School in Inverell; and chamber concerts in tiny schools from the Queensland border town of Mungindi to Kingstown at the southern end of the Northern Tablelands electorate; and Aboriginal Songlines workshops in Tingha.

NECOM also managed to put Armidale on the map last year by taking out the National Award for Excellence in Music Education at the prestigious APRA/AMC Art Music Awards for its 2012 choral showcase New England Sings! More than 700 school students and 40 teachers from 21 schools in Armidale, Bellingen, Glen Innes, Inverell, Kingstown, Tamworth and Walcha, and 74 musicians from the Armidale Youth Orchestra, the Armidale Symphony Orchestra, the Armidale City Band and the Armidale Pipe Band were involved in the project, which culminated with two sell-out concerts at Lazenby Hall at the University of New England in October 2012. NECOM is now preparing for its third production of New England Sings!, which will be presented on 2 November and will be the flagship event for the conservatorium's 10-year celebrations. I am looking forward to being involved and witnessing the celebrations.

The conservatorium's instrumental programs are enjoying outstanding success due to the commitment of parents and schools in the region working in partnership with NECOM. The beginner and instrumental programs continue to see many enrolments each year and hundreds of NECOM students—kindergarten to adults—are achieving impressive results as soloists, and in ensembles and school concerts, and the Armidale Eisteddfod. The collaboration between schools and NECOM is a win-win situation for all. Students are

supported by their schools to pursue their goals and dreams. In 2011, NECOM music therapist Natalie Nugent and program manager Corinne Arter, in partnership with the Special Unit of Armidale High School, established two outstanding projects—Growing through Song, a creative song writing workshop, and the Side-by-Side Peer Choir—to engage teenagers with disabilities or at-risk teenagers in the performing arts and to enable them to mix with peers outside their immediate communities.

I commend the work of Natalie, the work of Armidale High School Special Unit students and their wonderful Christmas choral concert in November last year. I congratulate Natalie and her colleagues Warwick Dunham and Armidale High School teachers Rowena Teege and Deb Rothschild on their commitment and vision. It is absolutely outstanding. Along with education programs, workshops and master classes, NECOM played host to 26 in-house concerts and presented 45 professional concerts to more than 3,000 people, with an additional 35 chamber trio concerts performed in small communities across the New England region.

Since my time as a member of Parliament I have developed a very close relationship with NECOM and have a high regard for its board and staff. It has been a great privilege to go in to bat for NECOM to source a number of funding streams for a few of its programs that were in dire need of support. I congratulate NECOM Director Susanne James, the retiring original directors Robyn Driscoll, Dr Bruce Menzies, OAM, Sue Metcalfe, OAM, and Jennifer Sholl, on their amazing contribution to NECOM over the years. Their energy and enthusiasm knows no bounds. I wish new board members Brett Constable, Liz Egan, Rosemary Leitch, AM, Greg Moin and Chairman Dr Arthur Rickards, OAM, all the very best and congratulate them on 10 magnificent years of NECOM.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.30 p.m.]: I commend the member for Northern Tablelands. Not only is he a great supporter of many activities in the Northern Tablelands, he is also a significant supporter of the arts, particularly of the New England Conservatorium of Music in Armidale. I am also led to believe that he is an amateur thespian, so I look forward to the member for Northern Tablelands perhaps appearing in some future productions at NECOM. I praise NECOM and the member for Northern Tablelands for their support not only of the arts but also of Aboriginal culture and arts, and involving Aboriginals in the process. I commend all those involved as 21,000 hours is significant. I commend again the member for Northern Tablelands and NECOM.

ORANGE HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.31 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that I recently attended the Orange Hospital Auxiliary's annual general meeting [AGM]. The Orange Hospital Auxiliary is the heart and soul of the Orange Health Service. It basically runs the cafe in the Orange Health Service itself. I was lucky enough to be invited to attend this year's AGM by President Tracy Wilkinson. In an extraordinary effort, this year the auxiliary presented a cheque for \$354,589.61 to the hospital. It is a hardworking committee. I usually do a shift every year in the cafe. Secretary Doreen Thurtell keeps a watchful eye on me to make sure that I do not relax behind the coffee machine; I have to do all sorts of work in the cafe.

I make particular mention of the committee comprising President Tracy Wilkinson, Assistant Presidents Pat Devenish and Flo Corbin, Secretary Doreen Thurtell, Assistant Secretary Kim Thurtell, Treasurer Dawne Frame, Assistant Treasurer Carl Baker and committee members Frances Patton, Pat Yates, Vladka Bartyzol, Maxine Kinghorn, Larry Grant, Dawn Frame, the great Robyn Sloan and Brian Brooks. The equipment the auxiliary purchased this year included an ultrasound system for the intensive care unit, theatre equipment, a patient monitor, portable contamination shower equipment, a computer program essential for medical staff, and a bladder scanner and accessories worth approximately \$53,000.

Highlights of the AGM included Peter Young, who was the keynote speaker, acting head of physiotherapy, director and performing artist extraordinaire. Peter is not only a talented actor and director but in his role as the acting head of physiotherapy he is putting together videos or DVDs to encourage patients in their rehabilitation. These will be broadcast on the hospital's television system. The great Peter invited another great thespian, Olivia Fisher, who starred in the Orange Theatre Company's production of *Phantom of the Opera* in the role of Christine. She is an extremely talented actress and delighted everyone at the AGM with a number from the *Phantom of the Opera*. Olivia has won the Canberra Area Theatre Awards and recently won the award for best supporting actress for her role as the feather duster in *Beauty and the Beast*. In the past she has been nominated for best actress in *The Wizard of Oz*. We will be hearing more about Olivia Fisher in the future. I thank Peter and Olivia for their great work. They both make a fine contribution to the community of Orange.

I make mention also of the other great members of the auxiliary—hard workers all of them who deserve recognition in this place. They include Helen Arnold, Flo Ahern, Daniella Burgio, Carl Baker, Hilary Black, Louise Brown, Erica Birks, Vi Burton, Sandra Brooks, Brian Brooks, Marilyn Clark, Margaret Clifton, Lionel Clifton and Dorothy Collins, who sadly passed away in May 2014. I also mention Melisa-Jane Cornish, Robyn Cullen, Judy Curtin, Kerrie Crosstie, Patsy Dean, Josie Dean, Virginia De Santis, Pat Devenish whom I have already mentioned, Wanda Driscoll, Maria Donato, Chris ElaKarina, Kath Elledge, Dawn Frame, Chuck Frame, Mary French, Margaret Fisher, Larry Grant, Liz Gammie, Kay Gransden, Betty Hocking, Barbara Horan, Charlie Horspool, Leonie Horspool, Beryl Hughes, Christine Hannus, Grant Hill, Maxine Kinghorn, Barbara Kiel, Val Lynch, Kay Kennedy, Leslie Kirby, Margaret Kirby, Cathy Long, Allira Long, Nikita Long, Teresa Luczak, Maureen Miller, Jann Mills, Margaret Munsen and Leanne Morrow.

I also mention Elaine McCann, Claudette McNeil, Di Mason, Barbara Masling, Annette Nunn, Catherine Nowlan, Margo Parkman, Francis Patton, Sue Patterson, Karran Rich, Jenny Root, Daphne Schmich, Gwenda Shave, Robyn Serwach, Liz Saunders, Gayl Schmich, Lyn Selwood, Robert Selwood, Margaret Simmons, the great Robyn Sloan, Margo Snare, Trish Sonter, Sharon Semple, Corinne Stringer, Norma Thornberry, Jenny Thornton, Doreen Thurtell, my personal supervisor in the café, Kim Thurtell, Mark Thurtell, Jacob Wright, Rose Wells, Joan White, Tracy Wilkinson, Joy Wilkinson, Suzanne Wotton, Gail Woods, Lyn Weekes, Pat Yates and Evelyn Young. Congratulations to you all.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.36 p.m.]: I commend the member for Orange, who spoke in support of the Orange Hospital Auxiliary. Hospital auxiliaries are a crucial part of any hospital. They not only raise funds, they also cement a community within the hospital. They man the local canteens and provide comfort to patients. It is pleasing to hear about the physiotherapy interaction with the auxiliary because it is important to have a bond between hospital volunteers and clinical or medical staff. The member for Orange has always promoted health services within his electorate and he continues to do so. On many occasions in this House he has been a fine advocate for medical services for his constituents. They are blessed with a great auxiliary and with a great local member.

REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [6.37 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the strong culture of original scientific research at Redeemer Baptist School. For eight consecutive years there has been at least one Redeemer finalist in the prestigious national BHP Billiton Science and Engineering Awards. Six Redeemer students have been honoured with the New South Wales title of Young Scientist of the Year. Nine Redeemer students have won awards, representing Australia overseas at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. In many cases, the students' research has proposed relevant solutions to important issues.

Redeemer's hall of science fame is inspirational. Afework Assefa designed an innovative thermal monitoring device that detects the presence of a child left in a car—neglect that could lead to tragic loss of life and criminal prosecution. Abdul Kassem set a clinical blind trial that compared the nutritional value of microwaved pre-packaged food with other cooking methods. A significant finding from the blood tests of Abdul's subjects implied that microwaving increases the bad to good cholesterol ratio by 7 per cent.

Ellenore Forrester demonstrated that electrical power is available anywhere a temperature differential exists. She proposed development of wearable devices using environmental temperature gradients to produce continuous energy outputs. Chaneg Torres mapped sound levels in classrooms to find optimum seating positions, in particular for hearing impaired students. His isobel contour maps demonstrated that classroom shape, furnishings and structural features all affect the way sound travels. Ian Cannon and Rickystan Savaiko developed a portable device to measure luminance contrast. Their device was used by building consultants to assist with compliance to Australian standards.

Marcus Cannon and Simeon Cannon undertook 3,660 ultrasound examinations to analyse the factors that increase the risk of deep vein thrombosis during long-haul air travel. They discovered that venous blood flow was reduced by almost 40 per cent with immobile, seated subjects. They published their results in a joint scientific paper with researchers from the University of Sydney. In their tertiary studies, this year Redeemer alumni Joel Poyitt and Mursell Cannon have been awarded Dean's medals in the School of Science and School of Education at the University of Western Sydney. Another Redeemer alumnus, Dr Anthony Conn, was a finalist in the 2013 Eureka Science prize. His research revealed dwarf galaxies orbiting Andromeda.

Redeemer's past and present leadership and teachers are to be commended for their dedication to inspiring students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects. I have previously informed the

House about some of Redeemer's ongoing achievements in literacy and humanitarian projects. I understand that Redeemer students this year have purchased and shipped a motorised slasher to the remote Barai Tribe in Papua New Guinea to enable effective maintenance of the village air strip, which is a vital link for healthcare emergencies and educational supplies.

At the end of each year Redeemer showcases the achievements of its students. The night is a fantastic celebration and demonstrates student proficiency in scholarship, humanities and social justice. Student music, choral and dance performances are a feature of the night, and always welcomed by parents, friends and the wider community. It is little wonder that Redeemer Baptist School is held in such high esteem by the whole community and has developed a reputation to deliver a holistic approach to education for our young people—the future leaders of our community. Redeemer Baptist School is committed to a Christian worldview in education and, in terms of science, this has meant following Francis Bacon's dictum that we cannot be "too well studied in the book of God's word or the book of God's works". I commend Redeemer's ongoing inspirational student outcomes in the science key learning area.

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution matter of public importance proceeded with.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Matter of Public Importance

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [6.44 p.m.]: Last year was Australia's hottest on record. We had the hottest January and September. We also had the hottest summer and spring, and the second-warmest winter ever recorded. Climate change makes hot days hotter and heatwaves longer. A recent article in the *Nature Climate Change* journal predicts that El Niño weather events associated with drought, heatwaves and bushfire, will occur twice as often this century. Bushfires across the country, including the Blue Mountains bushfires in October last year, demonstrate how devastating dry hot conditions make bushfires.

Around the world there have been floods, typhoons and cyclones. An article in the November issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* titled "Natural Disasters, Armed Conflict, and Public Health" stated there were three times as many natural disasters in 2000 to 2009 than there were in 1980 to 1989, with climate accounting for nearly 80 per cent of the increase and about 217 million people affected each year since 1990. Since 1850 average temperatures have risen by 0.8 degrees Celsius and each of the last three decades has been warmer at the earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850. There is scientific consensus that the changing climate is caused by human induced greenhouse gas emissions—a view shared by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] and the CSIRO. The joint CSIRO and Australian Bureau of Meteorology paper titled "State of the Climate 2012" reported rising sea levels and the highest concentrations of carbon dioxide in 800,000 years.

Climate change threatens our environment, health, food and economy, and the life of future generations. The draft Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report leaked in April warned that we are running out of time and that the cost to avoid warming above two degrees Celsius is less than trying to adapt. Most members of Parliament believe human-induced climate change is real and poses a major threat, but we have failed to establish the urgent action needed. Climate change is a major challenge. It will require leadership from each level of government in all developed, and many developing, countries. Governments must do all they can to significantly cut emissions. New South Wales should establish a plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The price on carbon emissions should not have been scrapped. It had been in place for more than a year with limited impacts and households received compensation to offset increased costs.

A price on carbon makes low carbon energy more financially viable and competitive, generating green innovation and jobs. Thirty-three countries have some form of carbon pricing. Without a price on carbon it is vital that State and Territory governments take strong action. The New South Wales Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme was one of the first mandatory emissions trading schemes in the world. It began in 2003, but was withdrawn on 1 July 2012 when carbon pricing began. It required big polluters to offset emissions through investment in small-scale mitigation measures such as efficient lighting or shower heads in homes. I share the call of environment groups for reinstatement of the scheme given the price on carbon has now been scrapped.

New South Wales should legislate for a strong 10-year greenhouse gas reduction target with annual goals. We should close the most polluting power plants immediately and plan for the long-term replacement of

coal-fired power with greener renewable power. The State and Federal governments are co-investing in a massive solar energy infrastructure project at Broken Hill and Nyngan, but we must move beyond isolated projects. We must remove red tape and unnecessary regulations that limit investment in and uptake of renewable energy. I share the concerns of environment groups that homes as far as two kilometres away could prevent approval of new wind farms. We need a wind power policy that encourages investment and recognises its minimal impacts compared to coal.

I strongly welcome the New South Wales Renewable Energy Action Plan, but it must set a target for local generation, not just support achieving the national 20 per cent by 2020 target that the Federal Government could remove or weaken. There are no incentives for households to install solar panels since the closure of the Solar Bonus Scheme. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] recommended price is only guaranteed for households already under the Solar Bonus Scheme. New households installing photovoltaic panels must negotiate with retailers for a price on excess solar energy returned to the grid, but some retailers rip off households. Energy efficiency provides enormous potential to cut emissions.

A 2008 McKinsey report suggests Australia could cut its greenhouse emissions by 20 per cent by 2020 from energy efficiency alone, and California's energy consumption has remained virtually static since the mid-1970s due to energy efficiency. We should strengthen energy efficiency targets and introduce ways to encourage more efficient buildings, including retrofitting older buildings and strengthening the Building Sustainability Index for apartments. New appliances should be subject to higher efficiency performance standards. Electricity company budgets should allocate a mandatory minimum for demand management given peak demand drives most infrastructure construction. Combatting global warming is essential to our economy, our way of life and our children's future. This is the critical decade and the sooner we cut emissions, the cheaper the reductions will be. New South Wales, the Premier State, should lead nationally and globally.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.49 p.m.]: I thank the member for Sydney for bringing this matter of public importance to the attention of the House. I was recently appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy. I consider it an honour and a privilege to be part of a Government that is responding to climate change in a common-sense, meaningful and cost-effective way. We are doing that by recognising the value of clean energy to our economy and environment. We are eager for New South Wales to lead our nation in clean energy.

The Government is genuinely committed to clean energy investment in this State. Last year we launched the Renewable Energy Action Plan, which articulates the Government's vision for a secure, affordable and clean energy future for New South Wales. The member for Sydney acknowledged this in his contribution. The plan has three very clear goals: to attract renewable energy investment to New South Wales; to build community support for renewable energy; and to attract and grow renewable energy expertise. It is about projects such as the Moree Solar Farm project. I congratulate the Moree Solar Farm project on reaching a milestone last week with financial close.

This project, like the Nyngan Solar Plant project that I visited last week, is good for the environment and is particularly good for regional New South Wales. Why? Because it brings jobs, local investment and opportunities. The Moree solar project is 56 megawatts and covers 350 hectares. It is a \$164 million plant and, importantly, it will employ 100 workers during construction. The Nyngan solar project, larger still, is 102 megawatts. The New South Wales Government contributed \$64.9 million towards the project. There will be 300 jobs during the peak of its construction and it will produce enough renewable electricity annually to supply 33,000 homes. I was pleased to join the Hon. Kevin Humphries to install the first solar photovoltaic [PV] module on what will be the nation's largest utilities-style solar plant. It was the first of 1.35 million solar panels to be installed.

The contribution of the Nyngan and Moree solar projects cannot be overstated. These developments will create jobs, provide thousands of households with affordable clean renewable energy and inject \$137 million into the local economy. These projects alone demonstrate that this Government is succeeding in creating a landscape that brings regional investment and encourages new energy opportunities. The other aspect, in responding to the issue of climate change, is to reduce energy use. The best use of clean energy is avoiding energy waste. This Government is committed to the New South Wales Energy Savings Scheme and we have in this State the nation's leading white certificate scheme. The Energy Savings Scheme is a credible market-based mechanism that is delivering real energy savings for the New South Wales environment and for our economy.

This scheme, which has recently been strengthened, is one part of the Energy Efficiency Action Plan announced last year. This action plan will result in reduced energy bills and an improved environment. The New

South Wales Government is putting its own house in order. The Government resource efficiency policy, which was recently announced at Clean Energy Week by the Hon. Rob Stokes, has clear and effective policies for water and energy use and waste management, and will result in real environmental improvements. Under the policy we will save \$55 million annually for a \$290 million investment over 10 years. These savings will be generated by common-sense reforms such as improving the efficiency of buildings that the Government builds, buying more fuel-efficient cars and paying more attention to our waste. These savings are good for the environment and the economy.

The policy has clear benchmarks concerning the savings expected from individual departments and it makes it clear that this State is open for jobs, business and growth in the clean energy industry. The scale of Government behaviour changes concerning purchasing decisions can have major impacts. As I stated at the outset, this Government is focused on clean energy and making sure it looks after our environment through a common-sense approach that is meaningful and cost effective.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [6.54 p.m.]: I speak to the matter of public importance on climate change. I congratulate the member for Sydney on bringing this matter to the attention of the House. It is the most pressing environmental challenge that we confront at this time. It is a great shame—and it fills me with shame—that the current Federal Coalition Government has taken Australia backwards with regard to actions to address climate change. Tony Abbott's decision to abolish the price on carbon has made Australia the first country to reverse action on climate change. The Coalition in New South Wales did not raise any objection to that decision. That is a great disappointment.

There is no doubt that the evidence is clear that the earth is warming as a result of human action. It is indisputable—the science is in and it has been in for a long time. Each of the last decades has been warmer than any other in modern time and 13 of the 14 hottest years on record have occurred in the twenty-first century. On average sea levels have risen by 20 centimetres over the past century. We are seeing more extreme weather events and scientists have predicted that we will endure more droughts, bushfires, floods and storms. This will have a devastating effect on our communities.

There are profound economic risks for doing nothing, as Professor Garnaut so eloquently showed in his ground-breaking study. Countries across the world have recognised this. Australia might not, under the Abbott Government, but 39 national and 23 subnational jurisdictions have implemented, or are on track to implement, carbon pricing instruments. I accept that there are other ways to reduce our global footprint and reduce emissions. We can put in place energy efficiency strategies, as Labor did when it was in Government in New South Wales. Economists and scientists are clear that the most efficient and effective way to address carbon pollution and emissions is to put a price on it.

It is extraordinary that the Coalition, which has supported market mechanisms in so many other aspects of our lives, does not support a market mechanism with regard to global and Australian carbon emissions. I am proud of Labor's record in addressing this issue. Labor created the Green Power Scheme in 1997. It was one of the first and most comprehensive voluntary renewable energy accreditation programs in the world. Labor introduced the New South Wales Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme in 2003 and the building sustainability index in 2004; it enacted the Energy Savings Scheme, creating incentives for energy retailers to implement energy efficiency measures; and it introduced the \$150 million energy efficiency strategy. I could go on and on. Only Labor will implement real action to address climate change.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [6.57 p.m.], by leave: New South Wales is one of the most climate change intensive jurisdictions in the world. More than 37 per cent of the State's greenhouse gas emissions come from burning coal and gas to generate electricity. It is time to turn this record around. It is now both possible and affordable to end the State's reliance on fossil fuels. The evidence is clear that clean energy sources such as solar and wind, combined with energy efficiency measures, could take New South Wales off coal and gas within 15 years. If we take up the challenge and work together towards 100 per cent renewable energy we can cut New South Wales' contribution to dangerous climate change.

The benefits of developing clean energy technology stretch well beyond the environment. There are tens of thousands of new jobs waiting to be created in renewable energy, with new industries and opportunities in areas of high unemployment—particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. By switching to renewables we can help rid communities across New South Wales of coal dust and power station waste, and put the brakes on the coal seam gas industry. Now that the technology is ready and the time is right what we need is the political courage to unleash the power of the wind and sun.

The Greens have put forward a 100 per cent renewable energy plan. It is focused on several key areas. First, transition to 100 per cent renewable energy sources would create tens of thousands of jobs in this State. The renewable energy and energy efficiency sector—as small as it is currently—employs approximately 3,500 people. A 2008 report by the Centre of Full Employment and Equity found up to 73,800 direct and indirect jobs could be created if New South Wales transitioned to 100 per cent renewable energy. According to the Clean Energy Council, 28 wind farm developments worth \$12 billion are currently poised for development in New South Wales. Those projects have the potential to create 3,940 jobs. Currently there are only 197 people employed in the wind industry.

The list of jobs from this technology is significant. Not only is this possible, it is affordable and essential. Renewable energy is not too expensive. Shutting down coal-fired power stations and transitioning and supporting workers in that industry will not hurt the economy. Climate change is happening now and we cannot wait around; we need to invest in lower emissions technologies. It is important to acknowledge that transitioning to 100 per cent renewable energy is possible. We should be removing barriers and presenting the development and expansion of renewable energy technologies. We should be facilitating public and private investment in renewable energy. We should reform the energy market to make it ready for renewable energy.

It is also important that we address fossil fuel power and phase it out by 2030 by increasing public investment in renewable energy technology such as solar-thermal power to provide base load power. I draw to the attention of members The Greens' plan and proposed legislation to ensure that New South Wales can move to 100 per cent renewable energy. I encourage the Minister to continue efforts to ensure that we can move this State to a climate-friendly environment of 100 per cent renewable energy production.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [7.00 p.m.], by leave: I thank the member for Sydney for bringing this issue to the attention of the House. It gives me a wonderful opportunity to show my support for a consortium in the electorate of Northern Tablelands between the Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW Trade and Investment, Regional Development Australia—Northern Inland NSW, the University of New England and Adam Blakester's business, Starfish Initiatives. This consortium proposes to work on the economic viability of a zero net energy town in the electorate of Northern Tablelands to provide a blueprint and a business case for the creation of a viable prototype.

As we have heard, a number of factors are coming together that threaten the existing make-up and functioning of the New South Wales electricity supply. Overall energy consumption is decreasing at a time when distributed generation is increasing, capacity for smart grid is increasing and pressures to constrain energy costs are increasing. In combination, these changes are being described as a "Kodak moment" for the incumbent operators, signifying the rapid decline of the competitiveness of their current business model. Distributors, and to a lesser extent generators and retailers, are being offered a stark choice between holding on to the current system and risking irrelevance as big data and technological innovation converge, or remodelling their business to become energy managers for consumers.

By contrast, renewable energies are increasingly competitive, particularly due to their ability to be distributed and situated at or much closer to the point of consumption. It is increasingly being recognised that distributed and on-site renewable energy generation is outcompeting energy provided over the grid in cost as well as the broader economic, social and environmental benefits. For a rural town with a population of around 5,000—of which my electorate has many—some \$20 million to \$40 million is incurred annually in energy costs. The emergence of competitive distributed renewable energy offers an opportunity for regional towns at the end of a gridline, particularly where anticipated increases in peak demand are forcing distributors to prepare for costly infrastructure upgrades.

There are now hundreds of operating energy towns around the world, the most well-recognised examples being in Germany. This presents the consortium in the Northern Tablelands with an opportunity to pursue the innovation of a zero net energy town, or ZNET, to demonstrate the effectiveness and benefits of this model by using existing, commercially proven and available technologies. I wish the consortium all the best. We are currently seeking the support of the New South Wales Government in the formulation of the business case. I will continue to pursue this with the wonderful Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy, Leslie Williams, and the Minister for the Environment, Rob Stokes.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [7.03 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Port Macquarie and the Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy for her contribution to the debate and for the Government's focus on renewable energy, which will result in opportunities for jobs and business growth in New South Wales.

I thank the staff of the Minister for the Environment for meeting with me to discuss this issue. I thank the member for Marrickville for her contribution. I agree with her that this is one of the most pressing challenges that we face today. I thank the member for Balmain for his contribution. I know he is passionate about this issue.

I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for pointing out the importance of local communities taking action on this issue. The City of Sydney also does a great job in thinking locally and acting globally. As the member for Northern Tablelands mentioned, Germany is moving ahead with a switch to renewable energy. I was recently in Germany as my husband comes from Germany. It is wonderful to see what is happening there. New South Wales can learn a lot from that example.

This is the critical decade. We must take effective action now to combat climate change or we will suffer the severe impacts. Tim Flannery, head of the Climate Change Council, stated on the release of the recent "Heatwaves: Hotter, Longer, More Often" report that "... when looking at heatwaves over the last 60 years things are getting worse. In a stable climate that would not be happening." The report finds that recent hot weather in Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra has already reached levels predicted for 2030.

Drought has returned to parts of Australia and the rest of the world is experiencing catastrophic weather, from drought in California to floods in the United Kingdom. The ocean acidification caused by greater concentrations of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere threatens world fish stocks and the bleaching of protected coral reef sites. With climate change impacts being felt already, apathy is waning for many leaders. Recently China and the United States agreed to address climate change, work together on a common platform ahead of the global summit in Paris next year and share post-2020 greenhouse gas mitigation plans. This represents a major step forward in global climate change negotiations and brings real hope for future generations.

Australia's target to reduce emissions by 5 per cent by 2020 is inadequate, yet it is still uncertain how or even whether we will get there. The shift in approach from the United States and China, which collectively represent 40 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, I hope, will charge leaders here into action. Importantly the China-United States agreement will likely create a rapid increase in global demand for green technology and green energy, and New South Wales should be at the forefront of developing and exporting green innovation.

In an op-ed in the *New York Times* on 24 July Julia Baird argued that repeal of the carbon price proves that politicians in Australia "rarely choose to take the lead on tackling climate change" but instead "whip up fear". She refers to an Australian National University study showing a 1 to 2 per cent drop in carbon emissions from power generation due to the carbon price. Why, if it was working, was the price repealed, so leaving Australia with no clear climate policy? The gap in Federal action opens opportunities for State action. This Government must lead on policy and action with support across the Chamber. Human-induced climate change has catastrophic impacts for our economy and way of life but, because it is human induced, we can prevent it. We must act before rapid climate change commences.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 7.06 p.m. until
Thursday 7 August 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**
