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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 7 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.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

The SPEAKER: Order! It being before 11.30 a.m. General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) will now be proceeded with.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEATH REVIEW TEAM

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [10.05 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that, under the Coroners Act, the Domestic Violence Death Review Team is required to meet four times each year with one function—to make recommendations to the Government.
- (2) Notes that delaying the Domestic Violence Death Review Team's meeting by eight months undermines the Government's commitment to curbing domestic violence in New South Wales.
- (3) Calls on the Attorney General and the Minister for Family and Community Services to explain why the Domestic Violence Death Review Team has not met in 2014.
- (4) Calls on the Ministers to demonstrate the Government's commitment and priority to address the issue of domestic violence deaths.

There is no ambiguity in the Coroner's Act: The Domestic Violence Death Review Team [DVDRT] is required to meet four times a year—no ifs, ands or buts about it. It is now August and the team has not met in 2014. Since the retirement of team convener Mary Jerram in December 2013 there have been no meetings and no new convener has been announced. Critically and crucially, no explanation has been offered for this inaction on the part of the Government. In a move that echoes the deafening silence that so often meets the issue of domestic violence in the broader community, this Government has decided to ignore violence against women. This inaction and ignorance, either wilful or neglectful, reflects poorly on the Government's professed commitment to address domestic violence head on. Make no mistake: It is an issue we must address.

Last year the *Sydney Morning Herald* ran an article entitled "Revealed: The women we failed." The statistics contained in it are sobering to say the least. Seventy-five per cent of all women killed in New South Wales die at the hands of their loved ones. Police deal with about 370 incidents of domestic and family violence per day. Studies suggest that less than half of all incidents are reported. Domestic violence is responsible for about two in five of all homicides and assaults in this State. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that 24 women died in New South Wales in the year leading up to September 2013.

What makes the situation more troubling and shows the Government's failure to act in an even harsher light is that while the statistics for other crimes point to a downward trend, domestic violence is on the upswing. That is the case in the Hunter region. The same article made mention of a 2009 study of 10,000 Australians that found that the proportion of people who considered slapping or pushing to be very serious had decreased in the past 14 years. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research Director Don Weatherburn has said:

It's a significant widespread problem that really hasn't shown any of the kinds of improvements we've seen with assault and nothing remotely like the improvements we've seen with robbery and property crime.

These troubling statistics suggest that dramatic action should be taken to address this large and growing problem. In another article Robyn Cotterell-Jones from the Victims of Crime Assistance League was quoted as saying:

It needs to be a regular part of the school curriculum rather than one of those things you go to once or twice a year ... Kids are not learning enough about boundaries, about self-esteem, healthy relationships ...

However, instead of taking positive steps forward this Government has once again let down vulnerable women in the inner city. The few women's-only specialist refuges are facing closure as their funding has been tendered out. Refuges that have been open for decades are now closing en masse. This is happening also throughout New South Wales and the Hunter. What is the Government's answer? The Government has come up with a policy given the Orwellian title of "Going Home Staying Home"—the very name of which portrays the Government's lack of knowledge in this area. Home for many of these women is not a safe place to be. These women are often forced to gather the kids and what few essentials they can get their hands on and flee. Now these women will find their options limited by an uncaring Government.

The membership of the DVDRT has lapsed. The time frame suggested by the reappointment process thus far suggests that a newly appointed team would have difficulty meeting before November. The team would then have less than two months to review 31 separate cases and compile a yearly report. I am sure the team members will be very hardworking and competent but I doubt whether they will be superhuman and able to do that. Clearly, this is not good enough and it fails to live up to the legislative duty the Coroners Act places on the Liberal-Nationals Government. Team member Betty Green has said:

We are unable to do any work and it is distressing. This is such an important mechanism for reviewing domestic violence deaths.

I agree with Betty and I call on the Government to address what police commissioner Andrew Scipione has said is one of the biggest issues modern society has to face—domestic violence. We have to tackle the issue head on and the review team is a crucial part of that.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [10.11 a.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraphs (2) to (4) with a view to inserting instead:

"(2) Notes that expressions of interest for representatives have been advertised.

(3) Notes the Government's commitment to addressing the issue of domestic violence deaths."

Let us be honest: There is no need to politicise an issue such as this. It is abhorrent that anyone would believe that members of Parliament, Ministers and the Domestic Violence Death Review Team [DVDRT] would do anything other than their utmost to help people at risk of domestic violence. No-one is ignoring this issue and I find it offensive that anyone would say that we are ignoring people suffering from domestic violence.

Mr David Elliott: You ignored Sandra Nori when she was a victim of someone on your side.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: No-one wants people to be at risk, especially when they should be able to feel secure and safe in their own homes.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: I take enormous offence at the comment of the member for Baulkham Hills and he should withdraw it.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Taking offence is not a point of order.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: The Government and the Opposition should be coming together and telling people that they should be able to feel secure in their own homes and we should be able to make that happen for them. We should be coming together in a bipartisan way and saying that violence is not acceptable. This Government regards domestic violence as a critical public policy and justice issue in New South Wales. This Government believes every person has the right to live their lives safely and free from violence—obviously that includes whether it be in their homes, their workplace or out on the street. No-one should have to live in fear.

The New South Wales Government is committed to improving the lives of people experiencing domestic and family violence by fostering innovation and collaboration in responding to domestic violence in

New South Wales. I have seen this firsthand in my electorate with the wonderfully supportive Sutherland Shire Family Support Service in Jannali. There are some things we do as members of Parliament that make us especially proud and fulfilled in our roles, and one is supporting that service through a Community Building Partnership grant. The service building now has a second storey to give it the space to undertake its important work in supporting victims of domestic violence—mainly women and children.

The service takes victims through their options and what support is available for them and it helps them rediscover their self-esteem and rebuild their lives. The service does this incredibly important work by working closely with our police at the Sutherland Local Area Command. The service makes the Domestic Violence Pro-Active Support Service [DVPASS] program a success in the shire by supporting women and children and giving them options and a place to which they can turn. Members of the service also support each other in their roles. The member for Wallsend said that the statistics are going up for the reporting of domestic violence. We want people to report domestic violence; we do not want it to be hidden in the home, we want it made public.

What we do not want is domestic violence occurring in the first place and we want to do all we can to stop domestic violence but we want it to be reported and not kept secret by the victims. We should empathise with our police, who have to deal with these situations, and we should work with them and with our supportive community workers, who must feel the toll of helping people in these horrendous situations day after day. In speaking about collaboration between our community groups and the police I note that the New South Wales Government is committed to improving the justice system response to domestic and family violence. It is also committed to improving responses to domestic violence and providing the support that victims need.

The Domestic Violence Death Review Team was established to provide for the investigation of the causes of domestic violence deaths in New South Wales so as to reduce the incidence of domestic violence deaths and to facilitate improvements in systems and services. On 24 March 2014 the current State Coroner, Michael Barnes, was appointed to the position of convener of the Domestic Violence Death Review Team. The previous convener was former State Coroner Mary Jerram, who was appointed as the inaugural convener in February 2011 and remained the convener until the appointment of Mr Barnes. As has been mentioned, the DVDRT must meet no less than four times per year. While the first DVDRT meeting for 2014 obviously will be later than in previous years, it is important to note that it is anticipated that the DVDRT will still be in a position to comply with the four-meeting requirement for 2014.

The DVDRT systematically reviews deaths occurring in the context of domestic violence. The scope of review includes individual case analysis and the maintenance of a comprehensive database from which research data is derived. All but one of the team members' appointments have lapsed. The DVDRT comprises representatives from a range of government and non-government entities including the Department of Family and Community Services, NSW Health, the NSW Police Force, the Department of Education and Communities, the Department of Justice, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Women NSW, Housing NSW, Juvenile Justice NSW, Corrective Services NSW and Aboriginal Affairs. We are currently advertising for expressions of interest for non-government representative positions and the new board members will be announced soon. The DVDRT will meet again once appointments are finalised and, as I mentioned earlier, there is the expectation that it will still comply with the four meetings in 2014.

The work of the DVDRT is supported by a small secretariat which has been progressing the work of the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network in accordance with the Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. The secretariat has negotiated access to the NSW Police Force database and is furthering the development of processes for the conduct of a world-first study into domestic violence related suicide. We should encourage such incredibly important work. The secretariat also is working closely with the NSW Ombudsman and the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is all about information sharing across these agencies. No-one has the answer, but by working together we are able to get closer than we were previously. All members support White Ribbon Day, and as I said at the beginning of my contribution, it is abhorrent that anyone would say we are ignoring this issue. I point out that the Premier recently supported Wesley Mission with a \$500,000 grant.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [10.18 a.m.]: I am gobsmacked to say the least that the Domestic Violence Death Review Team [DVDRT] has not met this year. Not only has it not met; we also just learnt from the member for Menai that members of that team have still not been appointed. One woman a week dies at the hands of a family member. We have a very clear Act in this State, brought in with great fanfare by the Government, for the establishment of the Domestic Violence Death Review Team. We now discover that the

DVDRT not only has not met, despite the fact that it is required to meet four times a year, but also members are not even appointed to it. Please explain to me how that is making this issue a priority when those two situations exist.

It has been said that I am politicising this issue. This is an issue of safety for women. We have a Government that is abrogating its responsibilities by not even following its own legislation relating to what is being described as a national crisis and a national emergency. It is not making the issue of women who are killed at the hands of their own families in domestic violence situations a priority when the very mechanism by which to examine the 31 separate cases not only has not met but also does not have any members appointed to it. I am astounded that that could be the situation. It is highly irresponsible, extremely embarrassing and does not demonstrate that this Government sees this issue as a priority. That is compounded by the fact that we have a tendering process for Going Home Staying Home, which is one of the most misnamed programs I have ever come across, that will exacerbate the situation for women who finally muster the courage and the capacity to get out of dangerous situations to go into generalist services.

That picture is not of my making. It is of the Government's making in relation to the situation of domestic violence. I suspect that if the member for Wallsend had not moved to reorder business and bring debate on this motion forward today, no action would be taking place in this space. I very much suspect that there has been a flurry of action in the responsible Minister's office to enable Government members to have something to say during this debate. I do not really know how the Government can justify this or explain it away. As I said, we have a mechanism in the form of legislation that is crystal clear about the role and responsibility as well as the operations of the Domestic Violence Death Review Team that is not being adhered to by the very Government that created that review. The idea that somehow or other, as a result of the circulation of requests for expressions of interest and appointments being made, the cases will be examined is simply a farce. It should be seen as that. [*Time expired.*]

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.22 a.m.]: I state for the record that I have a great deal of personal admiration for the member for Wallsend. I would not vote for her but I have a great deal of respect and admiration for her. But it is beneath the member for Wallsend and the member for Canterbury to use this motion as a political swing. Since the Opposition is so keen on making a political issue of this motion, I ask the member for Canterbury, in her capacity as the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, to guarantee in this House now that no Labor candidate in New South Wales, who has been endorsed for the next State election, is on the record for defending domestic violence or justifying domestic violence as an act in the home. I want her to stand in this House and guarantee to me that no endorsed Labor candidate has ever justified in writing domestic violence or the act of domestic violence.

Ms Linda Burney: I am not going to respond to that.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: No, she is not, because she cannot guarantee that.

Mrs Barbara Perry: Point of order: That is not the issue. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: It is very relevant.

Mrs Barbara Perry: Can I just make the point that the debate is not about that? The motion is somewhat different and is very specific to the Domestic Violence Death Review Team.

Mr Gareth Ward: To the point of order: Standing Order 129 relates to relevance during Question Time. There is no point of order.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will confine his remarks to the leave of the motion.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I will return to the motion. I now have it recorded in *Hansard* that the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party was given an open invitation to state in this House whether any Labor candidate has ever said anything to defend or justify the act of domestic violence.

Mrs Barbara Perry: Point of order—

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: They did nothing. They took a point of order in an attempt to silence me and they cannot silence me because they have no confidence.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Auburn seeks to take a point of order. The member for Baulkham Hills will resume his seat.

Mrs Barbara Perry: The member for Canterbury said no such thing. I ask the member for Baulkham Hills to withdraw his statement.

Mr Gareth Ward: Oh, come on! It is freedom of speech.

Mrs Barbara Perry: I ask the member for Baulkham Hills to withdraw that remark.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: To the point of order: I never said that. Now every endorsed Labor candidate has a cloud over his or her head. Members opposite know full well that they have grubs in their ranks. They have people who have been endorsed for the next State election and who have form on this issue.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will resume his seat. Does the member for Wallsend wish to take a point of order?

Ms Sonia Hornery: I just have a question for you, Mr Acting-Speaker.

Ms Linda Burney: Do you want to explain yourself?

Mrs Barbara Perry: Go outside and say that.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I have not mentioned any names.

Mrs Barbara Perry: Go out there and say it. If you've got any guts, you go outside and say it.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I have not mentioned any names.

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

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: It is your motion.

Ms Sonia Hornery: I just have a question. I do not believe that any member could respond to a question. It is a debate, not toing and froing, so that question should have been ruled out of order.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: What is your point of order?

Ms Sonia Hornery: My point of order is that it is not appropriate to ask us to respond, in the middle of your speech, and answer questions. It is not a question-and-answer session.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I take that on board.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I will go on making my substantive remarks.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: My point is that this issue is now being politicised because the member who moved the motion attempted to make it a political issue by criticising the Government. Everybody has a right to be safe in their own home and free from violence. Domestic violence contributes more to death, ill health and disability among women under the age of 45 years than any other cause.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Does the member for Canterbury wish to take another point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: I do. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. He suddenly started talking about this.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Standing Order 129 relates to question time.

Mrs Barbara Perry: All right, but the principle of Standing Order 129 can be applied.

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

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [10.26 a.m.]: I make it very clear that it was with great reluctance that I interjected. I usually do not interject, but I found what was being said quite offensive. In this Parliament we are here to debate the issues and to say that we cannot debate the issues is very sad indeed, and this is a very sad day for democracy. Holding government and opposition to account is what it should all be about. I am not just talking about the Government but also the Opposition. I am very saddened by what I have heard. The fact that I intervened and interjected during the speech of the member for Baulkham Hills saddens me even more. I want to say a number of things, the first of which is that I recognise in this House all the work that has been done by many members in their communities and in this Parliament to address domestic violence. I recognise their work and I thank the member for Wallsend for her commitment in bringing this motion forward for debate today.

In particular I recognise the work of our colleague the Hon. Helen Westwood in the upper House who has been instrumental, both prior to being elected to Parliament and subsequently, in raising issues concerning domestic violence. The work done by the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues on domestic violence is incredible. I would say that the consultations and roundtables that have been held, the submissions received and the evidence given are extraordinary, and that incredibly good work will inform legislation and us as legislators. I thank the Hon. Helen Westwood for that. When I was researching for debate on this motion, I came across the fact that the Hon. Helen Westwood is a recipient of the Edna Award, and Helen operates in Bankstown. An article by Adele Horin in June 2006 states:

In the heart of what is considered troubled macho territory, Westwood initiated the area's Reclaim the Night march, and public forums on sexual assault, and opened the town hall to an international conference on violence against women.

My electorate is adjacent to Helen's and has similar demographics. I thank Helen for working with groups such as the Muslim Women's Association in raising awareness and supporting them to do their jobs. I return to the debate. Domestic violence is unacceptable. It is equally unacceptable that there has been a delay in the appointment required to get the Domestic Violence Death Review Team operational this year. It is ludicrous to suggest that proper work will be done in the next few months after the appointment—32 cases are already backlogged in the system—and that we will get the proper work, information, reflective thought and recommendations that are required.

The work of the Domestic Violence Death Review Team is simply outstanding. I have looked at the team's previous annual reports. It has an important purpose in our democracy, which is to feed into policy and legislation and look at systemic issues. In the past couple of months in my local community there have been two high-profile domestic violence issues, one relating to an Ethiopian family and the other a murder-suicide. I thought the work of the Domestic Violence Death Review Team was about preventing domestic violence and working with our communities. That is all I have to say, but I am concerned that we are way behind the eight ball this week.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [10.30 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. In so doing, I draw the attention of members to this issue. It was made public that the Government has failed to appoint a convener in accordance with the provisions of the Coroners Amendment (Domestic Violence Death Review Team) Act 2010 by the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 9 March in an article written by Kirsty Needham under the heading "NSW Domestic Violence Review Team cases build up as wait for convener drags on". The article stated:

The NSW Domestic Violence Review Team has been unable to meet this year, despite cases piling up, because the O'Farrell Government has failed to appoint a convener.

The panel of 15 experts was established under an act of Parliament in 2010.

It was created after concern that 43 per cent of domestic violence deaths were not marked as such in the database used by police.

The Parliament, through the Coroners Amendment (Domestic Violence Death Review Team) Act 2010, sought to ensure that investigations into domestic violence deaths were dealt with in a particular way. The object of the Act, through the constitution of the Domestic Violence Death Review Team, is to provide for the investigation of the causes of domestic violence deaths in New South Wales so as to, first, reduce the incidence of domestic

violence deaths; and, secondly, facilitate improvements in systems and services. The Parliament sought to cause the Executive to look at ways to address a problem that has, for centuries or even since the inception of the human race, plagued societies, particularly in this State, and to utilise the Coroner to achieve that aim.

It is right and proper that the Government be held to account for not appointing a convener. It is the Government's responsibility to take action in accordance with the Act, and it has failed to do so. The Coroner has enormous royal commission powers, but he needs to be resourced. I can indicate to the House that I have received information from a variety of sources, including somebody who has acted as counsel assisting in that jurisdiction and police officers, about the Government's failure to properly resource the Coroner's office for not only domestic violence deaths but all deaths. The Coroner, that age-old office, offers the last vestige of protection and respect for human life and determines as best it can the manner and cause of death of the deceased.

People are dying as a result of domestic violence, and there is a cultural problem here that society has been struggling to address. The Legislature and the Parliament cannot simply address it with laws. The Parliament decided that the appropriate way to respond was through a Domestic Violence Death Review Team, but there has been a failure to move on the part of the Attorney General, his department and others who are responsible for that team. There is no point in the member for Baulkham Hills bleating and accusing the Opposition of supporting domestic violence. This motion is about holding the Government to account for its failure: its failure in the Coroner's office and in the Attorney General's department, and Treasury's failure to get off its tail and make the appropriate appointments to resolve this issue.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [10.34 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Menai, the member for Canterbury, the member for Baulkham Hills, the member for Auburn and the member for Heffron for their contributions to the debate. Opposition members, and I am sure the Independents, will reject outright the Government's amendment to this important motion as it fails to address the fact that the Domestic Violence Death Review Team has not met this year. The Government's amendment deletes paragraph (3) from the motion. That enables members opposite to say, "What a good boy I am" or "What a good girl I am" and to show their commitment to addressing domestic violence. But if the Government is committed to dealing with domestic violence, the question arises: Why has the Domestic Violence Death Review Team not met this year?

The member for Menai said that no-one in government ignores the issue of domestic violence. I ask again: If that is so, why has the Domestic Violence Death Review Team not met this year? The member did not address the fact that statistics show an increase in the reporting of domestic violence. That increase clearly demonstrates that we must address the issue of domestic violence, and address it now. The member for Menai failed to acknowledge in her contribution that the Domestic Violence Death Review Team has not met this year and to explain why that is the case. The member for Canterbury said that in effect the Domestic Violence Death Review Team does not have a committee at the moment, and its failure to meet this year contravenes the Coroners Amendment (Domestic Violence Death Review Team) Act. That is the nub of the issue.

The member for Canterbury rightly questioned the Government's commitment to addressing domestic violence, and asked it to meet its commitment to the Coroner's report. I am not sure whether the member for Baulkham Hills was debating the same motion as the rest of us because he failed to address a single item in the motion; he tried to make it a question-and-answer session instead of a proper, authentic debate. I am disappointed; I thought he would take the matter much more seriously. Importantly, the member for Auburn talked about the Government's accountability. She praised—all Opposition members acknowledge this—Helen Westwood, MLC, who was instrumental in the provocation inquiry and legislation that followed it, and who is committed to and passionate about this cause. She deserves recognition for that. The member for Heffron spoke about legalities, saying that the Government has contravened the Act by failing to appoint a convener and that such an appointment should be made.

Finally, if I have achieved anything by this motion it is to get the Government to pull its socks up and act. That is what the motion is about. If it means the committee reconvenes as soon as possible and starts to address the number of deaths that have arisen as a result of heinous acts of domestic violence, then the Opposition will have achieved something that the Government should have done. I am disappointed and concerned that the Government amendment fails to address the fact that the committee has not met and fails to give this matter the importance it deserves. If the issues of domestic violence and deaths caused by domestic violence were important to the Government, members opposite would have addressed the reasons why the NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team has not met for eight months. That is an unacceptable situation. I ask members to support the motion and to reject the amendment outright.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 43

Mr Anderson	Ms Gibbons	Mr Rohan
Mr Aplin	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Mr Holstein	Mrs Sage
Mr Bassett	Mr Issa	Mr Sidoti
Mr Baumann	Mr Kean	Mrs Skinner
Ms Berejikian	Dr Lee	Mr Smith
Mr Bromhead	Mr Maguire	Mr Souris
Mr Conolly	Mr Marshall	Mr Toole
Mrs Davies	Mr Notley-Smith	Ms Upton
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Elliott	Ms Parker	
Mr Fraser	Mr Patterson	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gee	Mr Perrottet	Mr Ward
Mr George	Mr Provest	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 18

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

Pairs

Mr Ayres	Ms Burton
Mr Baird	Mr Park
Mr Stoner	Mr Robertson

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Question—That the motion as amended be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 49

Mr Anderson	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Roberts
Mr Aplin	Mr Hartcher	Mr Rohan
Mr Barilaro	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Rowell
Mr Bassett	Mr Holstein	Mrs Sage
Mr Baumann	Mr Issa	Mr Sidoti
Ms Berejikian	Mr Kean	Mrs Skinner
Mr Bromhead	Dr Lee	Mr Smith
Mr Conolly	Mr Maguire	Mr Souris
Mrs Davies	Mr Marshall	Mr Spence
Mr Dominello	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Toole
Mr Doyle	Mr O'Dea	Ms Upton
Mr Elliott	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Flowers	Ms Parker	Mrs Williams
Mr Fraser	Mr Patterson	
Mr Gee	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr George	Mr Piccoli	Mr Ward
Ms Gibbons	Mr Provest	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 18

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

Pairs

Mr Ayres	Ms Burton
Mr Baird	Mr Park
Mr Stoner	Mr Robertson

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion as amended agreed to.

HUNTER ROADS FUNDING

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [10.57 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the NRMA is calling on the Government to provide adequate funding of \$3 billion for road infrastructure in the Hunter.
- (2) Notes the expanding population of the Hunter has led to the constant evaluation of infrastructure for modifications to make the network safe.
- (3) Urges the Minister for Roads to commit to road safety in the Hunter and significantly increase funding for infrastructure by funding projects such as the M1 link to Raymond Terrace, stage 5 of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass and upgrades to roads in the Hunter Valley wine areas.

This Government loves to talk about its infrastructure achievements in the Hunter, including ripping up a perfectly good heavy rail line and selling off vital public assets, but all the while insists on leaving crucial infrastructure projects languishing without adequate funding or any recognisable action. The NRMA has called on this Government to commit to allocating some \$3 billion to expand the Hunter's road infrastructure. As the Hunter's population continues to grow, projects such as stage 5 of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass, the M1 link to Raymond Terrace and upgrades to various roads in the Hunter Valley wine region become more and more important.

In 2011 the Coalition was handed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver for the Hunter region. Why then does the Government think the Hunter begins and ends in the Newcastle central business district? Hunter roads are reaching crisis point. After championing this project for many years, I was glad to read the announcement that stage 5 of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass would finally be funded. But that comes on the back of a Federal Government budget that included no spending for the Hunter region. I am worried about the commitments from both the Federal and State Liberal governments and what that means for the Hunter. I have spent much of my time in this Chamber advocating for more Hunter roads funding, which has been a longstanding issue, and I will continue to do so.

Mrs Lorraine Lawrence, a local, contacted my office to complain that her street is "a former goat track that has been paved over" but remains the same width. Mrs Lawrence says that her street is so narrow that with cars parked on both sides you cannot get through and the garbage truck has difficulty navigating it. Frustrated commuters are using this street to escape the traffic snarl that often develops at the intersection of Croudace Street and Newcastle Road each morning and evening. That is because since the Hunter Expressway has been built it has directed more traffic around the Wallsend to Jesmond area of our roads. Cars speed up Mrs Lawrence's street and she stated, "It is very dangerous." The traffic problems have been a safety issue for her and other residents. NRMA President Kyle Loades stated in the *Newcastle Herald*:

It's always been a high priority but when you further add recent completion of the Hunter Expressway and the traffic through areas like Wallsend that it has brought, it is clear that [the by-pass] is needed.

It is gratifying that the Government has finally listened to the people of Wallsend and me, though I question the motivations and commitment of those opposite given that Coalition members from the Hunter voted against funding the inner-city bypass each time I brought it up in a notice of motion. In the Port Stephens area, the inaction on the M1 link to Raymond Terrace is a stark reminder of this Government's flimsy commitment to Hunter infrastructure development. Kate Washington stated, "This is an extremely important piece of local infrastructure." She spoke about the planned dual carriageway extension and stated:

This will make the movement of vehicles easier, more efficient and will greatly benefit the region. With more and more vehicles using Hunter roads, we need action sooner rather than later.

Moving up the valley things only get worse. "The roads in the vineyards area are notorious," says a Cessnock councillor. "They say that even if you're asleep in the car you know when you are in Cessnock because your head starts hitting the roof." He continued:

Councils are in no financial state to fix them, cost shifting and rate pegging have got them struggling just to stay above water. The money raised from the port sale could have pretty much cleared the Hunter's roads backlog, but instead most of it is going back to Sydney.

This gets to the crux of the matter. Despite this Government's repeated insistence to the contrary, those opposite have little interest in acting on behalf of the people of the Hunter and their constituents. Instead, the Premier is more interested in lining the State's coffers and pimping for Sydney vanity projects. The projects I have listed are not as flashy as Newcastle's central business district light rail or bypass but they are increasingly important if Newcastle and the Hunter continue to grow, and they will. Mr Trevor Wilkinson from the *Newcastle Herald* stated:

We need local leadership to strongly put our case to Macquarie Street and realise some of our aspirations, and we want it now, not some time in the future when it is politically advantageous, such as just prior to an election.

I say to Mr Wilkinson, Mrs Lawrence and the motorists and residents of the Hunter, I am here putting your case forward. I say to my Hunter colleagues opposite, stand with me and demand better for our constituents. I call on this Government to follow the NRMA's recommendations and fully commit to adequate road infrastructure in the Hunter.

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland) [11.03 a.m.]: After listening to the member for Wallsend rave on for some time and quote people incorrectly about what is going on in the Hunter, I am delighted to speak on this motion and to correct the record. Maybe she could come for a drive with me through my electorate to see how much roadwork is occurring. She mentioned NRMA President Kyle Loades. I note that when he was commenting on the New South Wales budget he welcomed the Government's funding commitments. He stated:

The injection of new funds into important projects like the Newcastle Inner City Bypass is essential to help relieve congestion in the Newcastle area.

He further stated:

The allocation of funding for planning is an important first step and we're looking forward to construction on these vital projects commencing in the near future.

This Government is investing a record \$5.5 billion to maintain critical road, maritime and freight infrastructure as part of the 2014-15 budget. It is the largest budget allocated to road infrastructure in the State's history. It is the representation that makes the difference. Across the Hunter region we see work being carried out all the time. In my electorate we have record spending for road infrastructure. This Government has committed \$45 million for roundabout upgrades. This is an opportunity to see the major funding boosts that were announced in the last budget come to fruition. Strong investments are being made in infrastructure. This Government is catching up on the former Government's neglect. An allocation of \$280 million was made for the Newcastle Inner City Bypass and that includes \$150 million of funding from Restart NSW.

This project languished in the hands of the former Government for many years. The member for Wallsend was a member of the former Government. She had an opportunity to do something but did nothing. This Government, on the other hand, is determined to transform the Hunter. It is delivering infrastructure across the region and I am pleased to list of some of those projects. The Newcastle Inner City Bypass project will connect to John Hunter Hospital. Work is expected to commence straightaway and it was delightful to have the Premier in the Hunter to announce the new road funding. The 2014-15 budget allocated \$232 million for road infrastructure in the Hunter region, including \$72 million for major upgrades, \$160 million for maintenance and improvements on council managed roads.

It is a completely different story when the truth is told about what this Government is doing for the Hunter region. It is investing \$18 million to complete the construction of stage three of Nelson Bay Road upgrade between Bobs Farm and Anna Bay; and \$12 million for the finalisation of the Hunter Expressway between the Pacific motorway at Seahampton and the New England Highway. The Hunter Expressway is the most magnificent piece of road in my part of the Hunter. Traffic congestion on the New England Highway has been relieved. I have not met anyone who has travelled on that road who is not impressed with what that means for residents in the Hunter and those travelling around the Hunter. This Government has invested \$12.3 million to continue planning the Pennant Street Bridge-Glendale interchange. We hear the member for Wallsend and others in the Hunter talk about the need for the Glendale interchange. This budget has allocated \$12.3 million for that project.

An allocation of \$6.2 million is for the replacement of Aberdeen Bridge over the Hunter River on the New England Highway. This Government has allocated \$4 million to continue planning for the future upgrade of the Tourle Street-Cormorant Road corridor; \$3.5 million to install traffic lights and widen the road at Fairfax Road and The Esplanade at Warners Bay; \$2 million to continue planning for the New England Highway bypass of Scone and removal of the Kelly Street rail level crossing; \$3.35 million for the upgrade of Clarence Town Bridge over the Williams River at Limeburners Creek; and \$1.7 million for the upgrade of the bridge over Glennies Creek and as part of the Bridges for the Bush program.

The Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund has received another \$100 million, which will fund many road projects and redress some of the funding imbalance to the Hunter region that occurred under the former Government. This Government is putting \$15 million towards the construction of the eastbound New England Highway overpass at railway stations, which will complete the outstanding work. I congratulate the Minister for Roads and Freight and Roads and Maritime Services on their focus and attention on reducing bottlenecks and on allocating major funding into infrastructure. The member for Upper Hunter, the member for Port Stephens, the member for Newcastle, the member for Charlestown, the member for Swansea, the member for Lake Macquarie and the member for Wallsend should be celebrating this fantastic injection of funding.

The member for Wallsend spoke about roads in the wine country of the Hunter. I am sure that the member for Cessnock is delighted that Cessnock Council is providing his electorate with \$9 million for Hunter wine region country roads. It is a very different story from what the member for Wallsend has presented, and I could go on and on. For example, \$3 million is being spent on roads in the Greater Taree area and more than \$1 million on the upgrade of Lemon Tree Passage Road by Port Stephens Council. We are getting on with the job of increasing and improving road infrastructure.

I am delighted that Mr Loades, the new President of the NRMA, comes from the Hunter. He is right to congratulate the Government on what it is doing. It is an ongoing commitment and we will see an unprecedented amount of funding. Indeed, this budget contains the unprecedented amount of nearly \$27.5 million for my electorate for maintenance and normal management of road infrastructure. I congratulate the New South Wales Government and the Minister for Roads and Freight. It is a very different story from what we have been told by the member for Wallsend.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.10 a.m.]: I was taken completely by surprise that no other member of the Opposition was prepared to stand up and debate this motion.

Mr Ron Hoenig: I will if you like; if you want me to.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Labor members had their opportunity. It is no good having a big mouth after the horse has bolted. One has to shut the gate beforehand. The member for Heffron had all the time in the world to get to his feet and debate this issue but he preferred to interject from the back bench, which is exactly where he belongs. Members have to front up here, have the courage of their convictions, get to the microphone and start debating. The member for Heffron should be on the front foot. If he is not on the front foot he is on the back foot, a very dangerous place to be.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. Does the member know what motion we are debating?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Hawkesbury is making a preamble to the nub of the motion.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: The mover of the motion has some concerns about road funding in the Hunter and I shall put her mind at rest. I can allay her fears because the Baird Liberal Government has the best interests at heart of not only the people of New South Wales but also the people of the Hunter. In my capacity as the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads, serving under the very responsible Minister for Roads and Freight, Duncan Gay, I am privileged to advise the House once again, that this year New South Wales will receive record roads funding of \$5.5 billion, delivered by the Baird Government. Unfortunately, the roads funding for many areas had been neglected by Labor when in government. Those areas will not be neglected by this Government.

I am delighted to travel around New South Wales to view some of the great success stories, and there is no greater success story in the Hunter, in my opinion, than the Hunter Expressway, which I visited with my good wife a mere two or three weeks ago, to view firsthand that exceptional outcome, commenced under the Howard Liberal Government some years ago and completed by us. That is one of the hallmarks and legacies of our Government; we see these projects through to fruition. We complete projects on time and most times well and truly under budget. I take a moment to digress and speak about the South West Rail Link project that is now \$300 million under budget through the capable management of this Government.

Looking across the board, record funding from the \$5.5 billion has gone into the Hunter area. Areas such as Lemon Tree Passage will receive \$38.5 million of the total \$90 million package for the upgrade of Nelson Bay Road, a very necessary road to encourage tourism and help the economy of the area by transporting people through to Nelson Bay. All in all, I can allay the fears of the mover of the motion and say that the people of the Hunter and their roads are in very good hands under the jurisdiction of the Baird Liberal Government and they will continue to benefit for many years to come.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [11.14 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Maitland and the member for Hawkesbury for their contributions to the debate. Members of the Maitland community and constituents will be really pleased that the member for Maitland is finally contributing to a debate on the Hunter in this House. Her constituents have desperately been waiting for her to speak about Hunter issues and so at least this is a first for her. The member for Maitland asserts that no action was taken on the Newcastle Inner City Bypass by the Labor Government. Perhaps she needs to have her memory refreshed in that the first four stages of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass, apart from the last 20 per cent of stage four, which has recently been completed, were built by the former Labor Government. To suggest that Labor does not have a commitment to the Newcastle Inner City Bypass is incorrect and sadly ill informed.

On that note, I do welcome the commitment to the funding for stage five of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass by the Liberal Government—I think it is excellent—as well as the commitment by the previous Federal Labor Government for the Hunter Expressway, which we are all lauding. It was a Labor-funded project and it has been incredibly successful. It has cut the time for people commuting around the Hunter and I applaud that. The member for Maitland also referred to the Glendale interchange. I agree that \$12 million was allocated by the State Liberal Government in the 2011 budget but that is yet to be spent. There is no new money.

Lake Macquarie City Council has stated publicly that it is running out of money. After the injection of \$12 million by the former Labor Government, more funding is needed from this Government to fund the Glendale interchange. Now that this issue has been raised, I am glad that the member for Maitland will be knocking on the door of the Minister for Roads and Freight stating that funding is needed for the completion of Glendale interchange. Indeed, I will happily knock on the door with her to ensure that we get that money for this important interchange.

As I stated earlier, I welcome any injection of funding for Hunter roads by the State Liberal Government or by a State Labor government. No-one could be critical of that. I commend the President of the NRMA, Kyle Loades, because he lobbies without fear or favour both the Government and Opposition for his projects. He takes those projects publicly on board, he works very hard and he deserves credit for that. He is also very interested in public transport, which is something we need to address. Like me, he has the view that the more people we can get out of cars and onto public transport the better our roads will be in the future. I am sure all members would agree with that view. The member for Hawkesbury—quelle surprise!—did not try to address the motion in the first 3½ minutes of his speech. However, like him, I agree that the Labor-built Hunter Expressway is a very successful project. The member for Maitland invited me on a road trip around the Hunter. I am happy to go on a road trip any time.

Ms Robyn Parker: No, my electorate.

Ms SONIA HORNER: And your electorate. I am pleased to say that I have met 10 of the 11 mayors in the Hunter; I have met them all except one. I have spent some time in Dungog, Gloucester, Maitland and the Upper Hunter and I have yet to get to the Great Lakes.

[Interruption]

Ms SONIA HORNER: I will ignore the interjection by the member for Kiama; I am used to rude interjections from the member for Kiama. He finds himself quite hilarious. I ask the Government to support the motion. It is not controversial. It is good.

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

Motion agreed to.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.20 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution made to New South Wales by those who have sought asylum, refugees and other immigrants, including those on 457 visas.
- (2) Notes that seeking asylum is a human right and asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants should be treated with respect and dignity.
- (3) Notes that the Sydney electorate has one of the highest numbers of recently arrived immigrants and that they have made a significant contribution to the social fabric, multicultural mix and economic activity of Sydney and New South Wales.

Many Australians feel disgraced and disillusioned by our deteriorating treatment of asylum seekers. Australia is the only country in the world to mandate the strict enforcement of detaining asylum seekers. Mandatory detention began in the early 1990s under the Keating Government. It contravenes our obligations under the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. In 1999 the Howard Government extended the time asylum seekers were detained and introduced temporary protection visas. In 2001 the Howard Government introduced the Pacific Solution, which prevented asylum seekers from landing on Christmas Island, sending them to Nauru and Papua New Guinea to be detained without the protection of Australian law.

The Rudd Government abandoned the Pacific Solution and temporary protection visas on coming to power in 2007. In 2011 Australia began swapping new asylum seekers with refugees in Malaysia but this practice was ruled unconstitutional. In 2012 the Gillard Government reintroduced offshore processing and reopened the Nauru and Manus Island detention centres. In 2013 the Rudd Government introduced the Regional Settlement Agreement in which asylum seekers assessed in detention centres offshore, and found to be genuine refugees, were resettled in Papua New Guinea. The Abbott Government's practice of using the Australian Navy to intercept boats and turn them away from Australian waters puts lives at risk and causes immense distress. It also comes at a great cost to the Australian taxpayer.

Recent history has truly been a race to the bottom by the major parties; it is a national disgrace. I was deeply saddened by the death of 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati on Manus Island. Reports indicate he died after being beaten by several detention centre officers and others were seriously injured during two days of riots. The investigations and charges for this violence are the responsibility of the Papua New Guinea police yet there are allegations against police for partaking in it. That situation highlights the tension and distress caused by prolonged detention, offshore processing and resettlement. It also highlights the problems caused by outsourcing our responsibilities to countries with different laws and accountability measures. Those countries do not have the infrastructure and capacity to ensure adequate processing and resettlement.

Following the death of Reza Barati, about 15,000 people attended candlelit vigils at 750 sites across Australia in protest against immigration policies. Candles bring light to dark, symbolising the need to shed light on what happens in offshore detention centres. We should have strong policies and practices to stop people smugglers who exploit asylum seekers and put them at risk but not at the expense of desperate and vulnerable people. Asylum seekers are not always able to apply for passports or exit visas from the country in which they may be attempting to escape persecution, torture or other forms of inhumane treatment. Escaping can put their lives at risk and those of their families.

I am particularly concerned about the many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] asylum seekers. Currently 70 countries punish homosexuality with imprisonment, and five countries and parts of two others have the death penalty. I am particularly concerned that the Australian Government has committed to sending LGBTI asylum seekers to Papua New Guinea, where the penalty for homosexuality is 14 years imprisonment. The number of boat arrivals depends on conditions in countries from which refugees flee. It is estimated that the cost of processing asylum seekers in Australia would be 20 per cent of the cost of processing them offshore. Each asylum seeker processed offshore costs Australia around \$1 million, when infrastructure is taken into account. This money could be better spent on humane solutions such as increasing the capacity of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to process asylum seekers in Indonesia more quickly and with faster resettlement. The majority of asylum seekers who have reached Australia by boat have been found to be legitimate refugees.

Australia has been settling refugees for more than 170 years. My father was a refugee who moved to New Zealand after World War II. I often meet refugees at local citizenship ceremonies. The Sydney electorate has one of the highest numbers of recently arrived immigrants. In fact, 83 per cent of residents in the Sydney electorate were born overseas and almost 90 per cent had one or both parents born overseas. Immigrants have made a significant contribution to the social fabric, diversity and economic activity of the inner city and New South Wales at large. I am proud of this country's multiculturalism; refugees are a big part of that mix. Australia must honour its international obligations and allow people to seek asylum here, they should not be punished for their mode of arrival. All legitimate refugees who seek asylum in Australia should be resettled here. I urge the House to join me in calling on the Federal Government and the Federal Opposition to treat asylum seekers and refugees with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [11.25 a.m.]: I commend the member for Sydney for his motion, which has the full support of this Government. We recognise the enormous contribution made to New South Wales by those who have sought asylum, refugees and other skilled migrants, including those on 457 visas. New South Wales is one of the greatest success stories of multiculturalism anywhere in the world. Much of this success is owed to those who have come to this State as asylum seekers and refugees. People from more than 140 countries have made this State their home. We are all proud Australians from a diverse range of backgrounds. This House welcomes that diversity. This has contributed to our rich and vibrant cultural life. It has become part of who we are and represents one of our State's most important and valuable economic assets.

One in five small businesses—a vital part of the New South Wales economy—are owned by people born overseas. New citizens are helping forge stronger international business links for the advantage of this State. This significant contribution to the social fabric, multicultural mix and economic activity of Sydney and New South Wales is why multiculturalism is so important. The New South Wales Government is working hard to promote multiculturalism, Australian citizenship, cultural diversity, community harmony and unity in one of the most successful multicultural states in the world. Each year, the New South Wales multicultural calendar is filled with events that celebrate the cultural diversity of our State and recognise the achievements of many dedicated individuals who contribute to advancing a society which is bettered by asylum seekers and refugees who have chosen to call Australia home.

I am proud to represent the culturally diverse electorate of Coogee. More than 34 per cent of my constituency were born overseas, 19 per cent were born in non-English speaking countries. This diversity contributes immensely to the fabric of my local community. There is nothing more exciting in my role as a local member than meeting multicultural groups and their leaders, attending events and sharing and connecting with them in the community. I am honoured that I can play a part in building an understanding and appreciation of what multiculturalism means in our society. The New South Wales Government recognises the complex challenges faced by the Australian Government in dealing with asylum seekers, in particular irregular maritime arrivals, and the need for regional and international cooperation to address these challenges.

New South Wales supports the rights of people fleeing to Australia who are refugees as defined in the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees. We also fully support other asylum seekers who face a real risk of violation of their human rights if they are forcibly repatriated. The Government recognises and supports the humane and dignified treatment of asylum seekers as required by international law. Whilst I again acknowledge the complex challenges faced by the Australian Government in dealing with asylum seekers, I was profoundly disturbed by recent reports presented to the Australian Human Rights Commission in its national inquiry into children in immigration detention.

The inquiry has highlighted the significant levels of sickness and mental distress suffered by children in detention on Christmas Island and Nauru. The incidence of mental illness amongst those children is reportedly

30 per cent higher than amongst the general child population in Australia. Research has unequivocally shown that mental distress during early childhood and infancy leads to long-term health and development problems. Asylum seekers, particularly children, must be treated with dignity and respect. These children are likely to be future Australians and we want them to lead happy and productive lives within our communities. The New South Wales Government believes that the claims of all people seeking asylum in Australia should be processed promptly. Where claims for asylum are found to be legitimate those people should be allowed to live in Australia or another country in which their human rights will be protected.

In terms of skilled migration, that is, 457 visa holders, this Government has long been a supporter of bringing skilled migrants to New South Wales. The Hon. Andrew Stoner, Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, has released the Government's strategy for New South Wales business migration and attracting international students, which will work in conjunction with the Commonwealth and New South Wales State migration plan. This strategy is a targeted approach to high-value migration, which is intended to improve the State's productive capabilities. It is designed to build skills, capital and investment in New South Wales, with particular emphasis on delivering these outcomes in regional New South Wales. In addition, the O'Farrell Government introduced the Multicultural Business Advisory Panel to work closely with the Export and Investment Advisory Board to attract key business and build trade and investment relationships, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

The New South Wales Government is promoting community harmony through building understanding and appreciation of our differences because what we have in common transcends race, ethnicity and religion. All members of our community should be treated with dignity and respect. I stress that the Government absolutely supports this motion because we recognise the importance and invaluable contribution of refugees and asylum seekers to the fabric of our coveted multicultural society—our multicultural family—in New South Wales. We must treat those who are fleeing persecution humanely and with dignity and respect, welcome them to this wonderful nation and State and give them a fair go. Multiculturalism strengthens communities and assists in the growth of our economy.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.32 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Sydney. The three paragraphs of the motion highlight clearly the responsibilities of State and Federal government. I acknowledge the comments of the member for Coogee, who spoke passionately about issues concerning asylum seekers and refugees, and I endorse all of the comments made by the member for Sydney. It is clear from the recent Australian Human Rights Commission inquiry that there is a problem in Australia with the way in which asylum seekers and refugees are treated. It is critical that we, as a State government and State Parliament, emphasise that seeking asylum is a human right and that asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants should be treated with respect and dignity.

It is evident from the incidence of mental illness and stress and the lack of a coherent and integrated educational environment for those held in detention, children in particular, that we are not living up to that standard. The Federal Government must step up and meet that standard. I draw the attention of the House to what is one of the clearest demonstrations of the defect in our policies surrounding asylum seekers—that is the death of Reza Berati. I spoke about this matter earlier this year. Reza was a 23-year-old Iranian architect and the eldest of five children from a small farming village who belonged to Iran's Kurdish ethnic minority. The Kurds often face discrimination and inequality in their own country.

When Mr Berati arrived in Australia as an asylum seeker he was transferred to Manus Island under the Australian Government's policy of offshore processing. It was a policy introduced by the former Labor Government but has been made more militaristic and cruel by the Coalition Government through Operation Sovereign Borders. As members know, when riots broke out on Manus Island Mr Berati was murdered. His death was a signal and symbol to us of everything that is wrong with offshore detention in Australia. By agreeing to this motion, we must try to ensure full transparency so that people can understand the system that the Australian Government is supporting.

Members may be aware that in January this year the cost of a visa for a journalist to visit Nauru increased from \$2,000 to \$8,000. It is a system that does not promote openness and transparency; in fact, it promotes concern and, as we saw through the Australian Human Rights Commission's inquiry, it is creating problems. Where there is shadow and darkness, often injustice is perpetrated. We, as members in the Legislative Assembly and citizens of this State, must take every step necessary to support those who are fighting for justice and dignity for asylum seekers and refugees. I conclude by acknowledging the member for Sydney and the Government's support of this motion. I respect and acknowledge that commitment. I also acknowledge the work

of the Refugee Action Coalition, Balmain for Refugees in my electorate, Amnesty International, and the asylum seeker resource centre Welcome to Australia for their work supporting a just and humane approach towards asylum seekers and refugees.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [11.36 a.m.]: I support the motion but in doing so I will ensure that the House knows that we are not going to let the loony left get away with some of the outrageous claims they have made. Now I have seen it all: the member for Sydney is teaming up with his friend from The Greens in Balmain to give advice to the Coalition parties about border protection policies. The first outrageous claim I would like to debunk is about the level of immigration that occurred under the Howard Government. I point out to the member for Sydney that I will refer to the facts, rather than to emotion and hysteria.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that far from falling, net migration is on an upward trend since the Howard Government came to office. From 1996—the Howard Government's first year in office—to 2001 immigration reached a peak of 136,000 immigrants in this country, the highest level in 12 years. The following financial year it stayed at 134,000. The Howard Government's migration record is strong. We know there is an election around the corner because the member for Sydney and his friend the member for Balmain are talking about a Federal issue in the State Parliament. What they are saying, through political posturing, is that they would like to draw people smugglers back into business.

Those members say they are concerned about what is happening in detention centres. My concerns include the unnecessary deaths that are occurring at sea. My concerns are about genuine refugees who have been forced to wait for years for resettlement in UNHCR camps and will now be forced to wait even longer if the member for Sydney and his friend The Greens member for Balmain have their way. I am a champion of multiculturalism. I believe the diversity of the people in this country is its greatest asset. We see multiculturalism in the faces of the people we work with and in the restaurants that line our streets. It makes this country the best country on earth. We need to ensure that tragedies, such as the member for Sydney pointed out, that occur at sea are prevented. We need to have an orderly migration process whereby genuine refugees waiting in UNHCR camps are processed and settled accordingly. We need to prevent tragedies at sea.

All of us were shocked and saddened when SIEV-221, carrying desperate asylum seekers, sank off Christmas Island causing the deaths of 35 adults and 15 children. Regardless of our politics, we were all appalled by that incident. We must prevent people from getting onto boats by enabling them to be processed in an orderly manner through systems and processes so that they do not put their lives at risk. Instead, they should know there is a way for them to seek asylum and find their way to Australia. That is what I support. In supporting this motion, we support multiculturalism. We support the diversity of this country, but we do not support unnecessary deaths at sea brought about by weakening the current policies.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.40 a.m.]: I commend the member for Sydney for moving this motion in the House. Of the tens of thousands of people who have come to New South Wales on various forms of visas, 90 per cent of those seeking refugee status will be found to be genuine refugees and will need State government assistance. This is an important issue for this Parliament because these people, who will need State government services, must be protected while they await the outcome of their applications. It is a basic human right. At the Evian Conference in 1938 the Australian representative, Thomas W. White, said:

As we have no real racial problems, we are not desirous of importing one by encouraging any scheme of large-scale foreign migration.

In 1939 about 5,000 Jews arrived in Australia, the overwhelming majority of whom would have died had they stayed in their home countries. One of them was a six-year-old boy who had heard Adolf Hitler speak and remembers this incident to this day. That young boy, Gustav Nossal, is now one of Australia's greatest citizens and a National Living Treasure. His experience of a kind welcome in the face of official government reluctance to accept refugees is similar to that of most people who arrive in New South Wales. An Iraqi doctor said to me at a citizenship ceremony in Liverpool, "I feel I have been born again." He had escaped persecution and danger, and he will now contribute enormously to the community of south-west Sydney. Never underestimate the essential decency of the Australian people. The fact that the Abbott Government has had to withdraw the ridiculous changes to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act as a result of community pressure is testimony to the Australian belief in the right to a fair go for everybody.

On 30 April 2014 there were 677 children in immigration detention centres and another 156 in immigration residential housing. This is down from a peak of 2,200 in June last year. However, there are still

1,490 children in community detention, of whom about 500 are in New South Wales. There are 1,827 children on bridging visas and nearly 190 children on Nauru. The Australian Medical Association likens keeping these children in detention to child abuse, and 80 per cent of paediatricians, when asked, agree with this. Many recently arrived children end up in south-west Sydney. Lurnea High School in my electorate runs a brilliant refugee support program.

I recommend that every member of Parliament, regardless of their views on the asylum seeker issue, attend the presentation on 11 September by Mark Isaacs, the author of *The Undesirables: Inside Nauru*, on his experience as a worker on Nauru. He will tell us what it was really like. He has bravely published this book under threat of being jailed. The children of refugees need State government services, so this is a State Government issue. I commend the member for Sydney for bringing this matter to the attention of the House.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.44 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Coogee for his contribution to this debate in which he highlighted the economic contribution of asylum seekers and refugees. He pointed out that they are an important addition to Australia's multiculturalism and how New South Wales has benefitted from being home to asylum seekers and refugees. He also raised concerns about children in detention, which is a great concern of mine. The President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Gillian Triggs, said that there is very alarming evidence of mental health issues, including self-harm, in offshore processing centres.

I also thank the member for Balmain for his contribution. He is passionate about this issue. I acknowledge the member's Federal Greens colleague Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, who is a strong advocate for refugees and asylum seekers as she shines a light on treatment within detention centres. I thank the member for Penrith for his contribution to this debate. I know he greatly appreciates and respects multiculturalism in his electorate of Penrith.

Mr Matt Kean: Hornsby.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: The member for Hornsby, sorry.

Mr Gareth Ward: They look so alike!

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: It must be the hair. I thank the member for Hornsby for his contribution. He shares my welcoming of the Federal Government's announcement to scrap the plan to repeal section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for his contribution about the health impacts of Australia's policies on offshore processing. I thank all members who contributed to this debate. It is wonderful to be able to discuss in this House with dignity and respect our treatment of some of the world's most vulnerable people. Often our Federal colleagues fail in this aim. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 2855 called on and postponed on motion by Mr Guy Zangari.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUNDING

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.48 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the former Federal Labor Government on establishing the Building Multicultural Communities Program.
- (2) Condemns the current Federal Government for failing to honour the funding commitment of \$150,000 to Bankstown City Council for the upgrade of Jensen Park.
- (3) Condemns the Minister for Sport for failing to challenge the Federal Government's decision to rescind funding for invaluable local community facilities, such as Jensen Park.

I note that paragraph (3) has been amended. Last year the former Federal Labor Government announced the introduction of the Building Multicultural Communities Program which would provide one-off funding grants. The total funding pool was \$4.55 million. The grants were available to community groups across Australia and came in two different streams.

Mr John Williams: Where is the member for Bankstown?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Murray-Darling. I am moving this motion condemning the current Government and acknowledging the great efforts of the former Labor Government in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation. The first stream of funding catered for the implementation of non-fixed infrastructure and equipment projects, which would include items such as computers, printers, photocopiers, telephones, furniture and sporting equipment. These grants fell within the \$1,000 to \$10,000 price range. The second stream catered for capital works projects and non-fixed infrastructure up to the value of \$150,000, some examples being community halls and meeting rooms that are part of a public building, and radio stations and performance studios.

Upon the announcement of the Building Multicultural Communities Program a large number of community groups and organisations across the nation made applications to secure funding for infrastructure to meet the demands of their local community. Bankstown City Council lodged plans to upgrade Jensen Park and made a stream two application to the value of \$150,000 to cater for people in the Canterbury-Bankstown community. That was, of course, until the Abbott Government came to power and concluded that it needed to "reduce the scope" of the project. That meant that \$4.55 million worth of funding for community groups and organisations across Australia would disappear and our local communities would miss out. Successful funding applicants received correspondence from the newly appointed Abbott Government that advised them:

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

The translation from "government speak" to common English shortly followed, with the successful applicants being advised:

The Department is withdrawing the offer of funding.

We have yet to see the New South Wales Government offer any solace to the community groups that missed out on that much-needed funding to cater for the needs of their communities. Members opposite have instead spoken against condemning the current Federal Government for its actions and acted as though it should be praised for slashing \$4.55 million in funding grants. I have yet to see a single member opposite stand up to their Federal counterparts concerning the axing of the Building Multicultural Communities Program.

The Minister for Sport and Recreation needs to stand up for the sporting community throughout the State and take its fight to the Abbott Government. After all, if the State's sporting communities cannot rely on the Minister for Sport and Recreation to look out for their best interest in times like these what else are they to do? Should they stick their heads in the sand and pretend that nothing is wrong? Members opposite may feel that is a suitable approach but we do not. I notice that the member for Parramatta is shaking his head; I am disappointed. Now he has had a change of heart and is moving his head the opposite way.

Dr Geoff Lee: I have a sore neck. You are misleading the House.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: He says he has a sore neck. Jensen Park plays host to a number of local sporting clubs including the Bankstown District Amateur Football Association, which has regional youth representative teams, and the Bankstown City Lions.

Mr John Williams: Who is the member for Bankstown?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Murray-Darling. He fails to realise that the Fairfield electorate includes parts of the Bankstown local government area. The member for Murray-Darling is misinformed. I think he needs to find a seat somewhere. Jensen Park also plays host to local Premier League men's and women's soccer teams, which compete in the national league. Under the master plan developed by Bankstown City Council, Jensen Park would have received significant attention with the

introduction of the Football Centre of Excellence. The centre would have provided state-of-the-art facilities to train players and engage members of the community to help promote soccer—for the purists, football—and raise its profile in the area.

The centre could have become a new soccer hub for the Canterbury-Bankstown area; however, that is all but a dream now. Given that the grant application was for \$150,000, it would be an impossible task for Bankstown City Council to make up the shortfall. The Jensen Park clubhouse facility, which has not had a significant upgrade since it was built in the 1960s, would have been improved. In order to engage members of the community and get them involved in local sports we need to have the proper facilities. The local council knows that, yet our State and Federal governments appear to have overlooked that fact. It is typical of a government that does not support grassroots sport throughout the State to ignore this massive loss to local communities, who are crying out for new facilities such as the planned upgrades to Jensen Park.

Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves for not standing up to their Federal counterparts regarding this massive loss of funding to communities throughout New South Wales. I am sure a number of members opposite will brush this matter aside as a Federal issue as they have done in the past. However, whenever a member's local community is being directly affected by changes made by the Federal Government it is the member's responsibility to be the voice of their constituency.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [11.55 a.m.]: Shame on the member for Fairfield for moving this motion. Members opposite are adding insult to injury in our multicultural communities by suggesting they ever had any intention to deliver on their false promises to fund local community organisations. It stinks of contempt that a government that had 16 years to do something for our multicultural communities waited until the eve of its political death to announce this funding. The Labor Party reeks of a certain smell—especially during the caretaker period formally entered into on 5 August 2013 after the writ of election was issued—and that is desperation. Boy, does it smell.

Desperate to cling onto its once safe seats in Western Sydney such as Blaxland, McMahon and others and save its hide, Federal Labor contrived a series of false pledges. One was the pledge of investment in the Building Multicultural Communities Program, which Labor knew would never be made good because its government did not have the funding to honour it. That was a cheap tactic and bribe employed by Federal Labor to avoid a third Liberal whitewash in Western Sydney.

Where were members opposite when billions of dollars were being squandered on pink batts and insulation schemes? Why did they not stand up and ask their party to redirect the funds to the communities that they now so passionately claim to care about? People from culturally diverse backgrounds have had enough of Labor's lies, tricks and politics. This Government's success in western and south-western Sydney is proof of that. Members opposite do not seem to realise that they are offending these communities by falsely building up their hopes and then throwing those hopes at the New South Wales Government in a pathetic attempt to gain political mileage.

People are not stupid, and the people of Bankstown are certainly not stupid. They could have told the members opposite that Labor was going to lose the last election. They could have told them that any promise or pork-barrelling by the outbound Rudd team represented false hopes at best and an outright lie to the community at worst. People know that when a government truly wants to fund a project it funds it. When a government truly wants to deliver for the community it does as the Baird Government is doing and flags its intentions nine or more months before an election. To draw up a plan on the back of an envelope hours before a government is tossed out of office to simply try to save the furniture is typical Labor politics, and that is the worst type of politics. It is the type of politics that puts the party before the community and plays on the emotions and aspirations of minorities in the hope of winning them over while never having any intention of delivering on its promises.

That is the politics of those opposite, and shame on them for doing that. Having established the fact that the Rudd Government never had any intention of delivering this program one has to ask: What is the motivation for this motion? Could it be that the member for Fairfield has nothing worth talking about in his own electorate because he is not delivering for his constituents, being rather too busy trying to gain political mileage in the Bankstown area? Unlike Labor, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition does not engage in lip-service with our multicultural communities; we have never had to because our actions speak louder than Labor's empty words—from our Community Inclusion Grants to the Refugee Youth Sports Sponsorship Program.

Jensen Park is the home ground of the Bankstown City Lions and was built in the 1960s as a premier ground for football in the region. The park's facilities include play equipment, a field, a turf cricket pitch and toilets. As are many public recreational facilities, it is deserving of enhancements and upgrades to support its use by many people in the local community. Under this Government, Community Building Partnership funding has increased by \$100,000 to \$400,000 for the electorate of Bankstown as well as for many other electorates with higher levels of social disadvantage, as indicated by employment rates. Under that program, the New South Wales Government granted \$50,000 to the City of Bankstown in the 2013-14 funding round for the installation of new grandstands at Jensen Park. Why did the former Federal Labor Government not fund the Jensen Park upgrade earlier when it had the chance? Why did that Government make a promise so late in the day? Again, it promised something when it knew it did not have funding. The former Federal Labor Government told a blatant lie in a classic pork-barrelling.

This Liberal-Nationals Government has in place a multitude of other programs to assist the future development of sporting facilities like Jensen Park. The Sport and Recreation's grant programs, such as the Participation and Facility Program, support grassroots sport and recreational organisations by assisting with upgrades and the construction of new local sports facilities. I commend the Minister for Sport and Recreation for pushing forward funding under this grant program and other programs, including the NSW Footy Facilities Fund. In this regard, I further commend the member for East Hills for his tireless dedication to his electorate, and for being truthful to his constituents, unlike members opposite.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.02 p.m.]: I am not sure whose speech the member for Smithfield just read, but it sounds like it might have been written by the member for East Hills. I am not sure why the member for East Hills is not in the Chamber to respond to a motion regarding Jensen Park. Apparently he has been in his electorate office for the past two days. I make it very clear that applications for the Building Multicultural Communities Program closed in June—at least three months prior to the election. It was a \$4.5 million program and it is interesting to note that I saw many Liberal members quite supportive of the program. I recall that in April the former Minister for Sport and Recreation, Gabrielle Upton, and the member for East Hills went to Jensen Park for a lovely photo shoot, and to talk about the new Centre for Excellence and all the funding that Jensen Park would receive.

I am delighted that the member for Smithfield spoke about pork-barrelling. One could not have a better example of it than the former Minister for Sport and Recreation and the member for East Hills standing at Jensen Park to announce, essentially, that the park will receive funding of \$150,000—despite the fact that the Abbott Government chose to remove funding and deny Jensen Park, as well as a whole range of organisations, clubs and community groups—and that Jensen Park should have no concerns because the member for East Hills, together with the former Minister committed to replacing that funding. I do not know whether the current Minister for Sport and Recreation is aware of this commitment. They certainly had a lovely photo shoot and made sure it was in the local media. We know that the current Minister has made it very clear that there will be no funding for community suburban sporting grounds. One of his first initiatives when he took over the portfolio of Sport and Recreation was to make it very clear that community sporting grounds such as Jensen Park would not receive funding. At this stage nothing but a lot of hot air is coming from the member for East Hills.

Dr Geoff Lee: He's not even here.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: He is in his electorate office. That is a good point: Where is he? I would like to know where he is. Nobody can tell me where he is.

Mr Gareth Ward: How do you know where he is?

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: A little birdy told me this morning that he has been in his electorate office for the past two days. I think he is a bit burnt out from Parliament. Jensen Park is used by many different sporting groups. It caters for both soccer and cricket, but the focus has been on soccer. Bankstown City Football Club now has 19 teams, five of which are women's teams. The Womens State League is playing its premiership at Jensen Park and the focus has been on promoting soccer for women, particularly from multicultural communities. That is why the grant was so important: It would kickstart some of the upgrades that Jensen Park desperately needs. I think we can all agree that many of our community suburban grounds need funding. [*Time expired.*]

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [12.06 p.m.]: I oppose the motion, but I congratulate the member for Fairfield, the member for Smithfield and the member for Bankstown on speaking about the importance and need

for multicultural sports and recreational parks, including Jensen Park. With that in mind, I bring great news to the House. It is not often we have great news. We have good news on this side of the House but bad news on the other side. It is great to see that in the State budget \$36 million was allocated over four years for the upgrade of Parramatta Park in the capital of Western Sydney. That \$36 million is a record investment and the most significant investment in the park—and what a fantastic park it is.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: Point of order: The member for Parramatta should discuss the motion at hand, which relates to Jensen Park. The motion is very specific. The motion does not relate to Parramatta Park.

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

Dr GEOFF LEE: I see that it is a very touchy issue for the member for Bankstown. She does not want to help the community; she just wants to whinge, complain and moan about things that have not happened in the Bankstown electorate because of her inability to achieve things. I am very proud of this State Government's allocation of \$36 million for Parramatta Park. The park is not only for people in the Parramatta local government area; the park has 1.8 million visitors every year. Parramatta Park is surrounded by Westmead and Parramatta. One can see people playing volleyball and cricket and riding their bikes in the park.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 76. The member for Parramatta is not addressing the motion I moved regarding Jensen Park and the Building Multicultural Communities Program. The member for Parramatta should be drawn back to the leave of the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I draw to the attention of the member for Fairfield that paragraph three of his motion states, "... to rescind funding for invaluable local community facilities ..." I suggest that Parramatta Park is a local facility. The member for Parramatta has the call.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Thank you, Mr Assistant-Speaker. You are truly a wise Assistant-Speaker. I do not blame the Opposition, because it is embarrassing when the Government is doing good things and the Opposition is doing bad things. This Government is representing multicultural communities, supporting sport and supporting recreation. That is what we on the Government side of the House are all about. Parramatta Park is an important area. With \$16 million allocated this year we will build an amphitheatre with the capacity for 15,000 people to attend events such as concerts by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. I notice the presence in the House of the good Minister for Sport and Recreation who cares about recreation and about Parramatta Park. The most wonderful feature of this Government is that we care about our community, which is why the Baird Government wins votes.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: That is right—only about your community.

Dr GEOFF LEE: If the member for Bankstown cares so much about Jensen Park, I challenge her to take a Building Multicultural Communities grant and devote \$150,000 of that to the upgrade of Jensen Park. Let her state for the record her support for community building grants—or is this debate all hot air from the Opposition?

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [12.10 p.m.]: I join my colleague the member for Fairfield in condemning the Abbott Government and the State Minister for Sport and Recreation for failing to honour the funding commitment of \$150,000 to the City of Bankstown to fund a much-needed upgrade of Jensen Park. We know that many councils across New South Wales are cash-strapped. They are struggling to provide essential services such as maintaining roads and other essential infrastructure as well as waste and recycling, and they are struggling to provide funding for community events and community services such as childcare, and activities for seniors and young people. Many councils rely on funding from Federal and State governments to help with funding capital works projects. When the Abbott Government abolished the Building Multicultural Communities Program it put many councils and community projects in jeopardy.

The Building Multicultural Communities Program is a very important program that provided funding for new community infrastructure, equipment and capital works, and promoted social inclusion and enhancement of cultural community spaces. The Building Multicultural Communities Program funding that had been promised to the City of Bankstown was to help the cost of building new grandstand seating and undercover shelter at Jensen Park, which is home to the Bankstown City Lions and is used by teams in the Bankstown District Amateur Football Association. There are plans by the Bankstown District Amateur Football

Association, the Bankstown City Football Club and the City of Bankstown to create a centre of football excellence at Jensen Park, which would help to raise the profile of sport locally. Tony Abbott's cold-hearted withdrawal of funding for the Jensen Park upgrades will slow down those plans or, worse, put those plans in jeopardy.

I condemn the State Minister for Sport and Recreation for doing nothing to stand up to his Liberal Party colleagues and support the community. I will mention other programs from which Tony Abbott has mercilessly taken funding. The Australian Chinese Buddhist Society lost \$150,000 that was to be used to build a new community hall. That funding was wiped and the project is now in jeopardy. The Bonnyrigg Turkish Islamic Cultural Association lost \$132,393 that would have been used to install a roof over the association's courtyard and provide a greater area in which the community could meet in weatherproof facilities. The Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre lost \$160,000, which would have been used to refurbish the centre with function rooms and additional office space as well as provide the centre with an information hub and facilities. The Assyrian Resource Centre lost \$150,000, which would have been used for upgrading the centre.

I could go on, but the question remains: Where is all this money going that has been taken away from community organisations? It is being distributed to Liberal electorates. An example of that is funding of \$300,000 for closed-circuit television [CCTV] cameras that had been promised to Fairfield City Council. Where did that funding go? It went to Liberal-controlled councils. Three weeks after he removed \$300,000 for CCTV from Fairfield City Council Tony Abbott had the hide to show up at Campbelltown and give Campbelltown City Council \$300,000 for CCTV cameras in Campbelltown. That is disgusting. His action was a kick in the head to Fairfield City Council and the multicultural communities in Fairfield. Who is backing up Tony Abbott? It is our State member for Smithfield! He is not standing up for his own electorate. What is he sticking up for? He is commending Tony Abbott and the State Minister for Sport and Recreation for taking away funding from areas represented by Labor members. It is disgusting that the member for Smithfield would do that, thereby condemning his own people to losing funding that has been given to Campbelltown City Council.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member for Cabramatta that if he wishes to attack another member, he should do so by way of a substantive motion under Standing Order 73.

Mr NICK LALICH: Thank you, Mr Assistant-Speaker. I simply say that Tony Abbott has a hide. What he has been doing is disgusting. Government members should be saying to him, "Tony, give the community the money!"

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [12. 14 p.m.]: Mr Assistant-Speaker—

Mr Guy Zangari: He must seek leave.

Mr Gareth Ward: No he must not. We are allowed to have three speakers.

Mr STUART AYRES: I do not believe it: Motions allow for three speakers!

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! That is correct.

Mr STUART AYRES: Mr Assistant-Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to make a contribution to a debate in which apparently I am being condemned. The first point I make not only to Labor members but also, importantly, to members of communities in Fairfield and Bankstown is that this Government continues to fund the Community Building Partnership Program. Any member of the community, regardless of whether that person represents a sporting organisation or a multicultural group, can apply for funding. If a person is a member of a community supported by the member for Fairfield, the member for Bankstown or the member for Auburn and their organisation loses Jensen Park, the first thing that person should do is book an appointment with his or her local member. If it is \$150,000 that person wants for his or her community, that is exactly what the Community Building Partnership Program can deliver. That is exactly what a person can do to obtain funding for local projects.

If a person is not happy with funding from community members and the Community Building Partnership Program, they have no-one else to blame except Labor members opposite. The motion refers to our inability to fund community groups and a number of facilities that are important to communities. I recognise

some of the work done by the member for Parramatta and important investments that are taking place in that space, but that is just one of a whole litany of upgrades. The Bathurst electorate will receive funding for an upgrade of the local pool, which is an important part of that community. The list includes funding for the Richmond Valley, the Fairfield City Council to upgrade athletics facilities, Castle Hill to install a BMX track, the Cobar Shire Council, the Orange Emus Rugby Football Club and the Hurstville City Council.

The Shoalhaven City Council is receiving funding for upgrades for its works and the Merriwa Pony Club is receiving funding. The Government, through the Department of Sport and Recreation, funds literally hundreds and hundreds of community facilities on a yearly basis. The Government also continues to fund programs that specifically target improved participation by multicultural communities. This Government understands, more than any other Government in this State's history, the importance of multiculturalism across our communities. This Government continues to advocate very strongly for multicultural communities and continues to fund multicultural communities so that they can access a number of sporting activities and facilities right across our State.

Mr Guy Zangari: You did not stand up to the Abbott Government, though, did you?

Mr STUART AYRES: This is my favourite aspect of debate. It relates to Federal Government funding. I love how the Labor guys do business. There was never a contract or any agreement whatever for this particular project. Members opposite complain about empty promises, but if there is one thing with which the people of Fairfield, Bankstown and Auburn should be very familiar, it is empty promises. They have heard them time and time again. The member for Fairfield is a special example. He is the only member of this House who gets a new fire station and does not like it. That is how good he is. While this Government continues to provide funding of more than \$16 million for community facilities and active participation, particularly when it comes to multicultural groups, it delivers continuously over and over again for our communities, Labor members opposite continue to deliver nothing because all they have are empty promises.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.18 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions of the member for Smithfield, the member for Parramatta and the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I thank the member for Bankstown and the member for Cabramatta for their contributions. The Minister did not address the part of the motion that condemns the New South Wales Minister for Sport and Recreation for failing to stand up to the Abbott Government. The Minister totally forgot about that. Over the past 18 months we have had a wheel of fortune when it comes to sports Ministers in New South Wales. Let us play *Millionaire Hot Seat*. Which Minister was it at the time? Was it Minister A, Graham Annesley; Minister B, the member for Vaucluse; Minister C, the current Minister for Sport and Recreation; or D, Elvis Presley? Would members opposite like 50:50, phone a friend or Chamber participation?

The contribution of the member for Smithfield showed that he was misinformed about the Building Multicultural Communities Program. He mentioned building multicultural communities and spoke very briefly about Jensen Park. He attacked me for bringing this motion forward, but he failed to acknowledge that I had brought the motion forward in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and the shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation. That is what we do in this Chamber. In terms of the member for Smithfield, I rest my case. The member for Bankstown cemented the motion with her information. She said that 4,000 sports men and women play out of Jensen Park. There are 19 teams, five of which are women's teams. The Bankstown City Lions play out of Jensen Park in the New South Wales premier league for men and women. The member for Bankstown was on the money when she spoke about Jensen Park.

It is a different story for the member for Parramatta. He went on a wild spin; he spoke about Parramatta Park and the Government's \$16 million contribution. That has nothing to do with Jensen Park. He was misinformed, so much so that he did not acknowledge that Jensen Park is in the Auburn electorate. The member for Cabramatta said that Jensen Park is vital infrastructure for the grassroots sporting communities within the Auburn, Fairfield and Bankstown electorates. In his contribution he stayed true to the motion. Basically, whichever Minister it was—Upton, Ayres, Annesley or even Elvis Presley—remained silent on the issue.

Mr Nick Lalich: It was Elvis.

Mr Richard Amery: Thank you very much.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Thank you very much. The Minister was silent on the issue. Members opposite had no fight in them to stand up to the Abbott Government. We love it when members opposite say,

"But Labor didn't stand up to the former Labor Government on this." Yet while they have their mates in Canberra sipping lattes, eating pâté and drinking Dom Perignon they can say, "It's a Federal issue and you shouldn't be talking about it." Guess what? We are talking about it. The fact is that members opposite have neglected sporting communities in New South Wales and they have not stood up to Tony Abbott. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

[*In Division*]

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Before declaring the result of the division, I remind members to take careful note of where they sit. The member for Sydney, the member for Balmain and the member for Lake Macquarie, by agreement of the Whips, have been counted with the noes. I note that the member for Terrigal was also sitting in the wrong spot. Members should take note of where they sit when they come into the House.

Ayes, 20

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

Noes, 55

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

Pairs

Ms Burton	Mr Baird
Ms Hay	Mr Brookes
Mr Park	Mr Edwards
Mr Robertson	Mr Stokes

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

PROFESSOR JAMES BARBER

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [12.36 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the retirement of Professor James Barber as Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer of the University of New England at Armidale.
- (2) Congratulates Professor Barber on his vision, dedication and exceptional leadership, which has seen the university's finances turn around with record expenditure on capital works, infrastructure improvements and remarkable growth in student numbers.
- (3) Wishes Professor Barber and his wife, Mary, health and happiness in their retirement.

It is with great pleasure that I pay tribute to the former University of New England [UNE] Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer [CEO], Professor Jim Barber. Professor Barber announced his retirement from the post of Vice-Chancellor towards the end of January this year. Professor Barber served the University of New England with absolute distinction over his four-year tenure and he can look back on his achievements with pride. As the local member I was sorry—as were many in the community—to learn of his retirement. He has been a huge asset to the university. I am grateful that the University of New England and the wider Northern Tablelands community were able to benefit from his visionary leadership, his experience and his passion for a modern tertiary education system.

The University of New England is in a markedly better position today than it was when Professor Barber took up the position of Vice-Chancellor more than four years ago. Professor Barber can feel proud of his leading role in the turnaround in the university's fortunes. He leaves the university in a healthy financial position, with fast-growing student numbers and millions of dollars being poured into on-campus infrastructure improvements. The university is again the pre-eminent Australian rural university, something we in the Northern Tablelands are keen to celebrate.

I credit Professor Barber with positioning the UNE at the forefront of the online learning revolution in tertiary education. Professor Barber's foresight in this area has seen the UNE pull far ahead of the traditional sandstone universities, which failed to see the potential of online studies and changing trends in student learning. Professor Barber saw that trend early on and positioned the University of New England strongly. He also saw the need to position the university in Western Sydney—a huge growth area for students enrolling in universities. The University of New England now has a strong presence in Parramatta and a growing student base there, not only residential but—importantly—in the online market. I wish Professor Barber and his wife, Mary, all the best for their time in retirement as they return to their home in Melbourne. I wish them happiness in the next phase of their lives.

I acknowledge some other people who played a key role in the turnaround of the university while Professor Barber was at the helm. One of those people is John Watkins, the now former Chancellor of the University of New England and a former Deputy Premier of this State. John recently stood down as Chancellor after nearly two years in the role. In my dealings with John I have found him to be a thoroughly decent man. He has contributed a great deal to the university and shown great passion.

I also acknowledge Professor Annabelle Duncan, Jim Barber's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who has now stepped into the role as Vice-Chancellor. The university and the Armidale community are extremely well served by Professor Duncan, who is passionate not only about tertiary education but also about forging stronger links between the university and the community in which it is based and the broader region. I have already developed a very strong relationship with, and have a huge amount of respect for, Annabelle. I am sure that that will only increase as she grows in her new role.

I acknowledge Dr Geoffrey Fox, who was Deputy Chancellor of the university for many years and is now performing the duties of Acting Chancellor. As a very proud alumnus of the University of New England, Dr Fox is doing a wonderful job leading the University Council. He is a well-known identity in the Armidale community. Again with Annabelle Duncan he is helping to forge even stronger links between the university and the community.

Under Professor Barber's reign as Vice-Chancellor millions of dollars have been put into new infrastructure on site, including the almost completed White College building, where students are already

moving in. The building, a relatively new concept for the university, is not only a new residential campus but also a self-contained campus that caters mainly for international students. Rather than living in a college environment these students are living in self-contained units where they can prepare their own meals and look after themselves. I look forward to the completion of that project.

The new smart farm has helped make huge strides in agricultural research at the University of New England. The recently completed more than \$14 million University of New England Tablelands Clinical School co-located on the site of the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital will dovetail neatly into the university's Rural School of Medicine, headed by Professor Steve Doherty, who is doing an excellent job. I look forward to the official opening of that building. Because of the presence of the university, we have in that facility even greater capacity in our region to train and retain our own medical professionals from the start of their education through to their fifth year.

I have said previously in this House that the redevelopment of Armidale hospital will engage those students as interns right in the heart of the Northern Tablelands. Professor Jim Barber should look back with great pride on his years at the helm of the University of New England. It is indeed a much better place than it was when he took the helm, both in respect of its financial position and its student enrolment. I again acknowledge his passion for tertiary education and his achievements as Vice-Chancellor. I wish him and his lovely wife, Mary, all the very best in their retirement.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [12.43 p.m.]: I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for moving this motion about a great educator. There could be few more challenging jobs than that of a vice-chancellor of a university, and to be a vice-chancellor of an up and coming university like the University of New England has enormous challenges. At this stage it probably has greater challenges than at any time in the history of tertiary education. Professor Barber has achieved what everybody wants out of their career—he has made the world a better place. Education is a great leveller and universities such as the University of New England are absolutely vital to the future of society all over New South Wales, especially rural and regional areas.

As a teacher and an administrator, a vice-chancellor is in the unique position to guide the future of tertiary education in rural New South Wales. Having taught medical students at the University of New England, I assure every person in this place that I have never taught better students. The students can hold their head up high and compete with any medical students anywhere in the world for their skill and commitment, and also their future in rural health not only in New South Wales but also all over Australia. Quite a few students at the university come from rural areas in other States, where they will return. That is why the medical school at the University of New England is probably the most important medical school in Australia for the future of rural health.

The dual threats of the Abbott Government's cut to universities and the fee deregulation will cause universities such as New England University to suffer because they do not have the natural advantage of the sandstone universities in the city. It is not fair to the people of rural New South Wales that universities such as New England University are at threat from the deregulation of fees because universities are the great leveller. The failure of this Government to redevelop Armidale Rural Referral Hospital and to miss funding to enlarge it is a dreadful missed opportunity. As the member for Northern Tablelands said, it now has a magnificent clinical school. How much better would it be had there been not only the clinical school—

Mr Andrew Gee: Point of order: My point of order is that the comments of the member are objectionable and highly irrelevant. The member for Macquarie Fields should return to the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will return to the leave of the motion.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I thought I was talking about the clinical school at the University of New England and the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital, which was referred to by the member for Northern Tablelands only a few minutes ago. It was highly relevant to the debate and remains so. How much better would it have been had the hospital been enlarged to dovetail with the clinical school as was originally planned in the Health and Hospitals Fund No. 4, a Federal fund for which that hospital was not permitted to apply? All members know that is on the public record. The future of the clinical school and the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital could have been ensured had the New South Wales Government permitted the hospital to apply to the

Federal Government for the Health and Hospitals Fund No. 4. It did not happen. It was a missed opportunity. As the Treasurer well knows, under the current Federal health Minister there will not be any future Federal funding for this hospital.

The University of New England has a brilliant footprint around Australia. For example, its office in Parramatta is very good because the more universities in Western Sydney, the more choice, the bigger the market and the greater the opportunity. For that reason the online presence of the University of New England, plus the expansion of its services to Parramatta, is great for every person in New South Wales. This will further continue to increase as education is not only vital for people in New South Wales but also because it is now a major export earner. The brilliant clinical teaching that Professor Barber has encouraged at the University of New England will ensure further expansion of the university and its footprint around the world. Professor Barber had vision, dedication and leadership. In addition, he did not only inspire students; great leaders inspire great teachers, who inspire students to do their best. Professor Barber modelled that with his vision, dedication and leadership. That shows in every lecture and tutorial in every teaching exercise that is undertaken at that university.

I refer not just to Professor Barber's contribution to the university, but also the contribution of the university to Armidale. The university has been Armidale's major badge for more than 50 years and it will continue to be so. The university and Armidale are inextricably linked—if the university is going well, the town is going well. Professor Barber's contribution has not just been to the University of New England; his contribution to the university has assisted Armidale and the Northern Tablelands region. He has left an indelible impression on the people of New South Wales, but especially those in Armidale and the Northern Tablelands. I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [12.50 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands, which notes the retirement of Professor James Barber as Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer of the University of New England in Armidale. I join with the member for Northern Tablelands and the member for Macquarie Fields to congratulate Professor Barber on his vision. His dedication and exceptional leadership has been described by the member for Northern Tablelands. Clearly, Professor Barber's leadership led to notable changes for the future of the university in Armidale and provided a real influence on the students of that regional area. I wish Professor Barber and his wife, Mary, health and happiness in their retirement.

I acknowledge the important role that universities are playing in regional areas. It is no different in Port Macquarie. Whilst we do not have a University of New England, we have a number of universities, including the Charles Sturt University. The Charles Sturt University has made some real differences in our community. Since 2012 it has had a presence in the Port Macquarie electorate, offering tertiary places to regional students so that they can stay in the local community to study. The hope is that they will find employment there and continue to contribute to the local community not only in the profession that they choose but also more broadly.

Tomorrow a major event is happening for the Charles Sturt University: the sod turning of the new university that is being built in Port Macquarie at Lake Innes. I am pleased to participate in this ground breaking ceremony. I will be joined by my Federal colleague Dr David Gillespie and Emeritus Professor Ross Chambers, who is the Head of Campus at Charles Sturt University, and Professor Gary Marchant, who is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic. It will be a momentous and exciting day, and a milestone in the development of Charles Sturt University. Watpac is the successful tenderer that will build stage one of the \$42 million campus.

Tomorrow I will also visit the Port Macquarie Base Hospital to see the completed \$110 million expansion. Watpac Construction Pty Ltd has won the tender for the redevelopment of the Kempsey hospital. These two great regional hospital developments are being overseen by the Baird-Stoner Government. People in my electorate and across regional New South Wales are looking forward to health and hospital facilities being redeveloped and the building of many new facilities.

I congratulate the Charles Sturt University on the wonderful efforts it has made in Port Macquarie. Everyone in the region is looking forward to the sod turning tomorrow, which will begin the staged building project. We are hoping to see it completed in its entirety in 2030. The Charles Sturt University in Port Macquarie and the University of New England in Armidale have provided amazing opportunities for our local regional students. I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for moving this motion. Once again, I wish Professor Barber and his wife, Mary, all the best in their retirement.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [12.53 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their support of my motion. I thank the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Port Macquarie for their contributions to the debate. The member for Macquarie Fields strayed a little bit into raking over old coals. As we all know, one cannot go forwards if one keeps looking in the rear-view mirror. The member for Macquarie Fields seems intent on doing that. However, in the Northern Tablelands we are looking to the future.

The member for Macquarie Fields would be aware and happy to acknowledge that in April this year the great Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, was in Armidale opening the new \$8 million ambulatory care building, complete with a new oncology section. It is a fantastic building. The shadow Minister would acknowledge that building is the future of health care when it comes to outpatient services. At the same time, the Minister for Health made an announcement that \$400,000 would be allocated to the next stage of planning for the redevelopment of the Armidale hospital. That planning work is well underway and will be completed by the end of November.

During the member for Macquarie Field's contribution I think I may have heard a commitment to funding the upgrade of that redevelopment, which the Treasurer took note of as well. I welcome that. I look forward to that commitment being mentioned when the plans are being completed. Although the member for Macquarie Fields may have been—using cricket parlance—rolling the arm over in respect of that issue, I appreciate the sincere comments he made about Professor Barber's enormous contribution to the university and his community. I also acknowledge the contribution of the member for Port Macquarie, who is proud of the Charles Sturt campus in her electorate. She has a good relationship with the staff and students at the campus. She is a tireless advocate for tertiary education and for having a university in her electorate. Today I acknowledge and thank her for her support and contribution.

I again pay tribute to Professor Jim Barber. We were fortunate to have his presence at the university for four years—I am sorry it was not for longer. We are well served to have Annabelle Duncan step up to that role. She is an incredible, passionate and tenacious woman who is a big defender not only of tertiary education but also of the university. She is keen to build the university and to build a relationship with the community. I look forward to partnering with her in the future on this project as well as the University Council, which is being ably led by Dr Geoff Fox. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

FOOD REGULATION SYSTEM

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [12.56 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes with concern obesity rates in New South Wales.
- (2) Condemns the Federal Assistant Minister for Health for removing a vital food nutritional star rating from the public access.
- (3) Calls on the Federal Government to reinstate this information to the public arena.

Friends, colleagues, fellow statesmen, I come not to bury the Minister for Health but, in fact, to praise her. Food nutritional ratings are good public policy, as proposed by the Minister for Health and the health system. The policy was torpedoed by vested interests allied to Senator Nash and the Abbott Government. This is a clear example of good policy torpedoed due to a conflict of interest that should never have occurred. Since the giving of notice of this motion the decision has largely been reversed. Six months ago nobody would have believed that Alastair Furnival would become the pin-up boy for public health. In fact, his and Senator Nash's torpedoing of this star rating gave it publicity that it may not otherwise have received. It has also led to a reintroduction of the star rating system, albeit in a watered down form. However, the public is the winner.

This is the first generation of children who are likely to have shorter life spans than their parents. The major driver is obesity. The latest report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that two-thirds of Australian adults are overweight and 25 per cent of our children are overweight or obese.

Obesity is more prominent in regional areas than urban areas, with 67 per cent of men rated as overweight or obese. This is an issue for New South Wales because the costs of the obesity epidemic are borne by the New South Wales hospital system, which includes the care for diabetes and dialysis. Obesity causes increased morbidity.

This is a vital issue for the New South Wales health system, which is why the New South Wales Minister for Health was correct in pushing for this star rating. I look forward to the Government explaining exactly how proactive the Minister was in ensuring the star rating got up because this is good policy and she deserves to be commended for pushing it. What we would like to know is how she did it. The indirect and direct costs of people being overweight and obese in Australia in 2009-10 was \$37 billion a year, twice the annual State budget for health, so it is a problem. The World Health Organization recognises that the best way of dealing with this problem and the most effective way of preventing obesity is standard front-of-packet nutrition labelling.

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

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

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report: Planning NSW Infrastructure for the Twenty-second Century

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

Pursuant to standing orders debate postponed and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND REGULATION

Report: Report on the Management and Disposal of Waste on Private Lands

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

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.01 p.m.]: Today I speak in the take-note debate on the report of the Committee on Environment and Regulation entitled "Report on the Management and Disposal of Waste on Private Lands", which was tabled with the Clerk on 23 June 2014. Members would be aware of many cases in their own electorates of poor waste management on private lands that generate complaints to councils, health authorities and their electorate offices. They would also be aware of cases of hoarding and squalor which, although small in number, cause distress to both the sufferers and their neighbours, and tend to attract a lot of media attention.

The committee investigated the health and safety risks posed by poor waste management on private lands and whether the current regulatory arrangements are effective. We received 40 submissions including 29 from local government. We held two public hearings and heard from 27 witnesses including local councils, non-government organisations [NGOs], health and business representatives, and members of the community. It became clear to us early on in our inquiry that managing waste on private lands raises some important questions about the rights and responsibilities of landowners. For many people their right to enjoy their own land as they please is sacrosanct, but then so is the right of their neighbours.

Councils reported that they often become the mediators in neighbourhood disputes. We heard that the application of regulations by councils often has the reverse effect, especially where hoarding and squalor indicates that the landowners may not have the mental, physical or financial capacity to manage their land in the way that they or their neighbours wish. The evidence of councils was that the regulations are complex, time consuming, expensive to administer, open to various interpretations and in many cases unable to produce the results they or their ratepayers would like. Eight out of 27 local government submissions to the inquiry raised issues of hoarding and squalor. Although they appear small in number the impact of these issues can be enormous and costly. Councils reported in some cases having to spend \$60,000 in recovery costs to clear a property. These recovery costs can then multiply when councils have to clean up the same property four or five times.

The evidence of the health sector and NGOs was eye-opening. We heard from a psychiatrist, from the RSPCA and from a dedicated group of community workers at Catholic Community Services about harrowing cases of hoarding and squalor. The evidence suggested that people who suffer from the conditions that result in hoarding often react badly to the intervention of councils and other regulators. Far from helping to solve problems, on occasion regulation seems to make things worse, with the sufferers feeling they are being picked on and their rights taken away. The evidence from affected community members confirmed what the NGOs had to say. Again, we heard of some terrible cases where poor waste management had continued for years, affecting people's enjoyment of their homes, their health and even their personal safety but in many cases, regulation had not helped to bring about improvement.

The committee has made a number of important recommendations. Firstly, the committee recommends that the regulations be simplified and guidelines produced to help councils apply the regulations effectively, including allowing councils to recover the costs of regulating where appropriate. The committee also recommended that the current provisions for regulating unsightliness on public lands be extended to private lands. This is a complex and contentious area that will require special care from us all to ensure the right balance is found between rights and responsibilities. We recommended that a new approach be formulated to managing access to Aboriginal lands to ensure the effectiveness of government agencies in working with Aboriginal communities to achieve the best outcomes for all parties concerned when dealing with issues of illegal dumping.

The committee recommended new guidelines for managing derelict buildings and clandestine drug laboratories to ensure that community expectations for health and safety are met. Finally, the committee recognised that hoarding and squalor are significant and complex issues for householders, neighbours, councils, government agencies and other organisations across New South Wales that require a sophisticated and holistic interagency approach with a broader social context rather than a regulatory approach. The committee recommended that a holistic program be developed for managing hoarding and squalor on a statewide basis, including a hotline, triage and support arrangements for sufferers and their neighbours, a toolkit for councils and education for responders, and dedicated funding to ensure these recommendations are implemented.

I thank committee members and staff. I can sincerely say that the deputy chair, Tanya Davies, MP, did an outstanding job. I thank the Hon. Thomas George, MP, and the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, MP, who is present in the Chamber for their outstanding input, and also Jamie Parker, MP. David Hale, inquiry manager, did an exceptional job and I thank him. I thank Elspeth Dyer, research officer, for her wonderful efforts, and Meike Bowyer assistant committee officer. I thank all these people for their intrinsic and thoughtful approach to this complex inquiry and I look forward to the Government's response.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [1.07 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak today in the take-note debate on the report of the Committee on Environment and Regulation entitled "Report on the Management and Disposal of Waste on Private Lands". Firstly, I thank the chair, the member for Camden, for his leadership, guidance and empathetic commitment to the inquiry. What we thought would be a fairly simple and direct path amending a few waste management guidelines and a few policies turned out to be a far more challenging and complex issue. The chair noted that 29 of the 40 submissions that the committee received were from local government, split evenly between Sydney and country councils. Nearly 20 per cent of the councils in this State made a submission.

It is clearly revealing that councils have something to say about waste management and disposal on private lands. We invited a representative group of councils to Parliament House to meet the committee at a roundtable where we could question them together and build on their collective expertise. It was apparent that councils are under a lot of pressure from ratepayers to intervene in the way people behave on private property. The councils we spoke to had many good ideas about how to improve current regulations and how to work more efficiently and affordably. We took many of those ideas on board in our recommendations. I thank those councils for their forthright honesty about the current operating system.

The committee also heard from advocates for civil liberties and property rights to get a balanced view on the rights and responsibilities we all have as private landowners and neighbours. Chapter 2 of the committee's report does not make recommendations; rather it has a philosophical tone. It builds on the council evidence as to what ratepayers want and that of the advocates and citizens about private property ownership. It is about the two-way street: "a man's home is his castle" and "do unto others as you would like them to do unto you" and the appropriate limits of regulation.

I now turn to the evidence on domestic hoarding and squalor. We often read stories about hoarding cases in the media where houses and yards are overflowing with garbage. We see unhappy neighbours,

distressed landowners and council officers with court orders and backhoes loading dump trucks. Almost immediately the hoarding and squalor process begins again. It is a troubling and frustrating experience for those involved and for the local community. Thankfully, there are not many cases of hoarding and squalor, but it is deeply distressing for the families and friends of those who suffer from that condition. It is also distressing for the neighbours who have to put up with the smell, vermin, overflowing drains, and sometimes fires, for long periods. It is also distressing for sufferers who may be mentally, physically or financially unable to manage their properties in the way expected by the broader community and who often do not understand that what they are doing is wrong.

Pleasingly, the committee has recommended a non-regulatory approach to addressing hoarding and squalor. The evidence confirmed that councils and charities do what they can, but relying on a regulatory approach seems to make the matter worse. The chair described the committee's recommendation for dealing with hoarding and squalor as a holistic social response which addresses the cause, not the symptoms. I am proud to have been a member of a committee that has made positive, thoughtful and far-reaching recommendations. I look forward to the time—hopefully not too far away—when the committee's recommendations will make a real difference to the lives of sufferers and their neighbours. I commend the report to the House.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [1.10 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the take-note debate on the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Regulation report titled "Report on the Management and Disposal of Waste on Private Lands". I congratulate Mr Chris Patterson, the chair of the committee, the committee members and committee staff who worked hard to produce this comprehensive report and I look forward to the Government taking the committee's valuable recommendations on board. As the member for Camden and the member for Mulgoa have said, the management of waste on private land is a complex issue for councils because they are usually the front-line defence in dealing with these community concerns. It came as no surprise to us that the bulk of the submissions received in this inquiry were from local councils.

Different people have different perceptions about waste and how we should deal with it. I had a lot of sympathy for the council officer who used the term "beautification police". He said council did not want to be called upon to be the arbiters of what constitutes waste. I am particularly pleased with the committee's recommendation calling for a statewide program to deal with domestic hoarding and squalor. The committee dealt with a range of issues concerning the management and disposal of waste on private land but, for good reason, the issue of hoarding and squalor took up a significant part of our time. This has been a particular problem in many electorates, including mine, and I took a particular interest in this aspect of the inquiry. One of my constituents regularly contacted me about the impact his neighbour's hoarding was having on his life. In that instance things got very bad. Sadly, a fire broke out on the hoarder's property and caused significant damage to my constituent's property. The fire brigade could not gain ready access to the property because of the junk.

Hoarding is a very difficult issue. Very often those who hoard have underlying mental issues. However, it has a very real impact on members of the community who may be sympathetic to the underlying issues that lead to someone hoarding; nonetheless, it has a huge effect on their quality of life. The committee heard evidence about the need for a social approach to dealing with the underlying causes and symptoms of hoarding rather than a purely regulatory approach. I am hopeful that the committee's recommendation will result in a more comprehensive approach being taken to this very difficult issue, including a statewide program of consultation with key stakeholders—the local government sector and agencies such as the RSPCA, Catholic Community Services, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Health, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Housing NSW, and other members of the Hoarding and Squalor Task Force. I commend the report to the House.

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

Report noted.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MOTOR VEHICLE REPAIR INDUSTRY

Report: Motor Vehicle Repair Industry

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.16 p.m.]: As chair of the Select Committee on the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry I speak in the take-note debate on the report of the Select

Committee on the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry, which was tabled with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on 2 July 2014. The motor vehicle repair industry, which is a significant player in the New South Wales economy, employs more than 140,000 people. Around 90 per cent of the industry's work is supplied by motor vehicle insurers and over 60 per cent of the market is controlled by the two largest insurance companies. Motor vehicle insurers wield a great deal of influence in this market and create the environment in which the industry works. Concerns were raised by a number of key stakeholders that these powerful insurance companies may put profit ahead of safety, pressuring repairers to repair to a price and not a standard.

It was in this context that the Select Committee on the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry was established to inquire into the relationship between repairers and insurers in New South Wales with a focus on the safety and quality of repair work, the business practices of insurers and repairers and any impact on consumers. The inquiry generated a great deal of interest. The committee received 77 submissions from insurance companies, peak bodies, members of Parliament, a community legal centre, individual smash repairers, and consumers. We held two public hearings, took evidence from 24 witnesses, and gave individual smash repairer and consumer witnesses the opportunity to appear in camera. In addition, the committee examined vehicle rectification figures supplied by major insurance companies and the Motor Traders Association of New South Wales.

The inquiry revealed that a significant number of vehicles are being returned to New South Wales roads, potentially increasing safety risks to road users, after undergoing poor quality repair jobs. The committee further found that the average consumer has limited ability to assess the quality of any repair work performed on his or her vehicle, and it also found a link between certain insurer and repairer business practices and poor quality repairs. These findings were of great concern, given the potential implications for the safety of people using our roads. To address these concerns the committee made a number of recommendations.

First, the committee recommended increased accountability for motor vehicle loss assessors employed by insurance companies. For example, it recommended the introduction of a licensing system for assessors under the Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] Vehicle Safety Compliance and Certification Scheme, as well as holding relevant qualifications. All licensed motor vehicle assessors will need to review and approve the method of repair for a vehicle as part of the process for authorising a quote and will be required to provide details of structural or safety-related repairs for inclusion on an RMS database, and such vehicles will be subject to random safety and repair quality audits.

Furthermore, such penalties will apply to licensed assessors who breach licensing conditions and regulations. Licences also could be cancelled for breach of licensing conditions following a "three strikes" policy. "Funny time, funny money", has been an issue dogging the industry for ever and a day and one that causes most of the problems concerning accountability and transparency. The committee has recommended that insurance companies be required to use realistic time quoting methods for repairs rather than the notorious "funny time, funny money" method under which fictitious times are quoted for repair work that can lead to the cutting of corners.

Secondly, the committee recommended increased accountability for repairers and increased transparency in the repair process. For example, it recommended that repairers be required to record digital images of repairs undertaken on vehicles that would also be required to be supplied to vehicle owners. It recommended a shop rating system for repair shops to better enable consumers to identify the extent and standard of services provided. In addition, the committee recommended a public "name and shame" register for repairers who breach relevant legislation.

The committee was concerned to increase the transparency of insurance companies in their dealings with consumers. In particular, the committee was concerned by claims that some customers were being denied their choice of repairer and steered to insurer-preferred repairers to drive down insurer costs. Therefore, the committee recommended penalties for practices that prevent a customer exercising his or her choice of repairer—under an insurance policy that provides for that right—and greater disclosure obligations for insurers regarding choice of repairer before a consumer enters into or renews an insurance policy.

Finally, the committee recognised that it was important to better balance the power relationship between motor vehicle repairers and the insurers who supply them with work. Therefore, it recommended allowing repairers to approach the Small Business Commissioner for assistance in negotiating contract terms with insurers and it made a series of recommendations to increase the enforceability and effectiveness of the Motor Vehicle Insurance and Repair Industry Code of Conduct. I thank everyone who participated in the inquiry

into these important issues. I also thank my committee colleagues Mr Ray Williams, Mr Brian Doyle, Mr Greg Piper and Ms Tania Mihailuk for their dedication throughout the inquiry process and their bipartisan support to find solutions in dealing with this issue.

I also recognise the exceptional work of the committee secretariat on such a complex and contentious issue and acknowledge the meticulous work performed by each and every one of them. Their contribution to this report has been nothing less than exceptional. I believe the recommendations contained in the committee's report are an essential step towards improving the operation of the motor vehicle repair industry in New South Wales, and the safety of the State's roads. I am confident that the recommendations will help to increase the accountability of motor vehicle loss assessors, repairers and insurers and establish a better balance in the relationship between insurers and repairers. These recommendations will provide the Government with a clear framework to implement thorough and effective change. I look forward to the Government's response.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.22 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition I contribute to the take-note debate on the report of the Select Committee on the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry entitled "Motor Vehicle Repair Industry." I take this opportunity to acknowledge my fellow committee members: the chairman and member for Monaro Mr John Barilaro; Mr Ray Williams the member for Hawkesbury; Mr Bryan Doyle the member for Campbelltown; and Mr Greg Piper the member for Lake Macquarie. In particular I take this opportunity to thank the hardworking committee staff and research officers: Stephanie Hesford, Elaine Schofield, Elspeth Dyer and Sasha Shevtsova. Committee staff undoubtedly put in countless hours reviewing submissions and preparing reports and their efforts and professionalism deserve recognition and commendation.

The committee was formed in 2013 to inquire into and report on the motor vehicle repair industry. The committee received a total of 77 submissions from individuals and stakeholders from within the industry, including major insurance companies in the marketplace. I take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders and individuals who participated in the inquiry. As the shadow Minister for Fair Trading I was delighted to participate in this inquiry, especially after the New South Wales Government listened to the New South Wales Opposition and the industry's loud call for a full-scale inquiry into the motor vehicle repair industry.

The need for this committee arose after the New South Wales Opposition highlighted significant flaws and injustices in the Motor Dealers and Repairers Bill, introduced by the former Minister for Fair Trading, Mr Anthony Roberts. The bill attempted to combine aspects of the Motor Dealers Act and Motor Repairers Act into one Act. The New South Wales Opposition and crossbench members highlighted the fact that the bill did not protect the interests of smash repairers in respect of their relationship with large insurance companies. As the bill was constructed there was significant potential for unjust conduct and unfair contractual terms in the dealings between insurers and repairers, with the balance favouring the insurer. Furthermore, The New South Wales Opposition was concerned that the bill did not contain provisions that would assist consumers who had suffered from poor quality repairs.

At the time, the New South Wales Opposition proposed a series of 39 amendments that were rejected by the Government in both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. These amendments proposed to insert: a more thorough definition of "repair work" with reference to vehicle damage assessment, within the scope of the meaning; the provision of a "name and shame" register of dealers or repairers who breach their obligations; reporting obligations of incomplete or defective repair work; the provision of rectification orders or compensation for defective repair work; and the provision for access to the Small Business Commissioner to help resolve disputes regarding an unfair term of a repairer's contract or unjust conduct by an insurer.

I am delighted to report to this House that these issues were considered in detail by the committee and supported in several recommendations. In total, the committee made 21 recommendations and 12 findings. I note that the first recommendation supported the proposed Labor amendments regarding access to the Small Business Commissioner. The committee heard evidence from several stakeholders that indicated a number of concerns regarding trends in the poor quality of repair work to motor vehicles in New South Wales and potential safety issues that could arise from repairs that are not completed adequately. The committee noted:

Serious quality and safety issues can occur when vehicles are inadequately repaired, or when the repairs conducted on a vehicle are of a poor quality.

Recommendation 13 supported Labor's idea for a "name and shame" register, stating that a public register should be established by the New South Wales Office of Fair Trading. Further, the committee stated:

The register may also improve repair quality as repairers would wish to avoid being named and shamed on it.

I note that recommendations 5 to 9 regarding licensing of assessors will help to alleviate the concerns of smash repairers. That issue was highlighted by the New South Wales Opposition during the second reading debate. Overall, the findings and recommendations of the committee will increase the accountability of motor vehicle assessors and repairers leading to a better balance between the interests of insurers and repairers.

The New South Wales Government has until 2 January 2015 to formally respond to the report. I strongly urge the Government to consider the many issues that were investigated by the committee and to fully implement the recommendations to ensure that consumers, motor dealers and smash repairers are afforded the much-needed and essential protections—originally called upon by the New South Wales Opposition—to ensure a fairer and more open and transparent motor vehicle industry.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.26 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak briefly in the take-note debate on the report of the Select Committee on the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry entitled "Motor Vehicle Repair Industry." As someone who is qualified with two tradesman certificates and who has been involved in the motor vehicle industry for a large part of my life, I understand the importance of ensuring that damaged motor vehicles are repaired to pre-accident condition prior to being returned to our roads. This is and must always be the fundamental objective of all industry stakeholders involved in the repair of motor vehicles. Only an appropriately repaired motor vehicle can ensure the safety of its occupants if the same vehicle is unfortunately involved in another accident. If the structural composition of a motor vehicle is not appropriately repaired it poses a significant threat to the occupants of that vehicle and to other vehicles.

This select committee was established at the request of James McCall, a chief executive officer of the Motor Traders Association [MTA], to former Premier Barry O'Farrell. The select committee was established because the MTA had become aware that many vehicles brought to it by motorists to be reinspected following an accident had not been appropriately repaired. Upon inspection by the MTA, significant structural damage was apparent that might jeopardise the lives of those driving the vehicles in the event of another accident. The terms of reference of this committee refer predominantly to the safety of motor vehicles that have been repaired and returned to New South Wales roads; consumer choice; consumer protection and consumer knowledge in respect of contracts and repairs under insurance policies; and the business practices of insurance companies and repairers.

The report noted that approximately 90 per cent of motor vehicle repair work is supplied by motor vehicle insurers, giving insurance companies a powerful influence in the market. The fact that the two largest players in the motor vehicle insurance market, namely NRMA IAG and Suncorp, now control over 70 per cent of the market serves to further concentrate this power. Together these two insurance companies have manipulated repairers through price constraint that diminishes the viability of their businesses. In order to compete, the repairer businesses cut corners to save money and subsequently repairs are below standard. The inquiry heard from many customers, repairers and insurance companies. Overall, the committee found that a significant number of vehicles are subject to poor-quality repair work as a result of these manipulative insurance practices, which are in breach of the current mandatory code of conduct.

Poor-quality repairs to motor vehicles potentially increase the safety risks for road users. By the two major insurance companies' own admission to the inquiry, 2,000 vehicles per year require rectification to vehicles that had been repaired previously. However, following a motion I moved to request NRMA IAG and Suncorp to provide the committee with a full list of all rectifications, the actual figures are many times that number in any given year. To address these concerns the committee has made several recommendations to increase the accountability of motor vehicle loss assessors and repairers; to better balance the power relationship between insurance companies and repairers; to increase the transparency of the repair process for consumers; to increase the transparency of insurer practices for consumers; and to increase the enforceability and effectiveness of the Motor Vehicle Insurance and Repair Industry Code of Conduct.

Importantly, the committee has strongly recommended the licensing of all motor vehicle assessors under the Roads and Maritime Services Vehicle Safety Compliance and Certification Scheme [VSCCS] and legislated within the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act. Under this scheme all licensed motor vehicle assessors and repairers will be required to provide all details of structural or safety-related repairs and assessments to Roads and Maritime Services for inclusion in a database, and for such vehicles to be subject to random audits to assess repair quality and safety. The VSCCS is a product of this Government. It was implemented by the current Minister for Roads and Freight over the past three years.

These assessors are highly qualified and now inspect and certify all imported vehicles and modified vehicles to ascertain their roadworthy status. If a vehicle that has been inspected is not roadworthy, it is not

eligible to be registered in New South Wales. This is the standard that must be applied to all vehicles currently being repaired in New South Wales and returned to New South Wales roads, to ensure they are safe on behalf of the families of New South Wales who are driving them. I commend the committee's report and the work of the Committee and the secretariat. I thank them for their diligence in inquiring into this issue. This matter is important for the safety of all drivers of vehicles on the State's roads.

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

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery Superintendent Robert Chritchlow, Commander of the Hills Local Area Command, who is a guest of the member for Baulkham Hills and the member for Castle Hill. I welcome members of the Institute of Public Administration Young Professionals Group, who are guests of the Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations, on behalf of the Premier. I welcome Councillor Ken Keith, the Mayor of Parkes, who is a guest of the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, Minister for the Arts and member for Dubbo. I also welcome Councillor Conrad Bolton, Mayor of Narrabri Shire, who is a guest of the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, Minister for Western NSW and member for Barwon. Finally, I welcome to the gallery members of the Gerringong Rotary Club and residents of The Arbour at Berry, who are guests of the member for Kiama.

MALAYSIA AIRLINES FLIGHT MH17 NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

The SPEAKER: Members will be aware that today marks a national day of mourning for the victims of the MH17 tragedy. On Thursday 17 July Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was tragically shot down, killing the 283 passengers and 15 crew on board. Thirty-eight Australian citizens and residents were amongst those on board. We particularly remember the six lives lost from New South Wales: Sydney-based preschool teacher Gabriele Lauschet; 29-year-old Victor Oreshkin from Lidcombe; former Albion Park schoolteachers Michael and Carol Clancy; 25-year-old fitness instructor Jack O'Brien from Carlingford; and Sister Philomene Tiernan, who was a teacher at Kincoppal-Rose Bay School for more than 30 years.

The Presiding Officers have requested that the flags at Parliament House be flown at half-mast today to mark this national day of mourning. The Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have today joined the families of the victims from around the country for a multifaith service at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne. The sense of grief and loss felt by the families and friends of the victims is undoubtedly unbearable, but today we stand with them in remembering.

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

PETITIONS PROCEDURE

The SPEAKER: I draw members' attention to the standing orders that set out the rules for petitions. In recent weeks a number of petitions have been received that breach the standing orders on the permitted content and form of petitions. Standing orders 120 to 122 envisage that citizens will generate petitions for the purpose of respectfully bringing a concern or grievance to the notice of the House. The lodging of a petition is a formal proceeding, leading in some cases to a mandatory ministerial response or a debate in the House.

There have long been distinct rules governing the form and content of these documents. For example, a petition must not contain irrelevant statements, and there is a clear intent that members, who have ample opportunity to raise matters in the House, should not themselves be petitioners about general matters. Also, petitions that include headings that refer to individual members, or which contain photographs of a member or similar information judged as "additional" to the subject of the petition are unlikely to conform to the rules of the House. In fact, I inform members that many of those petitions have been rejected.

Members are free to circulate petitions of all types in their electorates that can be forwarded directly to Ministers, but if they are out of order they will not be able to be tabled in the House. Petitioning the Parliament is an ancient and important part of parliamentary proceedings as an expression of public views. However, some aspects of the rules require modernisation and the standing orders may well be reviewed by the Standing Orders and Procedures Committee in the near future.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from the Administrator:

M J BEAZLEY
Administrator

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 6 August 2014

The Honourable Margaret Beazley, AO, Administrator of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, Professor the Honourable Dame Marie Bashir, AD, CVO, being absent from the State, and the Lieutenant-Governor being unavailable, she has assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr ANDREW STONER: I advise members that I will answer questions today in the absence of the Premier.

JEWISH STUDENTS RACIAL VILIFICATION

Ministerial Statement

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Small Business, and Minister for the North Coast) [2.21 p.m.]: I condemn the deeply disturbing and regretful incident that took place yesterday only a few kilometres from this place. I am advised that a group of Jewish students who were on their way home from school yesterday afternoon were subject to a vulgar racist attack on a bus in Sydney's eastern suburbs. No-one, least of all children, should ever be subject to racial taunts or vilification. That type of behaviour has no place in Australia. It is abhorrent and repugnant.

Our nation and our State have an enviable history of immigration and integration. In fact, around 28 per cent of Australia's population was born overseas. Sydney is one of the world's great multicultural cities. Although conflict sadly rages in many other nations around the world, in New South Wales and Australia discussion of those conflicts has been conducted within the bounds of well-established and respected civil norms. With tensions heightened across the world, it is now more important than ever that we remember the things that bind us together as Australians are far greater than those that divide us.

In relation to yesterday's incident, I can advise the House that New South Wales police moved quickly to apprehend those responsible and that investigations continue. Whatever the motive of the individuals involved, sadly, the legacy of their short but cruel ride through the suburbs of Sydney will no doubt haunt those young children and their families for a long time to come. As parents, we all want to protect our children and our hearts break when we see children exposed to the darker side of mankind. Incidents such as these are mercifully rare and those responsible will face the full force of the law. I am sure that I speak on behalf of all present in the Chamber and the galleries—members and members of the public—when I offer our prayers and support to the children involved, their families and their schools.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [2.23 p.m.]: On behalf of members on this side of the House, I join the Deputy Premier in expressing our disgust at the most unfortunate incident that occurred yesterday involving schoolchildren on a bus. I understand that alcohol was involved, but that is not an excuse. We all know that children are not born racist; however, this incident displays the ugliness and the unacceptability of racism. Everyone is horrified at the incident that took place in the eastern suburbs yesterday. This is not about who is right or wrong in the conflict between Israel and Palestine; it is about the actions of one group of young people against children who were simply travelling home from school.

As the Deputy Premier said, these sorts of incidents—particularly when they happen to ones so young—stay with children. The memory of this incident will remain with those children for the rest of their lives—and I understand that there were children on the bus as young as five years old. No person in our society, whoever they are, should be targeted on account of their colour, race or religion. We can be justifiably proud in Australia that we have very clear rules and laws that protect Australian people who could be subject to these sorts of incidents. Australia is one country that has those protections. The outrage is even worse when the people targeted are young children on their way home from school. Labor members understand the distress and fear

that would have been instilled in those children and their families. Only this week—on Tuesday—an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* referred to some very serious research into the effects of racism, particularly on people at a young age, and the outcome for schoolchildren.

I understand that the New South Wales police are investigating the incident, and the Premier has updated the House on that investigation. It is vital that the perpetrators are brought to account. The Australia we know and love is the finest example of multiculturalism in the world, and we all want to protect and uphold that standard. These sorts of incidents underscore the importance of multiculturalism and respect to this country. That people of all cultures, races and religions live side by side in harmony and peace is indicative of the true Australian culture. What happened yesterday on that bus is something we do not want to see again in this country. Racism—no matter who it is against, no matter who perpetrates it and no matter what the circumstances are—is never, ever acceptable. As a community, we must come together to condemn incidents such as this. It was vulgar, beyond the pale and has no place in New South Wales.

I know that the Minister for Transport is taking this matter very seriously, but I am advised that the bus service involved previously had an arrangement in place whereby there were two permanent and dedicated drivers. As the member for Maroubra has requested previously, we ask that that arrangement be reinstated. With respect, I know that the Government will consider the issue carefully. I join the Deputy Premier in condemning this assault—which is the only way it can be described.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.28 p.m.]

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party. How can she expect the people of New South Wales to have any faith in the Government to clean up its act, given revelations at the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] that the donations scandal may reach all the way to the top of the Liberal Party?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Canterbury for the question and refer her to the comments made by the Premier earlier this week as well as to other comments he made on a number of occasions. Of course these matters are being treated with the seriousness they deserve, and we will let ICAC take its full course.

REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY

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

The Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for lovely Lismore for a very good question. This Government understands that Australia, particularly New South Wales, is a land of drought and flooding rains. It behoves governments to take notice of climatic patterns in our State, particularly in regional areas of New South Wales. During the millennium drought I visited many regional communities across western New South Wales as well as northern and southern areas of the State that all were impacted by one of the worst droughts on record. I visited communities that had not just virtually run out but had actually run out of water. For example, at Nimmitabel, matters became very serious indeed, as they did at Goulburn and Bundarra and similar communities, because there had not been sufficient investment in water security infrastructure during the good years to provide for the bad years.

Mr Nathan Rees: It is called drought.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The former Premier interjects. He sat back and did not invest in regional areas of New South Wales to assist with future droughts.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toongabbie will come to order. I call the member for Toongabbie to order for the first time. He will cease making loud interjections.

Mr ANDREW STONER: He is always interjecting. If he continues to interject, I will keep reminding him of his and his party's woeful record when it comes to regional areas of New South Wales, if not the entire State.

Ms Linda Burney: What about your record?

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Opposition wants to hear about our record. We have introduced a new program, Water Security for Regions, which is what our record is.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Toongabbie to order for the second time. He will cease making particularly loud interjections.

Mr ANDREW STONER: So far \$21 million has been invested in water security infrastructure programs in places such as Bourke, Nyngan, Nimmitabel and Wilcannia.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Today I announce an additional \$17 million for 10 new projects.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: He must have been at the bar again.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: One would think that Opposition members would be interested in regional communities that are the recipients of investment—

The SPEAKER: I would have thought so too.

Mr ANDREW STONER: —particularly investment that is incredibly important for their quality of life and their continuing prosperity, especially with the mayor of Parkes being present in the Public Gallery today. I welcome Ken Keith. I understand from the member for Barwon that the Walgett Shire Council is watching these proceedings online. If Labor Opposition members wish to make fools of themselves on the internet, they should keep going. Today I announce an additional \$17 million for 10 new projects in Glen Innes, Quirindi, Narromine, Walgett and Parkes. I also announce today that we are opening a new round of funding for Water Security for Regions worth \$80 million. The Government has a terrific list of water projects it is funding. We are proud to provide that funding because it will make a real difference in country communities that are adversely affected by drought.

Mr Clayton Barr: What are they?

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Cessnock really wants to know, he should listen and cease interjecting.

Mr ANDREW STONER: What are they? In the Brewarrina shire, \$650,000 has been allocated for the Angledool bore construction. In the Glen Innes shire, \$970,000 has been allocated to a Glen Innes off-stream storage. It will please the member for Upper Hunter to know that this Government has allocated \$380,000 for a Wallabadah bore and pipeline and \$4,825,000 has been allocated for a Willow Tree pipeline from Quirindi and Reservoir. The Narromine Shire Council will receive \$1,980,000 for Narromine and Trangie additional bores. The Parkes Shire Council has been allocated \$2,160,000 for an upgrade of the Lachlan River intake and refurbishment of Bore 8.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Indeed I have additional information to provide to the House. In the Tumbarumba shire, which I know the member for Albury is very interested in, \$500,000 has been allocated for the connection of two bores that were installed in the last drought. In the Walgett shire, \$3,587,000 has been allocated to raise the weir with the fish hatchery and \$301,500 has been allocated for the Grawin bore and tanks. In the Warren shire, which is a terrifically productive region of our State in the Dubbo electorate, \$1,353,000 has been allocated for the Warren, Collie and Nevertire bores. I also announce today extension of the program to additional local government areas that will be able to apply for funds. The Government will extend the program from 24 local government areas to 60 local government areas that will be eligible to apply

for Water Security for Regions funding, such as lovely Lismore, wonderful Walcha, cool Carrathool and awesome Orange. All those local government areas can apply because they all experienced water security issues during the millennium drought, to which I referred earlier. This Government is intent on investing in infrastructure for regional areas of New South Wales.

MEMBER FOR PORT STEPHENS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier, who is representing the Premier. Does the Deputy Premier believe it is appropriate for the member for Port Stephens to remain in his position as Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Planning, given that he has been mentioned in the Independent Commission Against Corruption in relation to potentially illegal developer donations?

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the Deputy Premier, I warn members that when they are asking questions, they should not ask for an opinion from a Minister. If Opposition members wish to engage Ministers in a debate on matters that are before the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC], I remind them that those matters are sub judice and are not to be debated in this House. Members will not get an answer or debate on that matter. I will rule those matters out of order. They are sub judice. I call the Deputy Premier.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Madam Speaker, you are absolutely correct. It is not appropriate for me to comment on matters that currently are the subject of investigations, inquiries and hearings before ICAC. Members opposite want to try it on over and over again. If they want to go into the details of who may have been mentioned or who has appeared in ICAC, we are happy to go into that because the balance of the ledger is on the Labor side. We can talk about the role of some of Labor's luminaries—Joe Tripodi, Eddie Obeid, Ian Macdonald, Tony Kelly, et al—and if Opposition members want to get into the gutter we can also talk about the role of the current Leader of the Opposition in relation to those issues. We can talk about Currawong.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: This was a clear question.

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

Ms Linda Burney: It is Standing Order 129, relevance. The question asked the Deputy Premier about the member for Port Stephens. Deputy Premier, we have heard all this before. We are asking you about the member for Port Stephens.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warned members about asking for an opinion, which is clear in the standing orders, as are matters that are sub judice in relation to ICAC. Members should read the standing orders. There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: It would seem that on the basis of that pseudo point of order that Opposition members do not want to go there. They do not want to talk about Michael McGurk, Ron Medich and the bribe that the Leader of the Opposition conveniently forgot to mention to anyone. They do not want to talk about his role as boss of Unions NSW or that he stuck his head in the sand when it came to allegations involving Health Services Union [HSU] officials. They do not want to talk about Eddie Obeid's chalet, either.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was about the member for Port Stephens.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question asked for an opinion. I refer the member for Macquarie Fields to the standing orders, which state, as I said earlier, that a member should not ask for an opinion to be expressed by a Minister, a Deputy Premier or anybody else.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I simply say on behalf of the Premier that he has acted swiftly and decisively in the wake of matters that have been revealed by ICAC—matters that have affected the Labor Party as well. The Premier has moved in relation to ministerial codes of conduct. He has moved in relation to the Liberal Party. In relation to the Liberal Party matters, it is not appropriate that I, as the Leader of The Nationals in New South Wales, comment on those matters. I remind members opposite that invariably when Labor members of the previous Government were mentioned at the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] the standard response from Labor Ministers was, "It is not appropriate that the matters be discussed." And that is the case today.

OPAL ELECTRONIC TICKETING SYSTEM

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. How is the Government progressing with the rollout of the Opal electronic ticketing system?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Members opposite are excited about this. First, I thank the member for Coogee for his question because I know he takes a keen interest in public transport. Many of his constituents are benefiting from the Opal ticketing system, as are the constituents of many members. I am pleased to announce that as of today 500,000 Opal cards have been issued. As members would be aware, the Opal ticketing system is now available across all trains and ferries and on more than 2,000 buses. On average, about 20,000 people are signing up every week for the Opal card. Last week a record 32,000 people signed up in one week alone. Last week I was pleased to join the member for Penrith and the member for Blue Mountains to announce that even more customers will be able to use the Opal ticketing system across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Today I can also announce that, in addition to the 500,000 Opal cards already issued, another 520 buses will go live with the Opal system next week. From today there will be 820 buses in the northern beaches area and from Monday there will be 300 buses in Western Sydney. That includes areas such as Penrith, Mount Druitt—

Ms Linda Burney: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the member wish to take a point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: Yes, I do.

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

Ms Linda Burney: The Minister is misleading the House—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury does not have a point of order: She did not cite the standing order that has been breached. The member will resume her seat.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will come to the member for Canterbury in a moment. From next Monday there will be an additional 300 buses across Penrith, Mount Druitt, St Marys and Blacktown. We know that if it were up to Labor nobody in Western Sydney would be able to use the Opal ticketing system. Yesterday we heard how the then transport Minister—the current Leader of the Opposition—promised that Labor would build the North West Rail Link by 2010.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We also know that the then transport Minister promised electronic ticketing by the end of 2010. So Labor promised not only the North West Rail Link but also electronic ticketing. Let us not forget what the member for Canterbury said back in 2006.

Ms Linda Burney: What did I say?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I remind the member for Canterbury—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Canterbury said:

Like most members in this Chamber I have had considerable experience setting up new systems and government arrangements.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Canterbury continued:

I have confidence in the Government's arrangements to oversee the implementation of the Tcard system.

She was spruiking her credentials and then failed to deliver.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Not only did Labor fail to live up to its commitments; it left taxpayers with a \$100 million bill to pay. When we came to office we had to not only remove the old Tcard machines that were still on train stations but also sort out the court case that Labor left behind.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting and shouting at the Minister.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We do not like to look back at ancient history, but we know that Labor promised the Opal ticketing system back on 18 November 1997. By the time Labor left office in March 2011, how many cards had they issued to paying customers? None. When Labor left office how many customers were using electronic ticketing? None. Zero number of tickets and zero number of people were satisfied with the Labor Party, especially in relation to public transport. I am pleased to say that we are getting on with the job of this rollout.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Toongabbie to order for the third time. Was there something at lunchtime today that I did not know about?

Mr Nathan Rees: Yes, the rice.

The SPEAKER: Did it have something else in it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: By the end of this year more than 2,000 buses will be fitted out with Opal equipment and that figure will increase to 5,000. Labor also failed to ensure that the Opal system would be accessible on light rail. The Government had to vary that part of the contract.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

The SPEAKER: Order! I draw the attention of Opposition members to their disruptive behaviour. If they are not interested in question time they are free to leave the Chamber.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! What did the member for Toongabbie say?

Mr Nathan Rees: I said that would be absurd.

The SPEAKER: "Don't be absurd"?

Mr Nathan Rees: No, that would be absurd—to leave. It's too much fun.

The SPEAKER: The member for Toongabbie may find himself leaving the Chamber very soon.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I hope that in early 2015 light rail will be on the system as well. What does the Opal system mean for our customers? It means no more queues, lower fares for the vast majority of customers and free travel after eight journeys a week. It means bringing our State up to the rest of the world.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased that from this Sunday about 1,000 retail stores will have Opal cards available for customers.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to remind members that in about four weeks 14 paper ticketing systems will be retired.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: About 20 types of paper tickets will still be available for customers.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That highlights the clumsy and complex system Labor left behind. We are cleaning it up, and the Opal system is delivering real benefits to our customers. I assure our customers that there will be plenty of opportunities for them to get their Opal cards or top up their cards into the future, including machines on stations. Contrary to the scaremongering of members opposite, I take this opportunity to announce that even when the gold card comes out seniors and pensioners can still continue to buy their paper pensioner excursion tickets. Members opposite have tried to scaremonger, but I assure everyone that pensioners and seniors will continue to do what they do today in relation to the pensioner excursion ticket. This Government has modernised the transport network, which Labor left in a mess. [*Time expired.*]

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

MEMBER FOR LONDONDERRY

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier, representing the Premier. Granted the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] will need to hear from the member for Londonderry regarding an \$18,000 donation to his election campaign, but why has the Government allowed the member to remain as Chair of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Police Integrity Commission and the Crime Commission?

Mr ANDREW STONER: Apart from congratulating comrade member for Liverpool on a beautiful red tie today, I am going to have to say the same thing I said last time and that is, that it is not appropriate for the Government to comment on matters that are before the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: It is not appropriate to do so. If the member opposite continues with this line of questioning, we will begin to comment on ICAC matters that have been concluded and upon the findings of ICAC into members of the Labor Party. If members opposite want to turn question time into a commentary about findings of corrupt conduct by Labor members, we are happy to do so. I heard a comment, "Bring it on." Alright, if those opposite want to talk about "he who must be Obeid", or Ian Macdonald, or Tony Kelly—

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

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: I do not know why the Deputy Premier is trying to hide—

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the member's point of order? This is not an opportunity for debate.

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. It is a clear question about the member for Londonderry.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury does not have a point of order and will resume her seat. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I have said what I am going to say and I reflect the Speaker's earlier comment that these matters are sub judice and it is not appropriate to comment on them.

NURSE RECRUITMENT

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—Jillian the builder. How is the Government supporting nurses in providing high-quality care to patients?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Hornsby for his question and for the focus on nurses. It was a pleasure to be out with him at the topping-out ceremony for the rebuild of Hornsby hospital. What a great day we had. And what a great day it was last week when I visited Dubbo, Peak Hill, Parkes and Forbes with the member for Dubbo and Ken Keith, the Mayor of Parkes. I remind the House that we made a number of election commitments regarding nurses before the last election; in particular we promised to employ an additional 2,475 nurses over our first four-year term and we promised to employ 775 more clinical nurse midwife educators and clinical nurse midwife specialists or consultants. The Liberal-Nationals Government has done more than that.

We kept our promise—plus. I am proud to inform the House that, as at June this year, the Government has employed 4,600 additional nurses, or 3,400 full-time equivalents. That is far beyond the 2,475 that we promised. It brings the total New South Wales nursing workforce to a record 48,000. There are 48,000 nurses now working throughout hospitals in areas across the State—including Parkes. By the end of the financial year, the Government will have also recruited 315 clinical nurse educators and clinical nurse consultants with 40 extra specialists for small to medium rural facilities and 45 in community health and community mental health services.

At last week's NSW Nurses and Midwives Association's annual conference, I indicated further support for nurses. It was interesting to find oneself applauded by nurses attending a union conference. I informed the conference that the Government would provide 1,000 tablet computers for community nurses in order to afford them access to real-time patient-specific clinical information and to free up more time for them to spend with patients. I also announced that 30 new clinical support officers would be appointed for smaller acute hospitals and mental health units, in order to relieve nurses and midwives of non-clinical duties, such as paperwork. That was also well received by nurses.

I announced that the Government would appoint 30 new facility nurses for smaller acute in-patient facilities in order to provide a supernumerary nursing resource. Those nurses can be deployed across a facility to assist in managing unplanned spikes in activity, which often happen without notice. The facility nurses will operate over and above the planned nursing hours per patient day allocation which the former Labor Government had agreed to and which this Government signed up for and is rolling out. The Government also plans to enhance the role and number of nurse practitioners. These are registered nurses who are qualified to function autonomously in an extended clinical role, providing access to services for patients, particularly in rural and remote communities.

Those announcements that I made last week are on top of earlier initiatives supporting nurses, including reintroducing the workforce training program "take the lead", with 337 nursing and midwifery unit managers in New South Wales enrolled in the program. That program has been led by nurses, people who are working in our facilities. They have come up with fantastic ideas and new ways of practising that save resources so they can be converted into new services for additional patients in their facilities. Leave it to the nurses: they are doing a fantastic job in our facilities. I acknowledge the nurses in the Chamber, Leslie Williams and Stephen Bromhead. My colleague the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will be interested to know that we have graduated 78 Aboriginal nursing and midwifery cadets since we have been in office, with a further 67 cadets enrolled in the program.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Earlier this year, together with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I was pleased to have four of those Aboriginal midwives visit the Parliament. The Government announced this year that it will provide \$100,000 in scholarships for both undergraduate and postgraduate Aboriginal nurses and midwives to further their studies. More than 6,000 new graduate nurses and midwives have been recruited over the past three years. Members representing country electorates will be pleased to know that the Government has enhanced the rural nursing workforce. In rural and regional hospitals, 2,300 new nurses—equivalent to 1,600 full-time—are now working in rural and regional hospitals. This represents a 9.1 per cent increase in the rural and regional nursing workforce since the last election.

I am proud of the wonderful work our nurses do in the New South Wales health system. As I told the nurses at their conference last week, I am always pleased to meet nurses when I visit hospitals with my colleagues and to receive their feedback on how things are going. Typical of this was my visit to Westmead Hospital last week where I accepted an invitation by nurses to attend a morning tea. They had written a letter to me: "Westmead nurses would like to say thank you". I was moved by this. It is signed by many nurses from Westmead Hospital, thanking me for the effort that the Government has put into providing additional resources.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I will always support nurses, wherever they are and I am thrilled that this Government has gone over and above the commitments made before the last election.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier, acting for the Premier today. I have been careful to couch this in a way in which it can be answered. In April, the Deputy Premier stated that there was instability in the Government, with revelations continuing out of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Given the Government has now lost a Premier and eight ministers, several Liberal members have been forced onto the crossbench and more members on the Government side of the House are under scrutiny, does the Deputy Premier admit that his Government is in shambles?

Mr ANDREW STONER: No.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUNDING

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: My question is addressed to the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. How is the Government delivering important community projects and fostering local decision-making?

Mr TROY GRANT: The member for Tamworth rings true in relation to what is said about a regional member of Parliament: he fights for his community. They know he will not win every battle but they expect a regional community member and a member of The Nationals to fight hard and sometimes get a bloody nose. I am proud to serve next to the member for Tamworth and I congratulate him on delivering outstanding results for Tamworth, Gunnedah and his entire electorate. He has a glowing record of success, with the assistance of the wonderful Minister for Health, which his community is embracing. The member for Tamworth has secured the Tamworth Hospital redevelopment project. A tick; well done.

Thanks to the best roads Minister in the State's history, the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, the Manilla Road upgrade is now a reality. Another tick. With the assistance of the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, the Keepit Dam upgrade is also ticked off. Now the member for Tamworth is leading this Parliament in the complex and emotive debate on the appropriate use of medicinal cannabis for the terminally ill, and I am very proud to serve with him. Through the ClubGRANTS scheme, the New South Wales Government and registered clubs are helping to fund new and upgraded infrastructure in local communities across the State. Following a rigorous independent assessment process the first public round has resulted in 10 projects sharing \$12.4 million of funding.

At Tamworth, \$1.1 million has been allocated to develop a playground and recreation space in the critical Bicentennial Park. The park will be suitable for all ages and is specifically designed to ensure those with sensory, intellectual and physical impairment have a safe and relaxing place to enjoy the outdoors. I have been told by the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water that at Moree \$1.7 million has been allocated to the much-maligned Aboriginal football team known as the Boomerangs for the Boomerang Rugby League Club to develop a new community sports facility. The club has come from generations of adversity and has received funding from this Government for that facility. The Boomerangs have a proud history of promoting healthy lifestyles and are strong advocates for stamping out domestic violence in their community. I have been told by the Minister that this is a community-changing investment, so it is money well spent.

On the South Coast, the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council has been given \$629,000 to assist development of the Bundian Way Tourist Trail around Twofold Bay. This project will encourage the community and visitors to walk, experience and appreciate the cultural history of the area ahead of cruise ships arriving in Eden later this year. Other community projects include: \$510,000 to renew Cameron Park in Inverell, in the electorate of the member for Northern Tablelands; \$1.6 million to upgrade Clifford Park in Goonellabah, in the electorate of the member for Lismore; almost \$1 million to redevelop Macksville Park; more than \$1 million for Surf Life Saving NSW in Port Macquarie; and more than \$1.7 million, of a \$5.3 million project, for the Police Citizens Youth Club in Cessnock, in the electorate of the member for Cessnock. This is a crucial piece of infrastructure which I believe will be the best in the State.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the Nationals member for Cessnock for his work and I am sure he looks forward to that facility. In addition, \$2 million has been secured for the Woy Woy Sporting Precinct Redevelopment which makes the dream for the Woy Woy community a reality, and I congratulate the member for Gosford. Also \$1 million has been allocated to support redevelopment of Jamison Park in Penrith. That is a wonderful investment in a key sporting facility known as Jamo Park. That funding is very welcome. Whether it is from Lismore to Bega, Cessnock to Moree, the New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals are listening to our communities and delivering local solutions for the sporting and community infrastructure that they need.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr TROY GRANT: Members will note from the Government response to the Liquor Act Review, which I laid upon the table yesterday, that the same balanced, pragmatic approach is at play and will be undertaken. The needs of local communities—as has been evidenced by the local outcomes achieved in health, implemented by the Minister for Health—will also be at play in the ministries for which I am responsible. Local communities, individuals and businesses are best placed to ensure local measures are appropriate, and members on this side of the House understand that. Small wineries and craft brewers across the State will be pleased by the reduction in the annual licence fee from \$500 to \$200, which is commensurate with their lower-risk profile and acknowledges the important contribution wineries make to tourism. This Government and local members have listened to the community and have responded.

Venues will be able to drop back from 2.00 a.m. or 3.00 a.m. licences to midnight closure and purchase a package of 12 late trades a year. This will see a net reduction in trading hours across the State as businesses seek to match their licences to local need. The savings to police, health, government and the community will be enormous. This Government is putting a strong focus on industry and individual responsibility. Let me be clear, those who fail to meet the standards that the community expects will be punished. Another round of ClubGRANTS is due to open later this year, and I look forward to continuing to listen to the community and supporting many more worthy community projects throughout Sydney and New South Wales.

TRANSPORT ACCESS PROGRAM

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. With poor accessibility to platforms at Dora Creek and Wyee train stations, and a high proportion of seniors living in southern Lake Macquarie relying on public transport, will the Minister allocate funds from the Transport Access Program to ensure adequate access for the elderly or mobility impaired?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for raising this issue which is a concern to him and his constituents. I appreciate that most members in this place have advocated for better access at our railway stations. I championed this issue when I was in Opposition and I certainly care about it extensively in my capacity as the Minister for Transport. It is important to remember that when we came to government only 124 out of 307 stations across the network had accessibility for wheelchair or mobility-impaired customers. We inherited a system where only 124 stations out of 307 were accessible, and there is no doubt we have to catch up and do a lot to raise the standard.

Regrettably, when the Labor Party was in government it managed only a few upgrades a year. Since we have been in government I am pleased to say that at least 24 stations now have easy access. We have done that in just over three years. I assure all members that the Government is working as fast and as hard as possible to ensure increased accessibility. I also want to put on the record that when we came to government we set up the Transport Access Program, a \$770 million four-year program to ensure that areas that desperately need easy access upgrades receive them.

I note that stations in the electorates of many members of the Opposition have had a number of easy access upgrades delivered, which they were not able to deliver themselves. I am pleased to say that we not only gave a huge financial boost to the Transport Access Program, we also consolidated it into one program. When this Government came to office there were six different teams doing six different examinations into accessibility. Unfortunately, the teams were not delivering what was required. Since coming to office this Government has delivered easy access upgrades at Albion Park, Greta, Riverstone, Austinmer, Hamilton, Scone, Canley Vale, Jannali, Sefton, Cardiff, Martin Place, Singleton, Casula, Marulan, Sydenham, Clarendon, Minto, Wallarobba, Gerrington, Newtown, Warwick Farm, Glenfield, Picton and Windsor.

A number of easy access upgrades at other stations have also been announced. I make the same commitment to the member for Lake Macquarie that I have made to all members in this place. This Government

is working as hard as it can for Dora Creek and Wyee. When identifying the next series of upgrades that will occur, I assure members that those stations will be given due consideration, as will all the other stations. The Government is getting through the program as quickly as possible. I remind members that a number of accessibility upgrades are planned.

In addition to the 24 that have already been delivered, upgrades are on the way at Redfern, Marrickville, Wentworth Falls, Arncliffe, Oatley, Ingleburn, Penrith, Bankstown, Tahmoor, Pendle Hill, Heathcote, Artarmon, Flemington, Museum, Sutherland, Waterfall, Mittagong and Wentworthville. There are more to come. Customers expect easy access at railway stations to be provided. I assure the community, and especially the member for Lake Macquarie who has raised this important question, that I appreciate how stressful it is for people who wish to catch public transport and are unable to do so. I am proud of what has been done but there is more to do. I assure all members in this place that the Government is working hard to deliver these upgrades.

ELECTRICITY ASSETS

Mr LEE EVANS: My question is addressed to the Treasurer. How will the Government's plan to lease part of the State's electricity network assist households of New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Heathcote for his question. Since this Government announced the lease arrangements—which the Government is hoping to take to the next election to seek a mandate on—those opposite have been supporting the infrastructure build, which we propose to undertake with the \$20 billion that will be realised from the 49 per cent lease of electricity assets. It would be interesting to hear how the Opposition would pay for the infrastructure, including the Sydney Rapid Transit line. As part of the Opposition's scare campaign and given the Leader of the Opposition is a former Electrical Trades Union [ETU] organiser—

Mr Adrian Piccoli: He still is a union thug.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: He is still a union thug. One key issue the Opposition has argued about is pricing.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] made a speech in Brisbane earlier today.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The member for Canterbury is about to find out. Rod Sims stated:

I am personally a strong advocate.

Mr Sims further stated:

With sound regulation the private sector will operate these businesses more efficiently as they will have better incentives for, and pose fewer constraints on, performance.

He went on to say:

An example of this is the proposed partial long term lease of the NSW electricity network assets. In my view such a sale can benefit NSW electricity consumers as network costs and therefore prices can be lower than otherwise.

That has not come from the Government. It has come from the independent chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. He further said:

... in my personal view, NSW electricity prices would now be significantly lower had the NSW electricity network assets been privatised, say, five years ago.

That is when the Opposition was in office.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will cease shouting. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the first time. I call the member for Bankstown to order for the second time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The only people in this State who are saying that network prices are going to go up as a result of a 49 per cent lease on the State's electricity network are John Robertson and the New South Wales Labor Party.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The Opposition is running a scare campaign across the community. Its energy spokesperson, the member for Heffron, is holding forums.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The Treasurer does not need any assistance.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The energy shadow Minister turned up in my hometown of Batemans Bay to hold one of these anti-lease forums. Three people attended: the energy spokesperson, the Labor candidate for the next election, and the editor of the local paper. Then he trundled out to Penrith and there were four people in attendance.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those present were the energy spokesperson, the Labor candidate, again I suspect the local editor and I suspect the member for Penrith sent a staffer along to see what was going on. The Opposition has lost the plot.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The ACCC is now saying that prices are going to go down as a result of network costs coming down because of the private sector's engagement in the management of these assets. We know that the ETU representatives opposite, including a former organiser of the ETU who now masquerades as Leader of the Opposition and want-to-be Premier—

Mr Anthony Roberts: Not very well.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Not particularly well.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those opposite want to continue the protection racket in the State's electricity networks. They want to continue the union rorts. They want their mates to drive electricity company cars with a petrol card in hand to places like Darwin for three months and have a lovely time at the expense of electricity consumers in New South Wales. This debate is about union power. It is interesting that the union is busily trying to position itself before an enterprise bargaining agreement, which will happen later in the year. Let us look at the facts. The ACCC has confirmed that prices will go down; the Labor Party is arguing that prices will go up. During their years in office they completely trashed the joint, increasing electricity prices by 60 per cent for consumers because of their practices. The member for Heffron is now running a scare campaign around the electorates, although the best he can do is get three people to attend his forum. Is it any wonder that Andrew Clennell is penning columns about the intellectual capability of the Leader of the Opposition? I will finish with this quote: "A lack of intellect and vision—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73. The Minister clearly is making a personal attack using a third source. I also refer to Standing Order 129, relevance.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I am happy to table the document. In the *Daily Telegraph* on 29 July Andrew Clennell wrote:

A lack of intellect and vision at the top is holding State Labor back.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

Question time concluded at 3.19 p.m.

PETITIONS

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

Caravan Registration Costs

Petition requesting a reduction in the cost of caravan registration fees, received from **Mr Kevin Anderson**.

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:

Edgecliff Interchange

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

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Same-sex Marriage

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

Daylight Saving Referendum

Petition requesting a referendum on the abolition of daylight saving, received from **Mr Kevin Anderson**.

Inner-city Social Housing

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

Low-cost Housing and Homelessness

Petition requesting increased funding for low-cost housing and homelessness services, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

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

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

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

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

Oxford Street Night-time Economy

Petition requesting more appropriate and sustainable licensing conditions to promote a safe and vibrant night-time economy on Oxford Street, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.21 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Anthony Roberts: I move:

That this House notes:

- (1) That on Tuesday 4 August 1914 at 11.00 p.m. Great Britain declared war on Germany.
- (2) That on Wednesday 5 August 1914 the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales met at 4.00 p.m. and the Premier, W. A. Holman, made a ministerial statement in regard to the declaration of war, indicating to the House the need for legislation "to give the Government certain powers which would be used at discretion"; that the Cabinet "had offered to place unreservedly the whole resources" of the State to the Commonwealth; and that there was a "resolute determination to be united in front of the common danger".
- (3) The sacrifices made by the men and women of New South Wales and Australia during the Great War.

On 4 August 1914 at 11.00 p.m. Britain declared war on Germany. As had been made abundantly clear prior to the war, when both sides of politics pledged to support Britain to the "last man and the last shilling", the inevitable consequence was that Australia was also at war with Germany. The lights across Europe went out and it was going to be the role of the British Empire to re-light the lights. Some say that the First World War was unique because we did not know what we were fighting for and that the war was the result of a series of diplomatic blunders, an error of history. But there is so much more to the Great War than error.

We went to war as a part of a united Empire, united in its belief in parliamentary democracy, in the dignity of the individual, and in the fundamental freedoms of the individual. We went to war against a foe that did not believe in that or in parliamentary democracy. Rather, it was an aristocratic ruling class that did not believe in the dignity of the individual. It invaded Belgium; it did not believe in the fundamental freedoms of the individual but instead believed in the expansion of a nation. Those who fought in the First World War were not fighting due to diplomatic errors; they were fighting to preserve the fundamental freedoms we all still enjoy today. Rupert Brooke wrote in his poem *The Soldier*:

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England.

Anzac Cove is forever Australian: 8,709 Australians died at Gallipoli. No battlefield is more ingrained in our national consciousness than Gallipoli. Ninety-nine years on, annually thousands go on a pilgrimage to Turkey to pay their respects to those who gave their lives. It is at Gallipoli that we fought as a federated nation for the first time. It has become a part of what makes us Australian. We honour our diggers every year on 25 April, commemorating what was ultimately a military failure, but a failure that showcased the best of Australia: tenacity, courage and mateship. Our diggers displayed the values that continue to inspire our nation and are the values that have driven our nation since.

Gallipoli gave the world a preview of what was to come from Australia and the promise of what was then a young federated nation, a promise that we are now fulfilling. On the day we went to war the Premier said that the Cabinet "had offered to place unreservedly the whole resources" of the State and expressed a "resolute determination to be united in front of the common danger". Two members who listened to their Premier—the Liberal member for Armidale, George Frederick Braund, and the Labor member for Willoughby, Edward Larkin—paid the ultimate sacrifice. They lost their lives at Gallipoli defending the values of freedom on which Australia and this House were founded.

The first legislator to enlist was Lieutenant Colonel Braund. He had previously served in the Australian Infantry Regiment. On the formation of the Australian Imperial Force he was appointed to raise and train the 2nd Infantry Battalion, which was raised within a fortnight of war being declared. He was its commanding officer. He trained them with toughness and expected high levels of competency and discipline, but he also led by example. He was a vegetarian, teetotaler and non-smoker and was obsessive about physical fitness. His own men paid tribute to his courage and gallantry. Charles Bean said that he displayed "every quality of a really great leader". He was shot by a sentry after failing to hear the sentry's call. He was a great loss.

Although Lieutenant Colonel Braund's death was an accident and was not as a result of conflict it was not inconsequential. On the first day 1,800 people died at Gallipoli and although the objective was not achieved and the mission was a failure their deaths were not meaningless. Even if they resulted from an accident of navigation or failure to account for a strong current, their deaths were not meaningless. The deaths of all soldiers have meaning, due to the values they fight for and their sacrifice to nation. That is not to say that this was not a terrible waste when so many lost their lives, but there was meaning.

Lieutenant Colonel Braund was 48-years-old when he died, but many were much younger. The legal age of enlistment in 1914 was 21 years, 18 with parental permission. We will never know how many lied about their age. We will never know how many died in a war before they reached their eighteenth birthday. We do not know how many of our youth were lost. But we do know that the youngest known Australian to die was the New South Wales-born Private James Charles Martin from Tocumwal. Jim was 14 years and three months when he enlisted in April 1915 and he died six months later on 25 October suffering from enteritis. Just days earlier he wrote to his family:

"Don't worry about me as I am doing splendid over here".

Fortunately for his family his death was able to be confirmed; many of the dead were known only unto God. The horror of the war meant that many bodies were unidentifiable. Whether on the killing fields of Lone Pine or in the trenches on the Western Front, Australians died and we do not know who they are or where they are buried. But we will still honour them; this House will honour them and every other soldier who fought in the First World War and wars and conflicts since. The doctors, nurses and medical orderlies were constantly stressed and underresourced. Sister Ella Tucker wrote:

24-4-15 Red Letter Day. Gaba Tepe The wounded think the old ship is heaven after the peninsula. There are 557 patients on board and only seven nurses.

Crowded, without ventilation and at sea, the conditions were not hygienic; they were not clean, even by the standards of the day, despite their best efforts. And nurses and patients alike suffered from seasickness. Once off the hospital ships from the Australian General hospitals [AGH] on the Greek Islands, hospitals that were grossly underresourced, Matron Wilson wrote:

9 August—Found 150 patients lying on the ground—no equipment whatever. Had no water to drink or wash.

That shows just how stretched Australia was during the First World War.

11 August—Convoy arrived—about 400—no equipment whatever. Just laid the men on the ground and gave them a drink. Very many badly shattered, nearly all stretcher cases. Tents were erected over them as quickly as possible. All we can do is feed them and dress their wounds. A good many died.

The nurses worked to save as many of our soldiers as possible. They did not have a cushy job. Whilst they were not on the front, they were in cramped ships or overburdened makeshift hospitals. At AGH3 there was not enough water for a bath tent. We must never forget those who helped the soldiers who protected our freedom and also supported them on their return. New South Wales gave much money and resources. We produced arms at Lithgow, promoted peace bonds, knitted socks and in 1916 the Cobar Ladies Jam Club produced more than two tons of jam. Most of all we gave men: men who fought, men who lost their lives. In Australia the highest proportion of males to enlist between the ages of 18 and 44, almost 40 per cent, was in New South Wales. It is remarkable that so many felt the need to enlist, but it shows the sense of service and sacrifice that characterises the people of New South Wales.

The people of New South Wales were prepared to stand up to do the job that had to be done. Many Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest possible honour for a soldier, with the simple description "for valour". Valour is not simply bravery or courage. Valour is not, as Google defines it, courage when in danger—if there is no danger, nothing can be courageous. Valour requires one to go beyond the call of duty not for oneself but because it has to be done. Valour requires one to stand up and place oneself at risk in the service of others. Private Hamilton, a New South Welshman, did just that. Private Hamilton, aged 18, enlisted on 15 September 1914. At Lone Pine, aged 19, he was cited as:

During a heavy bomb attack by the enemy on the newly-captured position at Lone Pine, Private Hamilton, with utter disregard of personal safety, exposed himself under heavy fire on the parapets in order to secure a better firing position against the enemy's bomb-throwers. His coolness and daring example had an immediate effect. The defence was encouraged and the enemy driven off with heavy loss."

From his position he was able to tell those in the trenches where to throw their bombs whilst maintaining sniper fire. He also served in the Second World War and attained the rank of captain. He embodied the "step up" culture of New South Welshman, which the war often illustrated. We can never forget the sacrifices of those who answered the call and stepped up to defend our country and its values. We are forever in their debt. On 4 August 1914 at 11:00 p.m. Britain went to war with Germany. That war continued for more than four years until an armistice was declared at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month 1918. During that time the world saw many atrocities. An entire generation went into the trenches; many did not return. The First World War irrevocably changed the world. We won, but at an enormous cost. We owe our lives, freedom and values to those who fought for our nation in the First World War. Lest we forget.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal) [3.33 p.m.]: As the hands on Big Ben drew closer to 11.00 p.m. on 4 August 1914 the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, watched as the gas lights in the streets were extinguished one by one. He commented:

The lights are going out in Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.

This year we commemorate that night when Australia, as part of the British Empire, went to war. The British ultimatum to Germany expired when the clock struck 11.00 p.m. Thousands cheered in London, as they did in Berlin and Paris. Four years later the world counted 10 million dead soldiers, seven million dead civilians and an ongoing legacy of hatred that gave birth to the terrible ideologies of communism and Nazism that subsequently were to inflict more than 100 million dead in the most savage blood loss the world would ever see. My story is not the story of that terrible conflict and its more terrible aftermath. It is the story of my two grandfathers, Bede Alphonsus Hartcher and Benjamin Greenup Brodie. Both volunteered and both served on the Western Front. One now lies there in the war cemetery, the other returned with his life irretrievably altered.

My mother's father, Benjamin Greenup Brodie, was older than the average soldier. He was 30 when he enlisted in July 1915 as a private. He was rapidly promoted to sergeant and left for the front on 2 May 1916. The war record, brief as it is, tells all. He was promoted in the field to lieutenant and then captain. He was wounded at Messines in 1917 and gassed at Passchendaele in October 1917. He was killed in action on 5 March 1918 and is buried in Warneton, France. He left behind my mother, who was born in 1913, and my uncle, who was born in 1915. Both were to grow up cherishing the memory of a man they could never really remember. However, his story is a story of heroism. The Australia War Memorial has commemorated him in a monograph. His story, along with many others, is told in the special series that has been produced for the centenary. The monograph begins:

As the officers and sergeants sat in the dimly lit dugout, the etched features of the commanding officer (CO) were accentuated in the eerie light cast by the hurricane lamp. The men listened intently as he presented the plan in intricate detail. After each was assigned his task, the CO looked at the captain and said, "Brodie you will be leading our blokes." Benjamin Greenup Brodie was a stalwart of the unit. He had enlisted as a private and from the earliest days displayed the leadership qualities that led to his rapid promotion through the ranks. Ben was posted to the 34th Battalion AIF and left Sydney, bound for the United Kingdom, in May 1916. The battalion spent several months training before crossing to France in late November where the men were soon in the trenches of the Western Front—just in time for the onset of the terrible winter of 1916-17.

When his platoon commander was killed, Brodie assumed command. The men immediately accepted the leadership change as Ben already had earned their trust and respect. Their faith in his judgement and common sense approach to soldiering was imperative, as their lives were in his hands.

In October, the battalion was engaged in the battle around Passchendaele. Heavy rains had reduced the area to a quagmire, the thick mud hampering movement and fouling weapons. The battle was a disastrous defeat for the Allies and the 34th Battalion suffered casualties of higher than 50 per cent.

Following the Passchendaele campaign, the men were sent to the rear for a rest ... During the break, the commanding officer called Brodie into his office and passed an envelope to the sergeant. A very proud Brodie discovered the contents to be two pips—he had been commissioned as a second lieutenant.

A brief stint at the Officers' Training School at Amiens followed, then it was back in the line for the young platoon commander. He was popular among the troops who regarded him as one of the boys, but one who was not averse to delivering a severe reprimand when necessary.

Brodie was a tyrant in battle, moving his men forward to achieve one objective after another, so it was not surprising that he was soon promoted to lieutenant. On one occasion, he led the company to its objective when the officer commanding was taken out of the action. In early 1918, he was promoted to captain and took over as second in command of C Company.

At the beginning of March, the 34th Battalion occupied the front line as part of the 9th Brigade.

The Germans were preparing for the Kaiserschlacht offensive, their final offensive, and the allies needed as much intelligence as they could to know when the offensive would take place and what German units would be participating in it.

On the night of 3 March, a brigade raid consisting of 10 officers and 225 men attacked the German trenches. The raiders killed more than 50 of the enemy and captured an officer and 10 men, before retiring to the safety of their own lines.

As the commanders contemplated their next move, they agreed the best strategy was to repeat the action the following night—the Germans would never expect them to hit the same place two nights in a row.

The commanding officer said:

Brodie, you will be leading our blokes—about a hundred in all. Your mission is to blow up the tunnels and the dugouts, capture whoever you can and get the hell out. And don't worry, we will have artillery support. The barrage starts at 0050 hours. Any questions.

It continues:

Brodie dispatched the advance party to lay the forming-up tape. Seven minutes later he sent out Sergeant Mudford to lead a covering party. Using the tape as a guide in the dark, they took up positions in the German wire emplacements—a mere 45 metres from the enemy. The main raiding party moved out, passing through the gaps that had been cut in the wire. Suddenly, a flare burst above them creating pandemonium as the pale light illuminated the battlefield. "Go! Go! Go!" Brodie yelled, waving his troops forward.

The enemy attacked relentlessly with grenades and machine-guns. Brodie stormed up the parapet, urging the Diggers into the trench. As he directed his men toward shelter, a burst from a machine-gun hit him in the side and chest. He dropped to his knees, but continued to yell commands. The stretcher-bearers grabbed their fallen captain and frantically pushed shell dressings into his gaping wounds.

But the Germans had anticipated the incursion and planned on trapping the raiders before they could withdraw. Brodie's 2nd in command, Lieutenant Fell, took charge and called out "The Germans are coming, lots of them! Fall back." Fell immediately gave the order to withdraw.

Lieutenant Fell hurriedly ran quickly to Captain Brodie and knelt down beside the badly wounded officer, who by now had been placed on a stretcher with a knapsack supporting his head. Brodie grabbed Fell by the uniform, pulling him closer. "Make sure you account for everyone before we leave, Fell," he muttered.

As they made their way back to their lines, Brodie repeatedly questioned his stretcher-bearer, Private Frew, on the state of his men. Frew reassured his patient that all was well, realising that although Brodie was gravely wounded, the officer's concerns were not for himself but for the safety of his men.

As they reached the protection of the parapet, a relieved Frew leaned nearer the officer's head. "We've made it, Sir, we've ..." But it was too late, Brodie was dead.

However, in slight difference to the monograph, my mother carried with her in her personal papers until the day she died the letter her mother received from the War Office describing her father's death. The letter stated:

Captain Brodie led his men in the German trenches. A German soldier threw a stick grenade. He caught the full force of the explosion. As one of his men rushed to assist him he said his last reported words, "I am done for sonny, see to yourself." His men dragged him unconscious across no man's land into the Australian trenches where he was pronounced dead.

The difference in terminology in the war records is not significant. Both record he died in action and that his last thoughts were not for himself but for his men. He was all of 33, leaving behind a widow and two children who were to forever honour his memory. On the card that my grandmother sent out to those who extended their condolences to her were the two intertwined flags of Britain and Australia under a coloured photograph of my grandfather. Underneath that photograph are the words:

Death in the course of righteousness earns life everlasting.

My grandmother subsisted to the end of her days on a small war widow's pension and took in contract work as a milliner. My mother and uncle were wonderfully assisted by Legacy, who paid their Catholic school fees and my uncle's university fees to train as a pharmacist. To the organisation of Legacy my family owes ongoing gratitude. My father's father, Bede Alphonsus Hartcher, was of German heritage. His grandfather, Ignatius, had immigrated in 1849 as a vigneron to the Hunter Valley. Bede's father, Andrew, was the only one of Ignatius's many children to be born in Australia. Though of German heritage my grandfather never learnt German and never regarded himself as having any connection to Germany. Had they been Lutheran they may have felt some connection, but as Catholics their religion had no national connections. Bede was born in the Hunter Valley, but received the rare opportunity of a scholarship to attend Holy Cross Ryde for high school.

Bede was the first of his family to leave the Hunter for Sydney. I am given to understand his name is on the honour roll of servicemen at Holy Cross. He volunteered later than most, on 15 May 1917 at the age of 26. He had stayed behind to court my grandmother and enlisted soon after their marriage. He joined the artillery as a gunner and was allocated to the unit Field Artillery Brigade, Reinforcement 32. The 4th Field Artillery Brigade was raised on 23 September 1915, following the formation of the First Australian Imperial Force [AIF] and the raising of the Second Division in Egypt in 1915. The brigade went into camp at Albert Park, Melbourne, where it did its initial training. In November the brigade embarked for overseas service and sailed to Egypt where it joined the Second Division and the older AIF units following the Gallipoli campaign.

In March 1916 the brigade embarked at Alexandria for France, as the AIF moved to the Western Front. Arriving at the port of Marseilles, the brigade travelled 800 kilometres by train to Le Havre, where it drew its 18-pounder guns and vehicles before continuing to Armentières, near the French-Belgium border, on 8 April. The fighting at Armentières was not as intense as it was in other places along the Western Front and the allies used the location as a "nursery sector" where new units could be "blooded". In May the 19th Battery was renamed the 104th Howitzer Battery. The Second Division and the 4th Field Brigade's first major offensive was the Battle of the Somme.

The Somme offensive was partly designed to relieve the pressure on the French at Verdun. The 4th Field Brigade was deployed south of Sausage Valley, near Pozières, in late July, where it was involved in constant action against the Germans. In the harsh winter that followed, the brigade experienced the first of many gas attacks. In March 1917 the Germans withdrew to the Hindenburg Line and the 4th Field Brigade moved forward to Bullecourt. The brigade moved to Flanders in June and was in constant action until November supporting allied attacks on Messines, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde, and then Passchendaele, as part of the Third Battle of Ypres. During this period, the brigade suffered its heaviest casualties of the war: 151 in October and 145 in November.

When the Germans launched their much-vaunted Kaiser offensive, the spring offensive of March 1918, the brigade supported the I Australia Corps as it absorbed the German push. When the Germans broke through to Villers-Bretoneux the next month, the 4th Field Brigade was moved to the Somme. In August, when the Australian offensive began, the brigade supported the infantry, as the I Australia Corps moved through Peronne, Mont St Quentin, Bellicourt, and the Hindenburg Line. Exhausted from combat and illness the brigade was relieved on 18 October. My grandfather's war diary states that he embarked from Sydney on board the *SS Canberra* on 16 November 1917.

My grandfather saw action on the Western Front and was severely wounded and hospitalised in Britain for some time. Upon release from hospital he returned to the front where he was wounded again and hospitalised once more. So serious were his injuries that he was not released from hospital until September 1919. It was 10 months after the armistice and three months after the peace treaty was signed at Versailles on 28 June 1919. It was a tragic date because it was exactly five years after the brutal assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which event had precipitated the Great War. In a tragic lesson to the world, the failure of diplomacy and governments to properly address the aftermath of that assassination led to the extraordinary tragedy of war.

Despite his injuries, which were permanent, I understand my grandfather never claimed any pension or compensation, saying that the money should go to those who were far more injured than he was. He was alive and their families, in many cases, were not. Like many ex-servicemen he never spoke about the war. He joined the New South Wales railways and worked on the railway until his compulsory retirement at age 65. All his life he battled with his injuries, but he never complained about them. In his later years, when he was in his eighties, I once asked him whether he ever felt a sense of oddity about being in the trenches and facing across no-man's-land towards trenches manned by soldiers from the land that his grandparents and father had come from. He said, "No, it never occurred to me that I had any connection to Germany. I was an Australian. I grew up in Australia. I never spoke German and it meant nothing to me. I was there to fight for Australia." My grandfather, my father's father, like my mother's father, in their lives exemplified to me the spirit of Anzac as set out on the memorial on the Kokoda Track, those four words: Courage, Endurance, Mateship and Sacrifice.

I believe they should always be remembered—remembered fondly by their families but remembered as a whole by the nation that owes them eternal gratitude. Australia was the only power in the First World War that had an all-volunteer army. The people of Australia in two referenda, one in 1916 and the other in 1917, rejected the idea of conscription. They believed that those who went to fight for their country should do so voluntarily. My mother's father, Benjamin Greenup Brodie, and my father's father, Bede Alphonsus Hartcher, were two among 300,000 Australians who became soldiers in the service of their country in World War I. One died on the battlefields of France and the other was severely wounded on the battlefields of France. Lest we forget.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.50 p.m.]: One hundred years ago Australia was at war. Britain had declared war on the Central Powers on 4 August 1914. Consequently, all British Empire nations were also at war. Australia was in the throes of a national election. Conservative and Labor leaders alike quickly promised support. Famously, soon-to-be Prime Minister Andrew Fisher pledged that we would commit "to our last man and our last shilling". Two days later, on 6 August, Britain requested that Australia, newly in possession of a Royal Navy fleet, secure territory to its north, in what is now Papua New Guinea. This mission led to the first Australian casualties of the Great War. To follow was the mass recruitment of troops destined for the battlefields of Gallipoli, the Middle East and the Western Front.

Through more than four years of conflict Australian and New Zealand troops were to become known as the Anzacs. They left their indelible mark on our history and our understanding of ourselves as a nation. Each nation represented likewise found itself at war on this day a century ago, or otherwise significantly affected by Europe's dark summer days of 1914. Each nation suffered, many from the devastation of war in their own land, all of them through millions paying the ultimate sacrifice and the burden of grief this brought to their homes. Peace eventually prevailed in 1918. It was hard won and involved huge costs but, sadly, it was not to last.

During World War I recruitment marches, or snowball marches, to Sydney were a feature of volunteer recruiting drives for the Australian Imperial Force in rural New South Wales. Between October 1915 and February 1916 nine marches were held, starting from various points in the State. The most notable was the first march from Gilgandra, known as the Cooee March. There were similar marches in south-eastern Queensland. In 1918, in an effort to promote recruitment, another march was staged, but it was less spontaneous than the others and the marchers travelled by train. They were called "snowball marches" in the hope that, like a snowball rolling down a hill and picking up more mass and surface area, the marches would collect more marchers as they progressed.

Marches following the Cooee March in 1915 were called the Dungarees, the Waratahs, the Kangaroo March, the Wallabies, the Men from Snowy River, the Kookaburras, the North Coast Boomerangs and the Central West Boomerangs. Other marches included one from Casterton to Melbourne and, in 1918, the Southern March to Freedom, the March to Freedom—Brisbane, and the Butler's 500 Snowball March. The Kangaroo March left Wagga Wagga on 1 September 1915 when 88 potential soldiers marched via Harefield, June, Illabo, Bethunga, Cootamundra and Wallendbeen. At Wallendbeen, on 9 December, the Governor-General addressed the marchers. From there they marched via Nubba to Murrumburrah and the next day to Harden.

They marched through Galong, Binalong and Bowning to Yass. From Wagga Wagga to Yass is 132 miles. They travelled at an average of 8.8 miles per day. The men were fed and feted by the local population. For instance, at Murrumburrah donations included 114 puddings and nine sheep to be baked gratis by the local bakers, 200 loaves of bread, 850 potatoes and 30 dozen eggs. They marched to Campbelltown via Goulburn and then came into Sydney by train, arriving on 7 January 1916 with between 210 and 230 recruits. It had not been decided that the recruitment drive would finish at Campbelltown so a country contingent had to be created.

One of the best-known marchers was John Ryan, who won the Victoria Cross. Edward John Francis Ryan was born in 1890 and died in 1941. He took part in the Kangaroo March. Another Victoria Cross recipient from the Wagga Wagga area was John Hurst Edmondson. He was born in 1914 and died in 1941, when he was awarded the Victoria Cross. I have read about the youngest Australian soldier, James Martin. The bravery of that young man was captured in a book. He enlisted against his parents' wishes. He was a strapping young fellow who was determined to enlist, and eventually his parents caved in and allowed him to do so. He died of dysentery at sea on 25 October 1915, aged 14 years and nine months. Many soldiers died as a result of disease and pestilence, not as a result of shellfire and bullets. Disease wracked the battlefields of France, Gallipoli and other places where Anzacs fought.

Another soldier who served in the war was Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey, GBE, KCB, CMG, DSO, ED. He was born in January 1884 and passed away in 1951. He was an Australian general in the First World War and the Second World War. He was born in Wagga Wagga and remains, I believe, the most highly decorated soldier in our history. The history of all the soldiers I have mentioned can be obtained through various means. Young people are being encouraged to observe the Centenary of the Great War—the war that was to end all wars. I encourage them and others to research the history of these brave men and women, who went to fight. Some may have regarded defending King and country as an adventure, but the reality soon became apparent when they arrived at the battlefields.

I like to read about history, especially Australian history. A big part of that history is the efforts of our soldiers today and in previous wars, including the Boer War, the First World War and Gallipoli. In all these wars Australians have fought with distinction. I believe the men and women who volunteered to fight did so with courage beyond what could be considered reasonable. They had great strength and courage to follow direction and engage in the warfare of the time. The soldiers who came home were also affected in many ways that we will never truly understand.

A series of recordings relating to the war are being played at the Australian War Memorial and on national radio stations. Two days ago I listened to a recording of a First World War veteran speaking about battlefield tragedies and the challenges and difficulties the troops faced. It was fascinating to hear his attitude towards the challenge of being in the trenches enduring machine-gun fire and shells while blood and guts surrounded him. Having reflected on the recorded history of the war I say to young Australians that during these years of commemoration they should take it upon themselves to learn more about the heroic deeds and sacrifices of soldiers such as Edward John Francis Ryan, VC, Jack Edmondson, VC, Sir Thomas Blamey and the brave James Martin. It is also important to remember the service of the thousands of other soldiers who received medals for distinguished service or who sadly paid the ultimate price and never returned to our shores.

On Monday at Cowra I had the great honour of representing the Premier and the Government as I joined with a number of eminent people to begin the commemoration ceremonies for New South Wales. We began the ceremony by gathering at the cemetery where we laid wreaths on the grave of Private Edward George Henderson, a blacksmith from Cowra. He was severely injured on the battlefield and brought back home. Sadly, he succumbed to his wounds a year later in 1919. Another soldier who was returned home was a gentleman named Major General Sir William Bridges. During the First World War it was traditional that soldiers were buried on the field where they fell. For someone to be returned home was unusual, but the body of General Bridges was returned to Australian soil to be buried. I believe his horse was also returned.

Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, Mayor Bill West, author Thomas Keneally and other distinguished guests, including the Japanese Ambassador and consul generals, joined us in laying the wreaths to commemorate the beginning of World War I and to ring the World Peace Bell. It was a moving occasion that was well attended by community members and dignitaries from around the State. Cowra is special because it is one of towns in this State that housed Japanese, Korean and other prisoners of war during the Second World War. The commemoration ceremony I attended took place just a day before the anniversary of the Cowra breakout. On 5 August 1944 the Japanese prisoners planned to break out of the compound. They decided not to attack residents of the town but to fulfil their duty as they saw it to either die facing fire or otherwise honourably. Hundreds of prisoners and four Australian soldiers lost their lives in that event. It was fitting that we met in the town that was the scene of the breakout and important that the peace bell was rung by representatives from each country that was affected by the First World War.

During the First World War the navy worked in support of the soldiers and the feats of the Australian navy as well as the submariners who navigated the straits and attacked enemy ships are well known. I believe that the navy truly honoured the Anzac commitment by providing the support the soldiers needed. Also working in support of the army were the doctors, nurses and others on the hospital ships such as the one the youngest soldier was transported to against his wishes and where he passed away. The nurses have recorded into history the events that occurred during the war. They have spoken of the helplessness of the situation they experienced at times with a lack of equipment and materials and the sheer number of wounded soldiers who needed attention.

One could spend a lifetime reading the history of Gallipoli and each war in which Australia has been involved. This commemoration is not about glorifying war; it is about acknowledging the ultimate sacrifices made and the great deeds done by Australians and other men and women throughout the world. My message to communities is to participate in these commemorations. The New South Wales Government and the national memorial are engaging with schools but I will highlight one event that I encourage people throughout my region to be involved in—that is, the re-enactment of the Kangaroo March.

I participated in the launch of the re-enactment in Wagga Wagga this year. The march will begin on 9 March 2015 and it will travel the same route that those brave men marched along 100 years ago. The march is being supported by an enthusiastic committee that has raised funds and travelled the State promoting the march and encouraging community groups and others to get involved. It is a fitting way in which to recognise the bravery of the soldiers. Other events will also occur in many communities throughout the State. One hundred years on we must show our appreciation and respect for those men and women who served us from

the beginnings of the Great War. We must also show our gratitude to the men and women who continue to serve us in places such as Afghanistan and elsewhere and who put their lives at risk daily so that our children can have peace and freedom. This is a momentous moment in our history as we commemorate the centenary of the commencement of World War I, but it is time for our country to reflect, to record, to appreciate, to show respect and to teach people—whether they were born in this land or whether they have come to this land—to understand the history of the great sacrifices and the sacrifices that continue for Australia and the safety of its citizens.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.09 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to place on record some words in relation to the centenary of the commencement of World War I, which we are commemorating this week. One hundred years ago to almost this very day our country was thrust into the first theatre of war. Some people have said that our country lost its innocence then, and perhaps that is true because at the end of that war some 60,000 brave men and women lay dead and 140,000 had been injured in what was a gruesome and tragic campaign. Young men—boys aged 15, 16 and 17 years—put up their age so that they could go to war and have what they thought would be a great adventure, but which ultimately, for many, ended in tragedy. Sadly, it was later established that hardly a family in this country was not touched by the events of that war, many losing a father, a son, a brother or an uncle.

The many wives and mothers who were to carry on in this country after World War I began laying wreaths at various places to acknowledge the passing of loved ones because there was nowhere to grieve—there were no graves for them. That very poignant moment of placing those wreaths was to be the beginning, in Albany in Western Australia, of Anzac Day, which we now commemorate every year. This debate is a great opportunity to place some personal reflections on the record, to acknowledge what our country was 100 years ago and to acknowledge what our country is today. It is also an opportunity for me to acknowledge some very important people, particularly my family.

Many members of my family contributed to the war effort, not the least of whom was my grandmother's brother Reg Allen, who participated in World War I, fighting at Beersheba and Fromelles in that tragic battle in which thousands and thousands of lives were lost in one night. He came home from that war and rarely discussed aspects of it, but I remember visiting him from time to time with my father, who he got along with very well. When I was a young boy I well remember Reg, who was well into his eighties, saying that he had bumped into a local padre—a minister—and he had said, "You've had a good life, Reg, but are you a Christian?" Reg said, "On the battlefield when the enemy came over the hill and we mowed them down I hardly think that was a Christian action." I have never forgotten that comment. He was deeply affected by his actions in the war.

I place on record the fact that the patriotism of this country has now reached a level that I do not think we have ever seen—certainly not in my lifetime. Every Anzac Day and every Australia Day it is incredible to see so many people come out to commemorate those days. It was my great pleasure to attend the Anzac Day dawn service together with my colleagues from Castle Hill and Baulkham Hills at what is known as Wrights Road Reserve. Castle Hill RSL Sub-branch, under the guidance of its president, Don Tait, and my great friend and a person I will also call a mentor, Major General Warren Glenny, who is the current president of Castle Hill RSL, put on what can only be described as a wonderful, heartwarming commemoration service at Castle Hill. Just to set the scene: about 15,000 people attended at Castle Hill last Anzac Day. Wrights Road Reserve consists of two playing fields, end to end—it is a very long green space—and it was filled to overflowing. Next year we expect to see 20,000 to 25,000 people turn up for the centenary of the beginning of this country's entry into the first theatre of war in World War I.

As I said, my family contributed in no small way to the war effort, from Reg Allen—I remember the times I spent talking to him at his wonderful historic home, which still stands proudly at Round Corner and is named, obviously, Allen House—to other members of my family. My grandfather, Cecil St Clere Williams, served on HMAS *Australia* in World War II in various battles but, most poignantly, in the Battle of the Coral Sea, which was a defining moment in the history of war, especially for our country, in holding back the Japanese forces.

Reg Allen's brother—my grandmother's younger brother—Eddy Allen unfortunately passed away and perished on the Thai-Burma railway. Following the recent popular movie *Railway Man*, images may have come back for many people who still remember members of their family and loved ones who did not return from that theatre of war or who were captured as prisoners. As I informed the House in a private member's statement some time ago, a cousin of my grandmother, John Eric Allen, was the last remaining prisoner of war in Changi

Prison. He returned to Australia from Changi and went on to lead a wonderful and interesting life as a businessman and, like me, was involved in the heavy vehicle industry. Jack Allen was a great character. My uncle Terry fought in Papua New Guinea. The member for Wagga Wagga spoke about the Cowra breakout. My uncle Terry was stationed at Cowra when the infamous Cowra breakout took place.

This debate is a great opportunity for members to place on record our great appreciation for the sacrifice, the courage and the bravery of people from right around this country in the various theatres of war. They have defined the qualities of compassion, courage and the mateship that we speak about on Anzac Day—the incredible qualities that have helped build the Australian culture of a respectful nation. We are respectful of the many different nationalities who now reside in this country. As my great friend and mentor Philip Ruddock, the Federal member for Berowra, often says: this country is the greatest immigration story in the world. Many nations could take a leaf out of our book when it comes to respecting others' opinions. Whenever we have a difference of opinion we can sit down and work through our problems rationally without demonstrating the violence that we have unfortunately seen in other countries in the past few months, which is extremely upsetting.

I acknowledge that we are not always perfect and that there will always be some unintelligent fools within our midst, regardless of their nationality, who will use some of the most offensive language, as we saw yesterday in an incident involving a busload of children. Quite rightly, this country will look down on those actions and we will condemn them because we are a respectful nation. We will continue to raise the bar in showing respect and compassion. It has been a great pleasure to share these thoughts. I look forward to hearing the contributions of other members. I acknowledge the member for Ku-ring-gai, who has been waiting patiently in the House. He was a great student of the history of war. I will sit in my office and listen intently to his contribution to this debate. I thank the member for Baulkham Hills for moving this motion.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai) [4.19 p.m.]: In December 1918 Winston Churchill wrote the following lines:

We must look forward one hundred, two hundred, three hundred years, to the time when the vast continent of Australia will contain an enormous population; and when that great population will look back through the preceding periods of time to the world-shaking episode of the Great War, and when they will seek out with the most intense care every detail of that struggle; when the movements of every battalion, of every company, will be elaborately unfolded to the gaze of all; when every family will seek to trace some connection with the heroes who landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula, or fought on the Somme, or in the other great battles in France ...

I join in this debate to commemorate the sacrifices made by so many both in those battles and here at home between 1914 and 1918. I was particularly touched by these words written by Churchill, "... when every family will seek to trace some connection with the heroes who landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula ..." Just to show that serendipity is alive and well, I will recount to the House events that have unfolded and that have affected me and my family, but in a way that has come to us with surprise. Margaret and Bruce Gow, who are people I did not know, have undertaken an adventure of which I wish to apprise the House. If I were to classify them as Australians, they would be referred to as grey nomads. I look forward to meeting them one day. This is their story—a story that they have written for publication next year, but one whose embargo, given their infrequent reading of *Hansard*, I am sure will not be broken. It is titled *The Portrait of Patrick—A quest to find the family of a young soldier*.

The photo was sepia coloured, as you would expect. The official portrait of a handsome young soldier proudly dressed in his new uniform. His face showed excitement; he was itching to go and serve his country and king.

Fragile, aged brown paper partly covered the back of the photo. Handwritten in pen and ink, three words only—Patrick John O'Farrell.

Patrick—I suppose they called him Pat or Paddy but he remained Patrick to us—was not a member of our family but we recognised a connection. Our own grandfathers had portraits like this, luckily survivors of the Great War. More photos in our family history are of great-uncles who never made it home.

Bruce's uncle, a well-known member of the RSL, was given the photo by a descendant of Patrick's mate from the First World War. The request was to return the picture to Patrick's family if possible, and if this couldn't be done, give it to the RSL at Benalla, thought to be Patrick's home town.

All this happened in about 1998. Uncle Johnny knew of Bruce's love for family history and his now considerable skill in genealogical research. At the beginning of what was to become a long and personal quest, Bruce received the photo from Uncle Johnny, together with the request to return Patrick to his family.

Once he hooks onto something, Bruce is like a dog with a bone. He knew how to tackle this challenge and assumed it would be straightforward. Never assume. He started as always, working from the known facts first. No O'Farrell is in the Benalla phone book. Benalla RSL knew nothing of Patrick or indeed any family by that name so would rather not have the photo thanks.

It was time for some real research then to find out who this man was and what happened to him. His WW1 war record was, as they are now, full of information. Two major projects, Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Mapping Our Anzacs, are fantastic resources as they have meticulously copied war records and have made them available online.

From this we found out Patrick was 5'8 ½", 11 stone 9lbs, had a fresh complexion, hazel eyes, dark hair and was Catholic. The record stated he was 24 years and 4 months old on enlistment into the AIF 5th Battalion, but we later found he was in fact born in 1894. He was in fact 21. We were not sure why he would put his age up if he was over 21 already. The first of many unanswered questions.

He had enlisted three months after Gallipoli and was indeed from north-east Victoria, his home address being a farming property near Benalla.

After the horror that was the Somme, Patrick was killed on August 11th 1918, just six weeks before the end of the war. He was 24 years old. What anguish for his loved ones as he was so close to returning home to them.

Of course, the next-of-kin was listed in Patrick's record. That was his father, Daniel from the property at Benalla. We could now learn more of the family background through some genealogical delving.

Daniel's parents were married in Ireland but Daniel was born in Australia and married an Australian girl, Ann Ellen Stewart. Daniel was the youngest of the siblings. He and Ann had a daughter and three sons, Patrick being the second child. The first two children were named after their grandparents, Mary Christina and Patrick John, the other two brothers being William and Francis.

The war record gives copies of everything in a file, including letters and even envelopes. Intriguing but frustrating, these provide tiny glimpses into Patrick's life that can never be explained. A woman living in a hotel at Tallarook wrote to the army requesting Patrick's address. A different woman, who lived in Melbourne, wrote to the army after Patrick died, wanting to know what had happened to his personal effects, which had been returned by then to his father. She then asked for a photo of Patrick's grave and received a mass produced letter with name inserted saying the photo would be taken in due course and a copy forwarded to her.

I had visions of a heart-broken young sweetheart with a copy of our photo on her sideboard. This must have been the case for so many young girlfriends and wives whose lives were shattered by the loss of their young men. So we followed up on this girl, whose name was Frances.

Her letter had been written in a terrace house in Fitzroy, where she continued to live for the rest of her life, dying unmarried in 1949. The strange fact here was her age, being fourteen years older than Patrick. What was the relationship? Was it possible they were sweethearts? Was she a good friend of the family? We will never know. A later record showed she was eventually sent the photo of Patrick's grave.

By now, after several years, we had become quite attached to our young soldier. We tried to find current family members from the information we had about his family. It was difficult because, despite having two brothers, the O'Farrell name could not be traced in the area. Further digging found both brothers had left the district decades ago. We decided we would adopt Patrick until, hopefully, one day we would be able to link up to his family. Meanwhile, he took his place in the study with the other family photos.

A few more years passed. We were packing up our house to go travelling and I was trying hard to convince our now adult children to claim all their belongings still in our house. I also wanted them to take the toys and books we kept for grandchildren's visits. So our daughter-in-law Kate and I were sorting and culling in the bedroom next to the study when we heard Bruce's voice:

"Hello, could I speak to the Premier please?"

Kate: "What on earth is he up to now?" She knows him well.

"Okay, well can you give me the email address, please?"

In a few moments, he appeared in the doorway to explain a new premier had been elected to NSW, a man called Barry O'Farrell. Clutching at straws, Bruce had "Googled" Barry O'Farrell to find he was of Irish stock, a family who had settled in the Benalla district. The dog with a bone just had to ring and ask. The email to the premier explained the story of the photo, naming family members and asking if any of the information rang a bell with Barry. What a thrill when Barry wrote to say his grandfather was William O'Farrell born at Benalla. Patrick was Barry's great-uncle! The family knew all about Patrick and grieved the fact he had died just before peace was declared. However, they had never seen a photo of him.

Bruce scanned and sent a copy of the portrait and explained next year we will take the precious original with us to Patrick's grave in France where we will recite the ode. On our return, we will pass over the photo to Barry and his family.

This year, on the Gold Coast, Bruce attended a conference opened by Barry O'Farrell. They talked briefly, and a bit emotionally, about the almost-lost photo and the long journey to finally return Patrick home.

We have had Lieutenant Patrick John O'Farrell with us for fifteen years and his story will stay with us, especially when we visit his and our family's graves on the battlefields of France and Belgium. Our grandfathers somehow survived that terrible war for which we are eternally grateful. No less grateful are we to the boys who never came home. The sacrifice and suffering of them and their families are unimaginable to us who have benefitted from their legacy. Australia lost almost a whole generation of fine young men. Per capita, we lost more than any other country.

Of course, the war that was to end all wars did not do that. A generation later, our fathers were overseas fighting for Australia and for our freedom. Again we are so grateful they returned. Patrick's other brother, Francis, had a son and named him Patrick in honour of the boy's late uncle. The young Patrick's mother died when he was five and the little boy went to Benalla to live with his grandparents Daniel and Ann until he was 14 when he moved to Melbourne.

At 19, he joined up to fight for his country as a pilot on the Lancasters. He was shot down over Hanover on a bombing raid to Germany in 1943 and is buried there. So Daniel and Ann suffered again, two Patricks, two wars, more broken hearts. Unfortunately, wars continue to rage, young men and women still die serving their country.

They all have families and stories. We have the photos and the stories of our family and they will be passed on. No doubt the same will happen for Patrick, now he is back with his family at last.

A postscript dated July 2014 was added to the article:

We have returned from France and Belgium, having visited the graves of our great-uncles and of course, Patrick. It was very moving to at last find him. It was not easy to find the specific cemetery as it was not in the town as we thought. Bruce happened to ask the right man, the mayor, and he escorted us to the cemetery out of town. It was one of the very many neat war cemeteries throughout northern France and Belgium. It's actually heartbreaking to see it all, so many millions, yes millions, of good young men lost to their families and countries.

In our luggage we had some gum leaves and a spray of eucalyptus. When the boys in the trenches got mail from home, their loved ones often included gum leaves in the letters. It was the tradition to gather any leaves and burn them in the evening in the trenches so all the Australian soldiers could share the smell of home. We sprayed the beautiful smell around generously as there were so many Australian graves. We placed the leaves on Patrick's grave, held his photo and recited the Ode, with some emotion I might add.

Now, finally, our picture of Patrick is going home to his family. We have been so privileged to be part of his long journey.

That is an extraordinary episode, an extraordinary effort by Bruce and Margaret, for which my family and I will be forever grateful. Of course, it reminds us of those 60,000 people who died, soldiers and some nurses among them, and the impact it had on their families. As Churchill said in 1918, it is right that at this time, as we seek to commemorate the horrors of that war that set up for us, particularly in this country, the opportunities that too often we take for granted, that so many were lost, so many who would have made a significant contribution to this country, people who would have sat in places like this, in business, the arts and other things, and excelled, as Australians are oft to excel. That is my tribute to those who fought in the Great War. It is my tribute to the efforts of Bruce and Margaret, and many others like them, who keep alive not only the memory of those who died but the point of why they did. I finish with the words of the poet A. E. Housman:

Here dead we lie
Because we did not choose
To live and shame the land
From which we sprung.

Life, to be sure,
Is nothing much to lose,
But young men think it is,
And we were young.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I thank the member for Ku-ring-gai for such a personal tribute to this year in which we recognise and remember what was achieved 100 years ago by so many young people. With his personal and family experience the member for Ku-ring-gai has highlighted how young these gentlemen were and what they did for us to be able to sit here, continue to debate and enjoy this wonderful country.

Debated adjourned on motion by Ms Sonia Hornery and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I recognise Yukinari-Shimada San from Japan, a member of the Japan-Australia Parliamentary Friendship Association of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly.

Government business having concluded, discussion on the petition signed by more than 10,000 persons will now be proceeded with.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES FUNDING

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [4.34 p.m.]: I am proud and willing to speak about public library funding. I have been presented with a petition signed by 10,000 people. I understand that the petition continues

and has been re-presented to the Parliament—and it might be presented again, because so many people in New South Wales clearly are concerned about the future of libraries. There are hundreds of thousands of public library users across our great State. I doubt whether any member of the House would need to be convinced about the value of public libraries. How many children have developed a love of reading by meeting Peter Pan or Atticus Finch in a public library? How many of those same children could have afforded to buy all the books they have read for free? How many people have pursued a passion later in life through their public library?

As an example, think of all the family trees and local histories which have been pieced together in the records sections of public libraries across our State. One cannot put a dollar value on these things. However, dollar values are precisely what this petition is about. This petition is needed because public libraries in New South Wales have been the victim of a lengthy, systemic and bipartisan process of cost-shifting. They have been treated like an ATM for the State Government to plunder whenever it was short of cash. As time has gone on, more and more of the load has been passed from the State Government to local governments.

When the New South Wales Library Act was introduced in 1939, a 50:50 funding split was proposed. By 1980 we had whittled our contribution down to 23 per cent. Today our State Government contributes just 7 per cent of the costs of running 377 public libraries, while local councils pay the rest. Those facts are not asserted to make a partisan political point. The decay of State funding for public libraries in New South Wales is a pox on both our houses. There has been a lot of jubilation in New South Wales of late on account of our great sporting successes, from the State of Origin to the Waratahs victory at the weekend, for example. While we may be winning on the sporting field, we are losing in some vital measures. New South Wales contributes less per capita to run our public libraries than any other State in the country. In my view this failure to support a system which educates and fosters curiosity in our people brings our State into disrepute, regardless of what our football teams may do.

This deterioration has been a gradual process. New South Wales libraries find themselves shackled to an unfair, inflexible and now inadequate base funding system, whereby the State Government is required to provide only \$1.85 per capita to each council to support their library services. This figure has not been indexed to population growth or the consumer price index. So as the cost of running a library goes up, the funding from the State Government stays the same. It is little wonder then that the State's proportion of the funding burden has shrunk so dramatically. Our contribution at a State level has stagnated while costs have ballooned. What was 23 per cent in 1980 is now only 7 per cent of the cost. Reform of this constricting basis for the funding system is the primary motivation of this petition, and it is an aim that I wholeheartedly support.

A response to the tabling of this petition stated that the Government had increased public library funding to record levels through an additional \$15 million for the Public Library Infrastructure Program. Whilst welcome, this short-term injection of money fails to address the structural problems in the library funding system. It has been precisely this piecemeal approach that has brought about the current difficulties and inequities. The real reform needs to be targeted at the day-to-day funding of libraries, not one-off projects and programs for which councils must apply. For library advocates the nightmare scenario is that the inequality of current arrangements will lead a council somewhere to withdraw from the Library Act. The likely result of such a move would be that councils could start running libraries on a fee-for-service basis, which would completely undermine the function and purpose of libraries.

Such a development could see the public library system completely unravel. This is not a fringe issue. Forty-four per cent of people in our State hold a library card. To put that in context, if every library card holder voted for the same party in March that party could form government without another vote being cast its way. The New South Wales Public Libraries Association, which should be commended for the constructive, informative and non-partisan approach it has taken during its campaign, has used the slogan "Library Lovers Vote Too." If they are right the statistics show what impact they could have in 2015. I am proud to have some magnificent public libraries in my electorate. In preparing for this debate today I looked through the calendar for the coming week at Cessnock library. I saw book clubs, internet and information technology [IT] classes, knitting groups, film screenings, story time for kids and a young creative writing group.

In just one week of its calendar Cessnock library showed me everything that a library is supposed to do. Every week hundreds of people of all ages and backgrounds go in there and learn something. They expand their social connections and broaden their imaginations. In my opinion the greatest thing one can do for someone, regardless of their age, is to teach them something. Our State has 377 of these sanctuaries which nurture learning and research. We must do better for them.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [4.39 p.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to discuss the ongoing support that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition has given to public libraries across the State. I acknowledge Mr Graham Smith and colleagues from the NSW Public Library Associations who have joined us in the gallery today and thank them for taking the time to meet with me this morning. I am confident that after that meeting they are acutely aware they have a supportive Minister as we pursue the challenges for public libraries in the future.

This year marks the seventy-fifth year of the passage of the Library Act 1939. The Act was introduced in order that the people of New South Wales could have access to library and information services. It is important to note that the Library Act 1939 was introduced by a Coalition Government. That Act was the first free public library Act and a landmark for Australia. It encouraged councils to open and operate free public libraries through the provision of an annual subsidy. In 1939 there were just two free public libraries in New South Wales, operated by the City of Sydney and Broken Hill councils respectively. Today, all of the 152 New South Wales councils have adopted the Act. There are 369 public libraries across New South Wales, with a further 34 satellite locations, and 20 mobile libraries servicing small and isolated communities.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition has a long and proud history of championing local libraries. In 1991 the former member for Willoughby and Minister for the Arts, Peter Collins, introduced a new formula to account for characteristics that make it more expensive for a local government area to provide library services. The five factors within that formula include: the number of children under five, the number of people over 65, the number of people speaking a language other than English, council isolation and dispersed populations. Councils that are above the New South Wales average in any of these factors are allocated extra funds. This ensures that extra funding is provided to country councils and Western Sydney councils in particular. A variation on this formula still exists today.

On winning government in 2011, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition introduced the Revitalising Regional Libraries policy, which has delivered an additional \$4 million in funding over four years. This initiative has been a great success and has seen 83 country councils identify their needs and receive grants of \$16,000 to improve facilities, purchase collections, and upgrade information technology [IT]. All 111 regional and rural councils will receive funding over four years. Impressively, the wi-fi hotspot rollout component of this initiative has connected 113 wi-fi hotspots in country libraries to date, with more to come. In the first term of this Government, the Library Amendment Bill 2011 was introduced, giving local councils the power to unlock the potential for collaboration on the provision of libraries and library services. This year the Government granted a record \$27.5 million to public libraries. This includes the introduction of the new Public Libraries Infrastructure grant alluded to by my friend, with \$15 million over four years allocated to further assist councils to improve library building spaces and IT infrastructure. This Government has done more than any other government to support public libraries and give them the infrastructure they need to improve their services and reduce that burden.

The Government has consistently demonstrated a better understanding of the challenges faced by smaller councils. The most recent survey found that public libraries across this State enjoy over 35 million visits per annum, lend over 46 million items and provide over five million internet sessions to the public. The support and access to infrastructure funding this Government has made available to local councils across New South Wales has played a significant role in improving the amenity and relevance of public libraries, helping them to meet the changing needs of our communities. In my electorate alone, Forbes Shire Council was able to access some of this library development grant and I know how important that has been to it.

I found helpful the meeting I had with the NSW Public Library Associations this morning. In relation to the Library Council of NSW, I am aware that increased funding is desirable to assist New South Wales councils in being able to continue to maintain and develop quality library services and ancillary services for the people of New South Wales. However, I argue that merely growing the per capita subsidy will only benefit councils with larger populations and a greater rating capacity. The preferred approach of this Government is to support councils that face greater challenges to deliver library services in a more structured and more appropriate manner. The Government has maintained and increased its contributions to local councils and libraries and, despite the tight budget circumstances it inherited, will continue to do so. The tabled petition shows the commitment of local communities to their public libraries. As the Minister I can say that the Government and I will continue to work with local councils, through the State Library and with the NSW Public Library Associations, to achieve a brighter future for the people of New South Wales.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.44 p.m.]: I am pleased that the Minister is supportive of libraries and the NSW Public Library Associations. I now ask the Minister to put his hand in his pocket and to show us evidence of his good faith. We are happy for the Government to fund local governments, both big and small.

Mr Troy Grant: It is a shame Labor didn't do anything for 16 years.

Ms SONIA HORNER: I will not concern myself with that comment. Libraries are important to all of us. When I was teaching at Kempsey High School in the 1990s, one of the conservative councillors on Kempsey council at the time opposed more funding for the Kempsey library because he said—that famous quote—he had not read a book in his life and it had never harmed him. Some conservative councils have been dragged kicking and screaming into the twenty-first century to ensure that their libraries are better funded. My learned colleague on this side of the House spoke about the problems relating to cost shifting. We know that has happened with local governments in many areas and it has affected libraries. The burden placed on local government to support libraries is too great and we want to see it lightened. Let us go back to the good old days of the 1930s when 50 per cent of the funding for local libraries came from the State Government. We ask the Minister to return to such a funding system. I wonder whether he has the courage of his conviction and a sufficient love for libraries to look seriously at returning to that system.

Libraries are a fantastic resource for the community but only if we can afford to pay to staff them. Another matter for the Minister to consider is the future of libraries. I take my hat off to the NSW Public Library Associations because I know how hard its members work. I thank them for that. My colleague the member for Cessnock spoke eloquently in debate and I wish to reiterate some of the points that he raised. At 7¢ in the dollar, the New South Wales Government's contribution to the maintenance of public libraries is the lowest of all States in Australia. It is time that that changed. Local councils in New South Wales fund 93 per cent of the cost of their public libraries. Let us bring New South Wales to the point where it is the highest funder of public libraries in Australia. I would thank the Government if it did that. I ask the Liberal-Nationals Government to honour the promise it made before the last election—to increase funding for libraries. Let us put our hands in our pockets to fund adequately the libraries that we love.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [4.47 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak in this debate and to commend all those who worked so hard to collect the petitions. The fact that so many petitions were signed indicates the importance of this issue to the people of New South Wales. It is appropriate for us to discuss these matters in the Parliament today. This petition indicates the high regard that the people of New South Wales have for public libraries. The Government shares that high regard and it has delivered on its election commitment to review public library funding. The review was undertaken by the Library Council of New South Wales in 2012, in consultation with stakeholders, including the NSW Public Library Associations and Local Government NSW.

The issue of public library funding is being considered as part of the 2014-15 budget process. As a former councillor and chair of the South Coast Cooperative Library Service, I have a high regard for the work that is done by public libraries. I also regard highly the work of library staff and the vast array of resources that are available. I note that my friend the member for Cessnock mentioned a few of them. I have also tabled a 10,000-signature petition in this place to this effect. I look forward to continuing to stand up for public libraries.

The Government increased public library funding from 2011-12 with a \$4 million Revitalising Regional Libraries initiative and it is committed to assisting councils to improve their public libraries building on the 75-year relationship between the New South Wales Government and local government for the development of libraries under the Library Act 1939. All members would remember the discussion on the Library Amendment Bill 2011. The extent of that discussion reflects how strongly members feel about their local libraries.

I pay regard to the libraries at Kiama, Gerringong, Albion Park and those in the Shoalhaven. Local councils operate 377 public libraries across New South Wales. Libraries are more relevant than ever before with impressive growth in usage statistics in recent years. Visits have grown to more than 35 million per annum—an increase of more than 20 per cent since 2001. Loans of books and other materials have grown to more than 46 million per annum. In addition, more than 2.7 million internet hours are used each year in public libraries. Impressively, 3.3 million citizens of New South Wales are members of their local libraries, making libraries one of the most popular community facilities that a local government can offer.

This growth in usage and the continued spread of libraries across New South Wales do not indicate a sector that is in crisis. It is a commendable result that councils are continuing to develop library services to meet demand, and the State Government continues to assist. It is notable that Byron shire opened a new library in 2013 which was assisted by a State Government Library Development Grant of \$200,000—and I know that there are others to come. I am proud to stand up for public libraries and in particular for library users in my community. I commend the petitioners and thank all those who contributed to this important debate.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LISA MAREE BAILEY

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, Assistant Minister for Health) [4.52 p.m.]: Today I recognise Lisa Maree Bailey, a great young woman and friend who tragically was lost. Today would have been her birthday and I take this opportunity to remember her. I know that the Liberal family mourns for her today. Lisa was the campaign manager for us at the last State election. She was an intelligent, hardworking person and everyone that was blessed to be in her company always felt happiness. She looked after us and always had a smile. A friend of hers had this to say about her death:

Too special to remain on earth. You had succeeded to achieve what you came to do. You needed your wings again, to soar higher than you did here on earth, to love and protect others. On behalf of all who knew you, rest in peace. We miss you Lisa.

I remind all those who might be listening to this debate that anyone who needs assistance can call Lifeline on 13 11 14, the State mental health line on 1800 011 511 and beyondblue on 1300 224 636.

JEANS FOR GENES DAY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.52 p.m.]: Today I wish to recognise the twenty-first anniversary of Jeans for Genes Day. On 1 August at 8.00 a.m. a celebration was held at Liverpool railway station to mark this anniversary. It was held on the railway concourse with the sale of cakes, muffins, doughnuts, sausages and the like. It also involved cutting a birthday cake. The aim of Jeans for Genes Day is the worthy cause of raising money to help fight childhood disease. The Liverpool event was organised by Liverpool railway station staff, train crew and management who all deserve to be congratulated on their efforts. In particular, I acknowledge and congratulate Regina Naidu, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union guards secretary, Liverpool subdivision. Also in attendance at the celebration was Charishma Kaliyanda, Labor candidate for Holsworthy.

FORSTER-TUNCURRY LIONS CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.53 p.m.]: After more than 10 years of work volunteer members of the Lions Club of Forster-Tuncurry have completed the boardwalk at the southern end of One Mile Beach in Forster. Along with the boardwalk, the project involved the construction of two sets of steps. The boardwalk meanders through lush tropical vegetation for more than 200 metres and ends at a lookout with views towards the ocean. The steps provide access to the beach and at one set of steps is a shower for swimmers. Signs recognising the work of the Lions Club, which have been created by the Great Lakes Council, were installed by Lions Club President George Gianniotis, Lions Bob Stout, Greg Butterworth and Jim Britton.

HUNTER BLACKBUTT RESERVE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.54 p.m.]: Yet again the Hunter Blackbutt Reserve was given gold as the top tourist attraction at the Hunter Central Coast Awards for Excellence in Tourism with 55 finalists entered in 22 categories of awards. I congratulate all the staff and volunteers who worked tirelessly to make Blackbutt the special natural hub that it rightfully is. Hats off to Blackbutt Reserve and my compliments to the Hunter Valley Gardens Snow Time in the Garden event that won the prestigious gold in the best festival event category at the Hunter Central Coast Awards for Excellence in Tourism. Well done Snow Time and Hunter Valley Gardens.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES GOLD MEDALLIST CAMERON PILLEY

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [4.55 p.m.]: I congratulate Cameron Pilley who, along with his team mate, David Palmer, won gold in the men's squash doubles at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. Cameron comes from a sporting family that resides in Yamba. Both he and his younger brother, Morgan, are natural sportsmen and have records for a number of sports across New South Wales over a number of years. Cameron was a noted cricketer in his younger years before focusing on squash and Morgan was a great squash and hockey player and is now cycling for a European team which I believe is Italian. Parents Steve and Sue should be extremely proud of the achievements of both their sons. They are both decent, humble role models, and I wish them continued success in the future. Well done, Cameron. We are very proud of you.

MR AND MRS GOETZ SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.56 p.m.]: In June I had the pleasure of visiting Mr and Mrs Goetz to present them with a certificate of congratulations on their sixtieth wedding anniversary. This lovely couple met at the Lutheran Church on Goulburn Street, Sydney, and three months later, on 9 June 1954, they were married at the same church. Together the couple raised four children—two boys and two girls—in Cabramatta. They now have six grandchildren. Mrs Goetz came to Australia with her family on 27 April 1949 from Germany but she was born in the Ukraine. She has lived in Cabramatta since 1952 which is also the year Mr Goetz came to Australia to work as a baker. On behalf of my community I congratulate Mr and Mrs Goetz on their sixtieth wedding anniversary. Not many people can say that they have been married for 60 years.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AWARD RECIPIENT STEVE FERRIS

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.57 p.m.]: I recognise Mr Steve Ferris for his dedication and commitment to the Glen Innes Masonic Village Aged Care Facility and congratulate him on being awarded a State Award for Excellence from Aged and Community Services NSW. Since 2009 Mr Ferris has been working as a volunteer at the centre five days a week, contributing six hours a day and sometimes starting as early as 7.30 a.m. He provides support and assistance to residents wherever and whenever he is needed. His long and tireless commitment is an example to others who care for and support members of our aged communities. As the State finalist Mr Ferris will now progress to the National Aged Care Awards in September. I congratulate Mr Ferris on this great achievement and wish him all the best and every success at the National Aged Care Awards finals, and for his future volunteering efforts.

LETHBRIDGE PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL RUGBY LEAGUE TEAM

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.58 p.m.]: Lethbridge Park Public School won the Open B Division at the seventieth annual New South Wales Rugby League Carnival. Congratulations to coach Matt Kean and all the players and supporters on this great achievement. A report this week states that the team maintained a solid lead throughout its five matches, allowing only one try past its defence. To win the carnival, Lethbridge Park defeated St Kieran's Manly Vale 20-0, Kyogle Public School 28-0, Colo Vale Public School 32-0 and Chatham Public School 24-6 before defeating Banksmeadow Public School 10-0 in the final. This result is another example of the sporting achievements of young people from the Mount Druitt area, and the sporting achievements of students attending public schools in our State.

ROSEVILLE CHASE ROTARY CLUB FUN RUN

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [4.59 p.m.]: I recognise the wonderful efforts of the Rotary Club of Roseville Chase in organising its annual Fun Run on 27 July. Along with many other community members, I started running from Castle Cove Oval on what was a delightful and wintery Sunday morning. The many hills on the 10-kilometre course were a challenge, but excellent training for the City2Surf next Sunday. I make special mention of the inspirational Martin Gillespie, who was receiving chemotherapy only 18 months ago and whose encouragement as he ran the course helped me to surge to the finish. Congratulations to event organiser Duncan Campbell, the Roseville Chase Rotary team and all the others who contributed to holding a great five-kilometre and 10-kilometre event.

RAMADAN AND EID-AL-FITR CELEBRATIONS

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.59 p.m.]: I congratulate our Muslim community on the celebration of Eid-al-Fitr, to mark the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan. Throughout the month of Ramadan, I had the opportunity to attend various community Iftars which were organised by councils, community organisations, police, schools and many families. Ramadan is a period of prayer, fasting, charity giving and self-accountability for Muslims in Australia. I was delighted to attend the many Iftar dinners and in particular, as the shadow Minister for Youth, the Lebanese Muslim Association Creating Connections Iftar dinner. I was delighted to hear the speeches of a number of distinguished youth leaders and media representatives. I take this opportunity to congratulate Sahar Dandan, Program Director of the Engage, Challenge, Grow program initiative. On Monday 29 July I was honoured to accept an invitation by Samier Dandan, President of the Lebanese Muslim Association to join thousands of worshippers who gathered at Lakemba Mosque for morning prayers as the festivities of Eid al-Fitr began.

KIAMA ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.00 p.m.]: On Monday 23 June I was pleased to attend the Rotary Club of Kiama's sixty-second changeover dinner held at Kiama Leagues Club. I acknowledge the outgoing president, Bill Humphreys, and congratulate the new president, Ian Johnston. I acknowledge Rotary District Governor Garry Browne and Mayor Brian Petschler, who gave the mayoral welcome address. I acknowledge my friend and local newsagent Bruce Johnston, and also Dick Groom, Heather Morton and John Kenny on their contributions in making this evening a successful and enjoyable one.

On Sunday 29 June I was pleased to attend the Rotary Club of Gerringong Sunrise's eleventh annual changeover luncheon held at Mountain Ridge Winery in Coolangatta. I acknowledge the retiring president, Robyn Dalley, and congratulate the new president, Steve Prosser. I also acknowledge Rotary District Governor Maureen Manning; Secretary Pauline Thwaites; Treasurer Jeff Quine; Mark Cuthbertson; Val Cuthbertson; Heather Williams, who performed the welcome to guests and closing remarks; Graham St Clair; Rhonda Pooley; David Broadley; Roger Drury; Len Bolden, member of the Order of Australia; Sandra McCarthy; Bob Waite; and Tim Lawrence for their service and involvement with our local community through Gerringong Sunrise Rotary.

THE AGED-CARE RIGHTS SERVICE

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [5.00 p.m.]: I recognise the work of The Aged-Care Rights Service [TARS], which is an independent legal centre specialising in giving advice and representing older people. I thank TARS for the support it has given to older public housing tenants being relocated from Millers Point. TARS is a member of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People and this year achieved accreditation by the United Nations. Last week TARS solicitor Kim Boettcher spoke to the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing in New York, where she recognised the value and importance of older people to our communities and the need to ensure that the rights of older people are protected. I commend the work of TARS and recognise the importance of its commitment to protecting older residents in Sydney.

NATIONAL TRUST AWARD RECIPIENT NOEL LEACH

MR AND MRS MCINTOSH SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.01 p.m.]: I acknowledge Mr Noel Leach, who has been honoured with the National Trust Award for his company Noel T. Leach Builders. I especially congratulate him on his contribution to the impressive restoration of Tempe House in my electorate of Rockdale. It was his work in restoring Tempe House that generated his interest in heritage buildings. At 79 years of age, after continuing with heritage works exclusively, Mr Leach has now entrusted his business to his family. I thank Mr Leach for his past contributions and wish him well for the future. It is with pleasure that I extend my congratulations to Mr David and Mrs Colleen McIntosh, residents of Brighton-Le-Sands, on the occasion of their sixtieth wedding anniversary, which is today, 7 August 2014. I hope they enjoy their special day.

SEEK A SKILL CAREERS EXPO

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.02 p.m.]: I had the pleasure of attending the Seek a Skill Careers Expo at Fairfield High where I met a number of local tradespeople and engaged young individuals. The careers expo was a great success. It was a wonderful opportunity for local youth to discover a range of amazing career options to set in their sights. I congratulate the number of partners involved in hosting a Seek A Skill Careers Expo and the many local schools for their participation on the day. I acknowledge and thank Fairfield High School and the members of the parents' cafe for providing the hospitality on the day.

SURFER CONNOR O'LEARY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.02 p.m.]: I congratulate Cronulla surfer Connor O'Leary who was recently runner-up at the ASP three-star rated Murasaki Shonan Open in Japan. As a result of competing he climbed from ninety-third to sixty-third in the ASP rankings, which means he is seeded into the higher-rated events as he seeks to qualify for the top 34 on the elite ASP World Champion Tour. Earlier this year Connor took out the Wayne "Rabbit" Bartholomew medal for the best male surfer at the inaugural Australian Boardriders Battle over the Australia Day weekend at North Cronulla beach. I look forward to seeing Connor compete in January next year at the second series of the Australian Boardriders Battle in Cronulla.

MALAYSIA AIRLINES FLIGHT MH17

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.03 p.m.]: It is not often that a local member of Parliament can stand in this place and state with certainty that his or her community is of one mind about any matter. However, today I inform the House of the collective grief that is being experienced in the diverse and vibrant communities that I am honoured to represent at the senseless slaughter of the MH17 passengers and crew. I thank everyone who took the time to sign the condolence book in my electorate office. Many others have accessed the online condolence book. It is also appropriate to acknowledge the efforts of the *Auburn Review*, which publicised the availability of the books in various locations.

The reality of this unbelievably cruel act on the other side of the world was brought even closer to our local homes and hearts as we mourned the loss of one of our own. Lidcombe man Victor Oreshkin was active in the ministry of the Lidcombe Slavic Evangelical Church and was involved in running youth conferences. Victor was the youngest of four children. His wonderful parents told me that Victor was always full of love for his extended family. By all accounts, Victor Oreshkin was a gentle and compassionate human being. He was only 29 years old. The simple message outside Regents Park Christian School highlighted that it was a young life violently cut short. The sign read: "Victor Oreshkin, Class of 2002". Our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and friends of every victim of this horrific crime. May they all rest in peace.

ROTARY CLUB OF THE HILLS-KELLYVILLE

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.04 p.m.]: Congratulations to the Rotary Club of The Hills-Kellyville, which was awarded the District Governor's Shield for small clubs. It is one of 80 clubs in District 9685 that goes from Lithgow to the Premier's electorate of Manly. The fact that it was able to achieve so much is a testament to the hard work of Robert Mackey and the other 22 members of the club. It took over the management of Jazz at the Pines and will once again run the Orange Blossom Festival garden competition, which has not been held for a number of years. It has supported the Bourke Public School's Breakfast Club, which has helped to increase the school's attendance and improve students' literacy and numeracy skills. Furthermore, its international projects include working with other Hills-based clubs to establish an eye unit at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital in Sri Lanka. I congratulate Robert Mackey and his team on a successful year and give my best wishes to incoming president Ian Pearce, as he grows and improves the club over the next 12 months.

FAIRFIELD FOOD SERVICES FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [5.05 p.m.]: On 23 May I attended the Fairfield Food Services fiftieth anniversary celebration. Previously known as the Fairfield Meals on Wheels, volunteers of the organisation have worked tirelessly over the past half a century to deliver food to disabled or elderly residents. Not only does Fairfield Food Services provide nutritious meals, the volunteers also socialise and spend time with its clients, many of whom find comfort, security and independence by staying in their homes. Impressively, this organisation caters to linguistically and culturally diverse clients, which is a significant service to provide in the multicultural area of Fairfield. When this organisation was established it delivered services to two clients. However, it has grown to deliver services to 250 people within their own homes or through communal dining. I thank Fairfield Food Services and the volunteers for their work.

BIRTH OF POLLY JOAN DERHAM

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.06 p.m.]: Today I am pleased to report to the House the arrival of Polly Joan Derham at the Orange Health Service. Polly's mum, Anna, works in the Orange electorate office on a part-time basis. I offer the congratulations of the House to proud mum Anna, proud dad Matt, and Polly's brother, Fred. Anna has reported that Polly is sporting a shock of dark hair and has a great set of lungs. I welcome Polly Joan Derham to the world and pass on the best wishes of the House to the whole Derham family.

BURRINJUCK ELECTORATE MEN'S SHEDS

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjack—Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events) [5.07 p.m.]: I wish to use the time for community recognition statements to recognise the Men's Shed movement across my Burrinjack electorate. Men's sheds are located in Yass, Cootamundra, Boorowa, Harden Young, Cowra, Gundagai, Grenfell, and Crookwell and at many more locations

across the Burrinjuck electorate. I thank the volunteers who create a great place for men to relax, unwind and seek advice on all sorts of matters, including health. They engage in woodwork, metallurgy and charity work for the broader community and so much more. I take this opportunity to thank the Men's Shed movement for its work in the Burrinjuck electorate.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROSEMOUNT GOOD SHEPHERD YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [5.09 p.m.]: Tonight I make a private member's statement about the good work of the Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services in my electorate. Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services was established in 1982 to meet the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged young people in Sydney. It provides an innovative range of services designed to address the social and economic exclusion of young people and their families. Rosemount's hardworking staff, under the capable leadership of chief executive officer Lyn Harrison, have made a difference to the lives of many young people in the inner west. It is always inspiring to attend their end of year graduation ceremonies to see how proud the young people are to be receiving an educational qualification despite the adversity they have suffered in their lives.

The Rosemount Good Shepherd runs a Youth Connections program for young people. Unfortunately, as a result of the Federal budget and the Abbott Government's push to make States entirely responsible for education programs, it has had its funding cut. This program provided support and mentoring to young people who had struggled at school to keep them connected to education. Evaluations of the Youth Connections program found overwhelming evidence that the program was improving outcomes for young people. Over the past four years Rosemount Good Shepherd had run a Youth Connections program in Marrickville and achieved amazing results.

I have met with some of the students in this program and their commitment to completing their secondary education is impressive—girls like Taylor, a 17-year-old Aboriginal student who has been studying through the program for four years. Taylor has achieved the highest level of education of anyone in her family. Her aim is to study medicine and her reports indicate that she is on track to achieve her dreams. Taylor's dream, along with nine other girls due to go on to years 11 or 12 next year, risked being derailed by cuts to the Youth Connections program. Unfortunately, Rosemount's cries for help fell on deaf ears, with neither the Commonwealth nor the State Government willing to restore the funding or help in some other way so this innovative and successful program could continue. In true Rosemount style, the organisation did not give up but sought to take its case to the broader community. Representatives came to see me and I raised their plight with constituents to increase awareness of and support for the program in the community.

Media outlets including Channel 10, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Inner City Weekly* and 3CR covered the story, giving the girls the chance to make an impassioned plea for the program to continue so that they could continue their education. Rosemount launched a change.org petition calling on the State and Federal governments to reinstate funding for these students. This received more than 69,000 signatures in support of the students. Rosemount also asked for donations so that it could continue to fund the program. The online donation campaign raised \$8,311. The students held a cake stall at the Addison Road markets in Marrickville. They spent all Saturday baking and raised \$400. More importantly, they received a lesson in resilience and how to garner community support. Towards the end of June, Rosemount received the wonderful news that a family foundation would support the students by providing \$100,000. This means that Rosemount has almost raised enough funds to keep the program going for the next two years, so at least the girls can complete their Higher School Certificate.

I congratulate Lyn and all the staff and students at Rosemount on their enthusiastic campaign in support of education. I also acknowledge the very generous support they have received from the community. While this may be a good outcome for Rosemount, unfortunately there are many students in Youth Connections programs across the State that will not be so lucky. Youth unemployment is a matter of enormous concern. A recent Brotherhood of St Laurence report revealed that youth unemployment has been on the rise over the past two

years, with youth unemployment representing just under 40 per cent of all unemployment in Australia. According to the report, the global financial crisis has had a "scarring impact" on the job prospects of Australia's young people.

We know that the better educated a young person is, the better chance they have of finding and keeping a job. But we also know that for a number of reasons mainstream schooling does not work for every young person. They may have been bullied at school, missed a lot of school or simply find it difficult to learn in a classroom with 30 or so other students. That is why programs like Youth Connections and organisations like Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services are so important. They provide an opportunity, a chance, for young people to gain their education in an environment that is more conducive to their learning style. As the Brotherhood of St Laurence report put it:

Youth Connections have helped over 70,000 young Australians who had disengaged or were at risk of disengaging from education or employment. Remarkably, they have demonstrated that around 95% of the participants in this program got through the thirteen week period—and were still in work or study six months later.

I call on both State and Federal governments to look carefully at this program to see whether they can find a way to continue funding it. I congratulate all the staff and students at Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services in Marrickville.

HOMELESSNESS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.12 p.m.]: At the outset, I congratulate the member for Clarence on his elevation to the position of Acting-Speaker. As members will be aware, this week marks Homeless Persons Week and, as the Minister for Family Community Services said in this place, it is a time to reflect on and take stock of the stark reality of homelessness across our communities. It is also a time to acknowledge and congratulate the hardworking homeless service providers and local individuals who do amazing work to help those who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Unfortunately, the prevalence of homelessness in all our communities is far too high. In fact, the statistics show that between 2006 and 2011 the overall number of homeless unfortunately increased by 27 per cent despite the best efforts of the Labor Government.

I am pleased to be part of this Government, which is changing the way that homelessness services are delivered across our community and changing the focus from crisis management to early intervention and prevention. The South Coast is the beneficiary of the New South Wales Government's Going Home Staying Home reforms, with an additional \$1.04 million secured for services in our region this year alone. Further, for the first time government funding has been received to provide integrated support for homeless men, something we had no funding for in the past. This service will be provided through the St Vincent de Paul Society, which does amazing work at its shelter in Nowra and at the Jim de Silva Farm.

I acknowledge that these reforms have been extremely difficult and I am disappointed that certain existing providers on the South Coast were unsuccessful in securing funding through the tender process. Shoalhaven Youth Accommodation services is one of the unsuccessful tenderers but it is to be commended for the work it has done. I know the people who work there and I am aware of their efforts in assisting homeless youth in the community. However, I am pleased that funding for youth-specific homelessness services across the Shoalhaven has more than doubled under the Going Home Staying Home reforms. Approximately \$425,000—an increase of \$231,000 on last year—has been provided to CareSouth, a Nowra-based organisation, to assist homeless youth and those at risk of homelessness. So in fact the money allocated to the previous provider has doubled under the current youth homeless provider.

Whilst some service providers have changed, there is more funding to continue and to grow those services. The New South Wales Government also has a transition plan in place, with transitional funding available and new money accessible for unsuccessful service providers. I will be discussing those arrangements with Shoalhaven Youth Accommodation next week. Under the New South Wales Government's reforms there are more services in my area for young people, for men for the very first time, for women, for families and for Aboriginal people. In fact, the Illawarra Shoalhaven Family and Community Services district will receive \$6.97 million in 2014, which is an increase of 18 per cent from last year. Also, \$442,000 has been provided for specific family support services across the South Coast and \$646,000 is being allocated to assist homeless women and to deliver domestic and family violence support.

As I have stated, the St Vincent de Paul Society has received \$718,500 to provide services for homeless men and, as stated previously, CareSouth will receive \$425,000 to assist homeless youth specifically in the

community. It is disappointing that the Opposition appears not to be supporting additional funding for homelessness services on the South Coast. I note that on a flying visit to the South Coast the shadow Minister for Housing did not offer any alternatives and did not seem to have any plans or solutions to fix the current scourge of homelessness in our community. The shadow Minister, like her Labor colleagues and candidates, continued a campaign of misinformation—I have to call it what it is: complete misinformation. Rather than offering any new plans or policies to fix a broken system after 16 years of Labor mismanagement and failure and rising homelessness figures—27 per cent, in fact—

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: The comments of the member for South Coast are outside the scope of a private member's statement. The member has now gone well beyond the accepted norms of what is appropriate content for a private member's statement.

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

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: It is clear that we could not continue to do the same things that had been done for decades and expect a different outcome. We had to change the way that we delivered services; we had to reform a process that was not working. Homelessness had increased by 27 per cent. As a responsible Government, we had to look at those figures and change the way that we did business. I suggest that those who continue to criticise the reform process consider the increased funding and the new service providers on the South Coast, who are local. I congratulate, in particular, the Minister for Family and Community Services, Gabrielle Upton, and the former Minister, Pru Goward, on their efforts in undertaking such significant reform that was required to help the most vulnerable in our community.

RETIREMENT OF DAVID WHITE

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events) [5.17 p.m.]: I also congratulate the member for Clarence on his elevation to the position of Acting-Speaker. Today I will talk about electorate officers in the Burrinjuck electorate office. Currently I have three staff members: two who share one electorate office position and another in the senior position. Gaenor Bingley and Margot Shannon have performed outstandingly in the shared electorate office position. However, somebody in my office has just retired, and his name is David White. David started working with me on 4 September 2000 and he retired on 31 July 2014. When an electorate officer has been with you for that long—almost 14 years—you get to know them reasonably well. You share their highs and lows, their hurdles and challenges. You are almost one big happy family. David White's service to the Burrinjuck electorate has been outstanding over that almost 14-year period.

An electorate officer is on the front line. They answer telephone calls and represent members when they are away from their electorate office—for example, when we are at Parliament House, attending meetings et cetera. What happens on the front line is very important. Constituents need to know that when they contact an electorate office they will be given true and correct information. Courtesy must always be extended to them and their inquiries must be dealt with promptly. Constituents also need to know that an electorate officer, as the member's representative, will act with integrity. I am the Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events but the majority of inquiries to the Burrinjuck electorate office relate to community service issues and disabilities or come from those experiencing real hardship who are in need of some respite.

Electorate staff must also maintain confidentiality. In a small community everyone knows each other's business, but when one really knows someone's business in a small town one has to be able to keep it to oneself. I pay my respects to David White and thank him for the amazing service he has given to the Burrinjuck electorate over the past 14 years. David pays great attention to detail. He writes terrific letters and speeches. He insists on returning calls promptly and giving people the required information. During his time at the Burrinjuck office David has touched thousands of lives. He cares and always helps people in whatever way he can. As a member of Parliament, you get to know the personalities of your staff well. David has some great interests, including the Navy and woodwork. He made a billycart once in the shape of an Army tank. One Saturday morning he gave it a test run down Yeo Street, Yass. The following Monday he came to work with his arm in a sling and a photograph of a busted billycart that did not go so well in its test run.

In his retirement David is going to enjoy working at the men's shed at Yass with a lot of his mates. Of all the issues David has dealt with over the past 14 years there will be a couple he will not miss—wind farms would have to be one. Wind farms are a big issue in my electorate. Reflecting on all the correspondence I have

had with successive Ministers since wind farms were first touted in my electorate, probably 15 years or so ago, it would amount to metres and metres of paperwork. David will not miss wind farms. At the next election the electorate of Burrinjuck will be abolished. It is a sad time for us. The new seat of Cootamundra will be created but it will be very different. I thank Margot Shannon for stepping into the senior electorate officer number two position. She has performed that role very capably for the past few weeks and will continue to do so. I welcome Jenny Littlejohn to the team, and I also thank Gaenor Bingley for continuing in her role. Once again, I say hooroo to David White, who has given such wonderful service to the Burrinjuck community.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [5.22 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Government we thank David White for his service both to the electorate of Burrinjuck and to the member for Burrinjuck over the past 14 years. He has obviously been an extraordinary servant of the people and the community of Yass and its surrounds. We salute him and thank him for his service. I wish David well in his retirement.

HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.23 p.m.]: This evening I will update the House on a number of events in my electorate. On 11 June I attended the National Day of Thanksgiving Service held at the Midway Christian Centre, South Maroota. It was a wonderful morning service and an admirable number of people were present. The purpose of the service is to thank and acknowledge those who make a positive contribution to the community. Pastor Peter Goldstein and his wife, Jessie, acknowledged leaders in the community from Federal, State and local government levels. The service also thanks representatives from emergency services such as the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service, and the selfless work of carers. I have known Peter Goldstein for many years. He was my first boss and was good enough to give me an apprenticeship. Peter and Jessie are outstanding leaders in their community.

On 21 June the Kellyville Fire Brigade Awards were held at the Lyceum Room, Castle Hill RSL. The awards coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Kellyville Fire Brigade. The evening highlighted how the brigade has grown from humble beginnings. The brigade was established following the horrific fires of 1939, which are still a distinct memory for some of the senior members of the brigade. The fire cut a swathe through the then almost wholly rural areas between Blacktown and the Blue Mountains. We thank the committed personnel who risk their lives to protect our community and congratulate Kellyville Fire Brigade on 50 years of service.

On Friday 1 August it was my great pleasure to attend a special assembly at Comleroy Road Public School, Kurrajong. The assembly was an opportunity to present a New South Wales Government Community Service Award to Les Dollin. Les is a selfless volunteer in a number of areas, including with the Blaxlands Ridge Rural Fire Brigade. More recently, his contribution in keeping public areas well maintained has come to prominence and he has gained yet more appreciation from the community. On a voluntary basis, Les, on his ride-on mower, tidies up rubbish and mows long grass on many road verges around Kurrajong. This work makes our area a beautiful place for residents and visitors. Les is a deserving recipient of his Community Service Award.

On 23 July I was joined at Kellyville by other members of Parliament and the Minister for Planning, who announced infrastructure funding of \$25 million for local councils. Coming from a local government background and having served on a growth area council in The Hills shire, I welcome the funding and take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Planning. Blacktown City Mayor Len Robinson and The Hills Shire Mayor Dr Michelle Byrne were on hand to formally accept the new funding. On Tuesday 22 July I had the great pleasure of launching a book written by my good friend Ken Featherstone. The book is a compilation of his life history. The launch took place at the Kenthurst Rural Fire Service shed on Porters Road, Kenthurst, where Ken has been an active member for many decades.

Ken has just turned 94 and the book covers broad aspects of his family life over the past century. It documents Ken growing up as a youngster, on a farm in Maroota in The Hills, to when he moved and started his own very successful farm at Kenthurst. Ken now resides happily in retirement with the love of his life, Margaret, at Round Corner. The book provides a unique snapshot of the struggles that our ancestors faced in the early 1900s trying to eke out a living from the land—there was no electricity, fuel stoves and the only source of water was from hand-dug wells. Indeed, life on the land offered only a handful of luxuries for our early settlers. I commend Ken on a quality publication. I note that Ken has known several generations of my family, going back as far as my great-grandfather.

On Wednesday 30 July I attended a business breakfast, which was organised by Principal Vicki Brewer, at Castle Hill High School. The business breakfast is a novel concept. It brings leaders and business people from the local area together to liaise with the outstanding seniors and captains at the school. I congratulate Vicki Brewer on her work in organising this successful event and presiding over this wonderful educational facility, which is achieving incredible results. The breakfast was addressed by former Castle Hill High School student Scott Griffiths, who is now a PhD psychology researcher. His presentation on boy's health and mental health, focusing particularly on body image, was well received and most thought provoking. Scott has done some incredible research into various aspects of body image among young men in today's society. It is often thought that body image problems only affect young women, but research shows that in the next few years it will become a particularly prominent issue for men. Indeed, many young men aspire to have bodies similar to that of James Magnussen—not like that of the Acting-Speaker; more bulked-up physical specimens like the Minister for the Environment, who is at the table.

Mr Rob Stokes: Hear, hear!

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Whilst there is no problem with being healthy, the problem is exacerbated by young people experimenting with steroids. Young men are staying on steroids for long periods and this is having a dramatic and profound effect on their lifestyle and health. I commend Scott for his wonderful work. On Monday 16 June the NSW Cancer Council held a thank-you event for the volunteers who raised funds for the Hills Relay for Life. Event Cinemas Gold Class, Castle Hill, kindly made its facilities available for the screening of *Grace of Monaco*, which was well received by the Relay for Life volunteers.

MERRYLANDS TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY PATROL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.28 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House of the situation of Vinesh Narayan and his mother, Ranu Narayan, who are constituents of mine. On 30 October 2013 Vinesh was stopped by police whilst driving. In writing to me about the incident, Vinesh said he "had been targeted by the local highway patrol unit from Merrylands" and he named the particular officer concerned. He said the officer:

Has been giving me trouble since late November 2012, every morning on my way to work he has targeted me, blocking me causing delays for me to get to work on time.

He said further:

The officer has also targeted me as an ethnic driving a Holden Commodore and today (30 October 2013) he has picked me out allegedly travelling at 110 km/h on a 60 km/h zone on Merrylands Road, Merrylands, when it is peak hour traffic built up on that road at approximately 7.15 a.m.

The officer issued an infringement notice to Mr Narayan alleging that he had exceeded the speed limit in a 50 kilometre per hour zone, which was factually inaccurate as it was a 60 kilometre per hour zone. The allegation the police made was that he had been driving at 110 kilometres per hour. Mr Narayan says that that speed is impossible at that time of the day on a weekday in that street. I am inclined to agree. After a discussion between the officer and Mr Narayan matters proceeded to near farce. After a discussion about the car's performance the officer put a defect sticker on it. The notice was in the major grounded defect category. Mr Narayan remonstrated with the officer pointing out that nothing he had said could justify such a defect notice. The officer's response was to laugh. The officer immobilised the car. When asked by Mr Narayan for assistance to move the car the officer once again laughed. Mr Narayan has made this comment:

I have never been treated so badly in my life. I honestly have lost faith in the NSW Police Force. I am forced to ask myself if it is worth living in New South Wales if this is the way ethnic citizens are going to be treated by the police now that I am suffering from the behaviour of the officers.

Mr Narayan and his mother have pursued multiple channels to seek redress but to no avail. It is not just the hefty fine involved. The defect notice involved payment of towing fees and a further inspection fee to have the defect notice lifted. Indeed, in the circumstances of this case, the issue of the defect notice was preposterous. On the face of it, the issuance of the notice was a clear abuse of powers—a police officer throwing his weight around. I say that for two reasons. First, the incident occurred on 30 October 2013. Registration had been paid on this car on 29 October 2013. The vehicle had been serviced, new tyres fitted and a pink slip obtained two weeks earlier. I have seen a copy of the document, popularly known as a pink slip, dated 19 October 2013. Only 11 days before a highway patrol officer defects the car it was inspected and passed for registration by an appropriate authority; and I have seen the service documents that accompanied this inspection.

Anyone following this story will anticipate the next development, and the second reason that I say the defect notice was preposterous. When the vehicle was inspected following the issue of the defect notice it was discovered that there were no defects at all with the car. The situation became even more serious. Subsequently, on 14 November 2013 the Narayans received a letter from Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] entitled "Notice of Withdrawal of Defect Notice". The substance of the letter reads as follows:

I am pleased to advise you that defect notice no. 0202152 has been withdrawn as it was incorrectly issued.

Mrs Ranu Narayan is the registered owner of the car and has had to bear much of the expense of this series of events. She is rightly outraged that a defect notice was issued when the car had recently been registered and in circumstances where the RMS subsequently said the notice was incorrectly issued. She lodged a complaint form with the police on 31 October 2013, after she had telephoned the relevant police unit where a sergeant had hung up on her, even though she was the owner of the car. The police also managed to hang up the phone on Mr Narayan. Police seemed irritated that the Narayans could point out to them inconsistencies in police forms. About six weeks later there was an acknowledgement from the police but it was months before any substantive reply eventuated. The type of behaviour complained of by the Narayans is unacceptable. Mrs Narayan should be reimbursed the moneys she has had to expend as a result of the wrongly issued defect notice. I am astonished that the matter has not been resolved as yet and saddened that I have had to raise it here in these terms.

LOWER NORTH COAST SURF LIFE SAVING AWARDS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.33 p.m.]: I inform the House of the Surf Life Saving Lower North Coast awards of excellence. On Saturday night 5 July 2014 the Surf Life Saving Lower North Coast branch held its awards of excellence at the Tuncurry sports club. The night was attended by 100 members representing the six clubs from Crowdy Head in the electorate of Port Macquarie, and Old Bar, Blackhead, Forster, Cape Hawke and Pacific Palms in the electorate of Myall Lakes. Guests on the night included the member for Port Macquarie, Leslie Williams, Dr David Gillespie, the Federal member for Lyne, the President of New South Wales Surf Life Saving, Tony Haven, and me.

It was a great night and a number of awards were presented: Junior Lifesavers of the Year, Toby Jones and Sarah Ward of Forster Surf Life Saving Club [SLSC]; Young Lifesaver of the Year, Nick Croker of Crowdy Head SLSC; Lifesaver of the Year, Allan Davis of Crowdy Head SLSC—I played rugby with Allan many years ago—Newcastle Permanent patrol competition, Forster SLSC; Training Officer of the Year, Sharon Hope of Pacific Palms SLSC; Volunteer of the Year, Brendan Pieshel of Crowdy Head SLSC; Administrator of the Year, Bernadette Nicholson of Blackhead SLSC; Young Competitor of the Year, Jordan Connolly of Blackhead SLSC; Open Competitor of the Year, Natalie Massin of Blackhead SLSC; and Masters Competitor of the Year, Laura Thurtell of Forster SLSC;

Team of the Year was Cape Hawke ladies surf boat crew; Coach of the Year, Kel McKredie of Pacific Palms SLSC; Support Operations Person of the Year, Lennon Fisher of Pacific Palms SLSC; Assessor of the Year, Greg Irving of Taree/Old Bar SLSC; Rookie Assessor of the Year, Will Kennedy of Pacific Palms SLSC; Surf Sports Official of the Year, Kellie Connolly of Blackhead SLSC; Rookie Surf Sports Official of the Year, Kim Jobson of Forster SLSC; Nippers Age Manager of the Year, Bernadette Nicholson of Blackhead SLSC; Lower North Coast [LNC] branch junior handicap point score, Pacific Palms SLSC; LNC branch junior champions, Forster SLSC; LNC branch senior handicap point score, Cape Hawke SLSC; and LNC branch champions, Cape Hawke SLSC.

The Newcastle Permanent Lifesavers of the Month were: October 2013, Lennon Fisher of Pacific Palms SLSC; November 2013, Rod Croker of Crowdy Head SLSC; December 2013, Brad Sawyer of Taree-Old Bar SLSC; January 2014, Shane Reeman of Blackhead SLSC; February 2014, Andrew Burke of Forster SLSC; and March 2014, Stephen Hamilton of Cape Hawke SLSC. The rescue of the month for October 2013 was awarded to Lennon Fisher, Kel McKredie, Jarred Allen and Allan Davis for the rescue of two surfers in difficulties at the south end of Seven Mile Beach in large, dangerous surf.

The rescue of the month for January 2014 was awarded to Maddi, Darren, Sandra and David Rowe, David Quinliven, Geoff Jackson, Mark Dew, Paul Kremer and Noelene Young for the rescue of three people caught in a rip at Blackhead in large, dangerous surf. The rescue of the month for March 2014 was awarded to Brian Wilcox, Richard Ellery, Kel McKredie, Dave Ellis and Julie Wilcox for the rescue of one person on an upturned boat 600 metres off Seven Mile Beach at dusk.

The rescue of the month for May 2014 was awarded to Lennon Fisher, Kel McKredie, John Gray, Brian Wilcox, Julie Wilcox and Ben Atkinson for the rescue of a fisherman at Seal Rocks by Lennon Fisher in extreme surf conditions and the subsequent search for a missing member of the fishing party over the next day and a half. A special presentation was made to Jan Clingeffer, Kim Rayner and Ryan Rosenbaum for services to Taree-Old Bar SLSC. The National Service Medal was awarded to Andrew Jones of Crowdy Head SLSC. The President's Award for Most Outstanding Contribution by a Male was awarded to Kel McKredie of Pacific Palms SLSC and for a female it was awarded to Bernadette Nicholson of Blackhead SLSC.

The president announced on the night that the LNC branches performed 50 rescues, 1,518 preventative actions, attended 126 first aid incidents and worked 16,354 patrol hours, and attendance at those beaches was estimated at 167,269. I thank the executive of the Lower North Coast Branch: president Brian Wilcox, director of administration Alan Davis, director of finance Jim Tyrpenou, director lifesaving Julie Wilcox, director of surf sports Terry Aldridge, director of education Stuart Small, and director of youth and member services Lorraine Morgan for all their volunteer work to save lives in the community. President Brian Wilcox stated:

Our clubs have benefited from the New South Wales Government surf club capital facility program which allocates \$2 million annually to allow clubs to provide considerable improvements to facilities for their members. Clubs have also benefitted greatly by having access to funds through the community building partnership grants offered by the New South Wales Government. We have to thank our State MPs Stephen Bromhead and Leslie Williams for their support of surf life saving receiving considerable funds through this grant.

They acknowledge other support by the New South Wales Government and their local members.

CABRAMATTA MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA RECIPIENTS

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [5.38 p.m.]: On 20 July 2014 I attended celebrations in Cabramatta in honour of three recipients of the Medal of the Order of Australia. I congratulate Mr James Chan, Mr Harry Tang and Mr Thay Lim for receiving these prestigious awards as part of the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List. The Medal of the Order of Australia was established in 1975 by Her Majesty Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia, to recognise Australians for their achievements and services within the Australian community. The three gentlemen who received the awards have contributed a great deal to the Chinese and Indochinese community in greater Western Sydney.

Mr James Chan, owner of a local restaurant in Casula for more than 30 years, was awarded for his distinguished service to the Chinese community. James is the Chairman of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society's Mingyue Lay Temple and played a significant role in developing and improving the temple. He has also provided assistance and support for schools such as Hurlstone Agricultural High School and William Carey Christian School. James has been heavily involved with many fundraising organisations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army and World Vision. As an upstanding member of the community, James has been commended for his time and dedication in the development of our community.

Mr Harry Tang was awarded for his many years of service to the Indochinese community of New South Wales through various organisations. As the founding President of the Indo-Chinese Association, founding President of the Love the Elderly and Children Foundation and President of the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel, he has offered an immense amount of support to Indochinese migrants by assisting them with shelter, education and social welfare. His numerous fundraising events provide a means to improve the care of the ageing Indochinese community. As an Indochinese refugee himself, Harry's involvement in the Indochinese community is nothing short of genuine, as he has a deep and true understanding of what is required as support networks for those in need. As such, Harry is a core asset to the local community, particularly in giving voice to the Indochinese community's concerns and delivering services to meet their complex needs.

Last, but not least, Mr Thay Lim was awarded for his service to the Chinese community of south-west Sydney. Thay has been involved with many organisations including the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel, the Australian Chinese and Descendants Mutual Association and the Australian Cambodian Chinese Association. Thay is the President of the Sydney Indo-Chinese Youth Sports Association and has been instrumental in getting youth off the streets of Western Sydney. Since its inception in 2002, it has grown from five participants to 180 young people and 190 adults using its free services. These services include teaching young persons and adults martial arts and lion dancing and encouraging the Chinese community to stay in touch with traditions and customs from their homeland. Thay has most generously dedicated time and money by donating to Fairfield Hospital, the Children's Hospital, the New South Wales Bushfires Appeal and various aged centres in Bonnyrigg. He has shown incredible diligence and perseverance.

This brief description of these three outstanding gentlemen just scratches the surface of what they have given the Chinese and Indochinese communities in Western Sydney. I am very proud to say these three men are recognised by their communities as the pre-eminent contributors to the cultural and socioeconomic development of the greater Western Sydney area. They exemplify the ideals of remaining true to their passions, perseverance, generosity and compassion for others. They are prime role models who encourage and inspire other members of the community to reach their own goals and ambitions. For this, I am extremely grateful.

Once again, I congratulate James Chan, OAM, Harry Tang, OAM, and Thay Lim, OAM, on receiving these awards and thank them for the endless and selfless service they have given to the people of Western Sydney that makes them so well deserving of this highly recognised honour.

MACARTHUR SAINTS JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [5.43 p.m.]: I wish to share the wonderful work of the Macarthur Saints Junior Rugby League Football Club—based at Oswald Reserve, Rosemeadow—particularly the under-16 team that has been nominated for the prestigious National Rugby League [NRL] Grassroots Club of the Year Award for its Vinnies Blanket Appeal. At the start of the season I was invited to speak with the team and present the players with their game jerseys. I told them to be not afraid and to put their training into practice. Their training and support come from committed volunteers, the grassroots of junior rugby league. The coaching staff are led by John Waaka, the coach; Allan Spencer, the trainer and senior first aider; Linda Spencer, the team manager; Sue Waaka, the assistant manager; and Jason Utatao and Rod Mackenzie, the runners. They know the Laurie Daley values of the Blues—that rugby league is designed to turn boys into men. They know that it is the job of junior rugby league football clubs like the Macarthur Saints to turn them into the greatest men they can be.

The coaching staff challenged the team to go beyond their comfort zone and commit to a blanket appeal for the homeless, to support the good work of St Vincent de Paul. The initial challenge was 100 blankets. The boys thought that would be a tough order—in fact, I thought it was a tough order. I contributed three blankets rather than one. They absolutely smashed their target, collecting more than 200 blankets. The under-16 players include Corey Spencer, Anesh Kini, William Taiti Taanoa, Jackson Ngawhika, Sam Togoai, Cameron Lovelock, Frederick Pullen Whitmore, Hans Taala, Jy Clapham, Lachlan Renshaw, Justice Utatao, Afia-Joe Tevaga, Samuel Samuela, Jordan Pei Tiatia, Petaia Aneteru, John Ratuvou, Nuu Mau, Hunter Tovehi, John Robert and John Mailei. These wonderful young men were supported by their families, their club and their community as they collected blankets.

Some parents deserve a special mention for their assistance throughout the event. They include Julie Renshaw, who lost her father on the streets when he was homeless; Stephanie and David Clapham; and the Macarthur Saints committee members and families, with special mention of Dianne Morrison, the Macarthur Saints secretary. I also mention the wonderful club sponsors Australian Access Hire and Thai Centric. Rachel Stoddart, of St Vincent de Paul, helped to make the whole event possible and offered the boys guidance in dealing with the homeless. She enabled us to join a night patrol at Martin Place. I accompanied the players and we spoke with homeless people as we distributed the blankets on a cold Sydney night. The event was followed by the NRL.

Macarthur Saints is but one of the junior rugby league teams in my area. These teams highlight the best things about rugby league as a community builder. They turn boys into the best men they can be. These boys know that when they make a break or they are defending their line against overwhelming odds, their brothers in the Macarthur Saints will be with them to take the pass and be another set of shoulders in defending their line. They know the importance of winning humbly, losing graciously and never giving up. It has been my privilege to be with these players and watch them grow as a team and as individuals. I commend the Macarthur Saints and congratulate them on their nomination. I hope to watch them win the NRL Grassroots Club of the Year Award for their blanket appeal.

AUSTRALIAN BOARDRIDERS BATTLE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.48 p.m.]: I was delighted to join the panel today at the official launch of the second series of the Australian Boardriders Battle in Cronulla. The Boardriders Battle is a national series, with eight qualifying events across Australia. On 24 and 25 January 2015, the Australia Day weekend, the national finals will be held in Cronulla. That will be the second time they have been held in Cronulla. We had Tim Bailey from Channel 10 as our energetic compere. The other panel members

were Andrew Stark, Surfing Australia Chief Executive Officer; Rory Gration, from sponsor PZ Cussons; Adam Melling, Association of Surfing Professionals [ASP] Men's World Championship Tour; Perth Standlick, ASP Men's World Qualification Series; Layne Beachley, seven-time ASP Women's World Champion and Queenscliff Boardriders surfer; Wayne "Rabbit" Bartholomew, 1978 Men's World Champion, and his son Jaggar Bartholomew, Snapper Rocks Surfriders rising junior.

New South Wales will be hosting three of the eight qualifying rounds in the 2014-15 Australian Boardriders Battle. The New South Wales rounds will be held at North Narrabeen on 8 November, Yamba on 15 November and Kiama on 10 January. The series follows a unique club surfing format unlike any other boardrider club event circuit. Three formats, or battle plans, will be used at each event—"skins" for individual surfers, five-surfer team combinations and a women's division. Each team consists of six surfers: one junior under 18, four opens and one over 35. At least one must be female.

The New South Wales Government, through Destination NSW—which is the New South Wales Government's tourism and major events agency—is one of the sponsors of the event. For a number of years the New South Wales Government has also been a regular major sponsor of other events in Cronulla such as the New South Wales Cycling Grand Prix. New South Wales has a proud sporting, surfing and lifestyle culture. In just its second year, the Australian Boardriders Battle is a fantastic addition to the New South Wales events calendar, which already includes the Australian Surf Festival that is currently taking place in Coffs Harbour, Newcastle's Surfest and the Australian Open of Surfing at Manly Beach.

The Boardriders Battle finals will give an immediate kick to our local economy through visitor spending. Last year the final attracted more than 400 interstate visitors to Cronulla, plus many more visitors from Sydney and the rest of New South Wales. More important than the immediate economic kick is the event's role as part of the long-term positive branding of Cronulla as a tourist destination and recreation area for people from interstate as well as from Sydney and greater New South Wales.

This morning at the launch I spoke about Cronulla's natural beauty, its fabulous beaches, which are part of a national surfing reserve, its proximity to the birthplace of modern Australia at Kurnell and to arguably the second-oldest national park in the world, the Royal National Park across the Port Hacking estuary by ferry. I also spoke about Cronulla's great cafes and restaurants and its easy access, being the only beach in Sydney directly accessible by train. I hope that on Australia Day next year competitors and spectators will come and enjoy all that Cronulla has to offer.

INDIGENOUS POLICE RECRUITS OUR WAY DELIVERY PROGRAM

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.53 p.m.]: On Monday 14 July I was pleased to represent the Minister for Police and Emergency Services at TAFE Illawarra's Nowra campus to celebrate the success of 10 local students who have completed the 2014 Indigenous Police Recruits Our Way Delivery [IPROWD] program. I acknowledge Commissioner of Police Andrew Scipione, who was in attendance and who is a great man and a great commissioner. I sleep much better at night knowing that he and his team are looking after our State's police force.

The statewide program is offered through a partnership between TAFE New South Wales, the NSW Police Force and the Australian Government. It focuses on assisting Aboriginal people to gain entry to the police academy in Goulburn, which is the first exciting step towards becoming an officer in the NSW Police Force. I acknowledge the following 10 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male and female graduates from across our region: Alicia Libbis, Darren Wellington, Korey Studman, Lachlan Watts, Nikitah Wilson, Tamika Clarke, Tom Matthews, Kirren Roughley, Mitchell Campbell and Steven Poole, who also received the annual Gibbs Award.

Along with Commissioner Scipione, the students were joined by: New South Wales State Manager of the Indigenous Affairs Group Leon Donovan; Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Acting Deputy Commissioner and Chair of the IPROWD Steering Committee Carlene York; Commander Southern Region Superintendent Gary Worboys; IPROWD founder and State Manager Peter Gibbs; former senior constable in the NSW Police Force, recipient of the Cross of Valour and author of the *Cost of Bravery* Allan Sparkes; and TAFE Illawarra Institute Director Dianne Murray. Also in attendance were Wollongong Local Area Commander Kyle Stewart, my very good friend the Lake Illawarra Local Area Commander, Wayne Starling, and Shoalhaven Local Area Commander Joe Cassar.

Having successfully completed the IPROWD program each student has already received individual assistance to complete their applications to join the NSW Police Force. The program has shown great success, with more than 70 graduates continuing their careers at the New South Wales Police Academy since the start of the program in 2008. I know that the member for Dubbo is also a proud advocate of the IPROWD program. As the local member I was deeply honoured to attend the graduation ceremony. Not only was I privileged to serve the Shoalhaven City Council Aboriginal Advisory Committee as its chair and member during my time as a councillor but I also deeply enjoyed working with and advocating for the many Aboriginal community and support groups and Aboriginal community members in my electorate.

The IPROWD graduation was a great opportunity to celebrate yet another example of Aboriginal people achieving great things in our local community. The NSW Police Force, which is Australia's oldest, provides people with rewarding and diverse careers. For example, recruits may go on to join a range of specialist commands such as the drug squad, forensic services, the public service and riot squads or the dog squad. They might work in intelligence, information technology, Aboriginal community liaison, human resources or the media unit, highway patrol, sex crimes squad, joint emergency response team or legal services. They might play a part in solving complex crimes or in preventing crime and comforting victims after disasters.

Our police officers serve and protect our community and also work with the community to prevent and detect criminal activity. Importantly, members of the NSW Police Force are provided with ongoing training and support to ensure they can continue to perform to the best of their abilities. I thank TAFE Illawarra Institute Director Dianne Murray and the very capable IPROWD coordinator Helen Simpson not just for putting together a terrific event but also for having the vision and wisdom to be part of this extraordinary program.

I conclude by thanking each of the graduates for taking the first step towards a career dedicated to serving the public. I remember my graduation day and appreciate the important role my education has played in charting my life. No doubt their graduation was also an important day for these young people. The media often tends to focus on some of the unfortunate individual events in the Aboriginal community but this is a story of empowerment. It is a story of giving young people the opportunity through education to chart a course in life and to be ambassadors for others in their community. They can show that they can and will do better and make a broad contribution.

I am so proud of each of the graduates and so happy to have seen them taking this important step towards their future. This achievement can never be taken away from them. They will be able to hold it dear and use it to their advantage as other graduates have done before them. Some members of the police force who had previously gone through the IPROWD program attended the graduation ceremony. They are proud of their heritage and history as Aboriginal people and also very proud to serve the NSW Police Force. I thank and congratulate all of them. I also congratulate you, Mr Acting-Speaker, on your appointment. I am sure that your sharp wit and demonstrated performance as a great backbencher will serve you well in your demanding role in the chair.

JEWISH STUDENTS RACIAL VILIFICATION

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [5.58 p.m.]: In my personal capacity and, more importantly, on behalf of the people of my electorate of Maroubra I condemn the actions of certain teens who, as has been reported in today's media, terrorised a group of young students from Mount Sinai College on the route 660 bus yesterday. This is a bewildering incident. It is bewildering not only because the alleged assailants were so young—indeed, they were reportedly in partial school uniform—but also because they were allegedly heavily intoxicated during the event. Questions need to be asked about the parental supervision they receive in that regard. Whether or not they were intoxicated, there is no excuse for them turning on very young children and engaging in allegedly anti-Semitic behaviour. There is never any excuse for that. On 31 October 2013 in this place I spoke in debate on a motion moved following an alleged assault on a group of Jewish people in Bondi. I joined with every member of this House to condemn that racism and I said:

To those who think there is no room in Australia for people of the Jewish faith and community I say: Get over it because they are going nowhere; they have been here for a very long time. The Jewish people form a very peaceful, necessary, productive and integral part of Australian society, as do people from whatever background of the Islamic faith who choose to live here in peace amongst those who may be from the Catholic, Anglican, Sikh, Hindu or Buddhist faith. We are all here together; we are not going anywhere. We all form part of one of the most racially tolerant international communities. History shows what happens when people disagree with those propositions and act to move against them.

I hope that alcohol, youth and stupidity are more to blame than anti-Semitism for the actions of the individuals involved in this incident, but the police will get to the bottom of that. I was approached in September last year

by the Mount Sinai College and was told that Route 660, which had been operating for 12 years at that time, had for the last eight of those 12 years two bus drivers who were dedicated to driving that route. Those dedicated permanent State Transit Authority drivers were valued by the parents and the school community because they were aware of the heightened security risks that, unfortunately, attend Jewish schools. Those security risks ebb and flow, often in relation to international events, but unfortunately they are always there. The school community wanted those permanent drivers retained because the drivers knew the children by name, they knew the route and they were aware of the sensitivities. They were very disappointed when those drivers were removed due to a change in policy.

On 23 September last year I wrote to the Minister for Transport informing her that I had met with the principal of Mount Sinai College and on behalf of the school I requested that those bus drivers be reinstated. I received a reply from the Minister two months later saying that those drivers would not be reinstated. I am not saying at all that the driver of the bus yesterday is in any way to blame; only the perpetrators of the alleged act are to blame. However, if those two dedicated drivers—who knew the children and who were alive to the sensitivities of the security risks at that school—had been driving that bus, that incident might have been intercepted earlier than it was yesterday. Once again, on behalf of the Mount Sinai College community and the Jewish community, I respectfully request that the previous arrangement of dedicated drivers on that bus route be reinstated and I ask the Minister in light of the incident yesterday to revisit this issue.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.03 p.m.]: I join the member for Maroubra in condemning the vile and disgusting attacks that occurred on that bus yesterday. Australia is a country of great diversity; we see it in the faces of the people we work with and we see it in the restaurants that line the streets of our electorates. In my opinion it is a great strength of this country and one of our greatest achievements that people from different backgrounds, different races and different religions have come together and built a strong, diverse, cohesive and tolerant society. Members in this House, regardless of the politics and the electorates we represent, as community leaders must stand united to stamp out the insidious crime of racism. Discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender or sexuality has no place in Australian society. I stand with the member for Maroubra in condemning these disgusting attacks on the Jewish community.

BURWOOD LAND USE ZONES

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [6.04 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a local planning issue in Croydon Park and Enfield that has been the subject of significant community interest recently. For some months there has been growing opposition from surrounding residents to a planning proposal sponsored by the owners of Flower Power to rezone its Mitchell Street site, which would permit the construction of three-storey unit blocks in an area that is predominately low-density residential. In October last year Burwood Council resolved to submit the proposal to the Department of Planning for gateway determination. Following a change of heart in February the council advised the department that it no longer supported the planning proposal.

The owners of Flower Power submitted a revised planning proposal in June which Burwood Council rejected. The outcome of the rezoning proposal now hinges on the recommendation of the Joint Regional Planning Panel [JRPP]. The residents and ratepayers of Burwood Council's local government area expect their elected representatives—and that includes me—to do everything in their power to prevent an outcome that would have an adverse impact upon the lives of those surrounding the Flower Power site. The people of Croydon Park and Enfield deserve to have peace of mind that the residential precinct they have chosen to call home will retain its existing character and appeal. They do not want to find out down the track that Burwood Council did not do everything in its power to preserve the neighbourhood's residential integrity. To strengthen the case for retaining the area's low-density residential character there is one further step that council must take to protect the community's interests.

Adjacent to the Flower Power site is the Burwood Council Kingsbury Street depot. The depot is zoned general residential, which permits the construction of three-storey buildings up to 11 metres in height. That is the very same zoning that the Flower Power owners are seeking under their planning proposal. Although the depot is currently used for a range of purposes by Burwood Council, its long-term future would appear to be less clear given its zoning. Were Burwood Council to rezone its depot to low-density residential it would make it that much more difficult to justify changing the Flower Power site to accommodate higher-density housing in this location. Perhaps Burwood Council wished to leave its options open and develop the site for three-storey residential buildings at some point down the track. Certainly the possibility for that to occur is very much on the cards if the general residential zoning remains in place.

The mayor of Burwood has been personally leading the charge against the Flower Power planning proposal and now is presented with a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate that he is prepared to put the interests of the residents ahead of Burwood Council's long-term plans for its depot site. In his haste to champion the cause of local residents fighting against the current rezoning of the adjacent Flower Power site, Mayor Faker seems either to have forgotten or has elected to downplay his role in changing the zoning of council's depot in 2012. In light of the mayor's recent comments to a local newspaper that council had somehow been coerced by the New South Wales Government into changing the land in question from industrial to general residential, I decided to do a little digging into the history of the issue.

It turns out that the mayor wrote to me in November 2011 seeking assistance in expediting the inclusion of the Kingsbury Street depot as part of the Burwood Local Environmental Plan. The rezoning of the depot from light industrial to general residential opened the door for future three-storey residential development on the site. One consequence of the change in zoning of the council depot was the possibility that adjacent landowners would seek to capitalise on the opportunity to cash in on a lucrative residential development proposal at some stage. The justification provided by the mayor at the time he sought to rezone the depot was that council wished to sell the site for redevelopment as part of its strategy for long-term financial sustainability.

It would appear Mayor Faker has recently had a change of heart, declaring in the same newspaper article that council now has no intention of leaving the site. Although the mayor claims that the council has no intention of changing the current use of its depot, he did indicate in his November 2011 letter that council was exploring options to obtain a new depot site elsewhere. We know that Burwood Council has elected to sell off land in the past and only recently received approval from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for a special rate variation. I know that many Burwood residents are unhappy with having to pay additional rates this year. For any council faced with maintaining ageing community infrastructure whilst continuing to deliver vital services expected by residents, the financial challenges are enormous. The temptation to sell off further council-owned land in order to pay for these competing priorities can be difficult to resist.

Burwood Council is urged to take steps to protect the interests of residents in Enfield and Croydon Park from an unwanted residential development on the Flower Power site. Burwood Council can move to rezone its Kingsbury Street depot adjacent to Flower Power from general residential to low-density residential, sending a strong message to developers that this precinct is not considered appropriate for three-storey buildings. In my view the zoning of the council depot and the Flower Power site should be the same as the adjacent residential area. The residents of Croydon Park and Enfield deserve no less.

JEWISH STUDENTS RACIAL VILIFICATION

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [6.09 p.m.]: Today I address the House on the abhorrent racist and anti-Semitic assault on students from Jewish schools in my electorate of Coogee, which took place on a bus yesterday afternoon. The alleged abuse shakes the foundations of our multicultural society. There is no place for racism in Australia, especially against school-aged children, some of whom I understand were as young as five. What makes this attack all the more deplorable is that not only was it discriminatory abuse and the threat of violence but it was directed at small children. The need to protect our children from such damaging assaults is paramount within any community and must not be tolerated.

It does not matter what one's views are on current world events, that kind of offensive abuse does not belong in Australian society. These events do not only affect the children and their parents and they do not only offend the friends and relatives of these children, they offend the entire Jewish community and any person in this country who values our multicultural community and our way of life. The actions taken by the young men on that bus are below any measure of civil society and should be universally deplored and condemned. Such racism has no place in this State. I reiterate that I do not care what a person's views are of world events; they do not bring that type of offensive abuse into Australian society.

My electorate of Coogee has a large and resilient Jewish community, but I have no doubt that this attack will shake all of them to the core. During this time of high international criticism that is being directed towards the Israeli Government, we must remember that all Australians should live free of racism and discrimination, no matter what their religious denomination may be. A clear differentiation must be made between the actions of the government of the State of Israel and the Jewish people. Despite events occurring on the international stage, our community has the right to live freely without enduring abuse and threats like those espoused on that bus yesterday.

I commend the Commonwealth Government on its recent decision not to proceed with changes to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. I was pleased to stand with the New South Wales Government in taking a lead role in unequivocally opposing these proposed changes because I fully appreciate the importance of the protections currently in place under the Federal Racial Discrimination Act. The abhorrent abuse that was directed toward these children yesterday demonstrates quite clearly the need to protect minorities, those from other countries or those who follow other religions. I commend the New South Wales police officers who this morning acted so quickly to apprehend the individuals involved in this attack. I am sure they will act with the full force of the law and all resources available to them to bring those people to justice.

I am saddened to acknowledge that this trauma will not so easily be remedied for the young children involved in the attack. The actions taken by the five youths were committed in a single drunken act of stupidity—and we should bear in mind the age of the alleged perpetrators—but the damage caused to these children and the Jewish community will be a prolonged and arduous experience. I extend my sympathy to the families and the broader Jewish community. We are lucky to live in this country, which has been free from the kinds of activities we see in so many other parts of the world. We embrace multiculturalism, and we recognise that people who live in Australia have come from many parts of the world. How can we possibly teach children about harmony and tolerance when such events occur in front of them and are directed towards them?

This Government will not accept racism and discrimination in any form. We pride ourselves on accepting all peoples from all faiths and places of the world. This is above partisan rhetoric and should be espoused by all sides of politics. We are lucky to live in one of the most harmonious multicultural societies in the world. It is incumbent upon all citizens to expose those whose actions are based on racial hatred and who seek to import overseas conflict onto our streets.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.14 p.m.]: I stand with the member for Coogee in condemning those vile and disgusting attacks on the Jewish community in Sydney. As community leaders we have a responsibility to make it absolutely clear that racism and bigotry have no place in Australian society. It is unacceptable and completely un-Australian. The children on that bus should have been able to go about their business freely without fear of being attacked or intimidated in any way, shape or form. That right was taken away from them, then and there, when those youths went into that bus and hurled that offensive abuse.

We must take a zero tolerance approach to what happened on that bus. We must take a zero tolerance approach to racism. This country was built on the back of migrants who came to this country, took a chance and helped to make Australia the wonderful place in which we live. Irrespective of whether those people are from the Jewish community or any other community, they came here and they are Australians. We must stand by them, stamp out this vile bigotry and call it out for what it is.

JEWISH STUDENTS RACIAL VILIFICATION

ROSE BAY ROTARY CLUB

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [6.15 p.m.]: I likewise have been absolutely appalled by the reports of the racist attacks on Jewish school students on a bus in the eastern suburbs yesterday afternoon. I too condemn the actions of those accused. The use of racial epithets and threats has no place in a tolerant multicultural Australia of which we are all proud. No person, especially schoolchildren between the ages of five and 12 years, should ever be subjected to any sort of racial or derogatory language. It is completely unacceptable in our local community. My thoughts are with the children involved, with the community and with the families. I understand that police are conducting investigations and I am confident that the justice process will lead to a satisfactory conclusion.

In my electorate of Vaucluse we enjoy one of the most diverse groups of communities from all cultures and religions: It is one of our great strengths. But we need to be vigilant against the spread of religious or racial persecution that spreads from other countries to ours. It has no place in Australia; it has no place in New South Wales; it has no place in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. Yet when it does occur, it has the potential to spread like a contagious disease. We all have a duty to do everything in our power to identify it, call it out and eradicate it. That is the best way to immunise our community against its spread. We need to instead spread tolerance, understanding and a firm commitment to peace.

I turn now to comment on the Rose Bay Rotary Club, which is my local Rotary club. On Saturday 1 July I had the pleasure of attending the Rose Bay Rotary Club's changeover dinner. The evening was about

recognising the achievements of the outgoing president, Mr Phillip Snider, and welcoming the incoming president, Mr Doug McArthur. The club has a very active and successful community presence. The past two years under Mr Snider's direction have been no exception. He has maintained a consistent program of work with our local community and has overseen a growth in the number of members and participation in the club. In my eastern suburbs community, we all benefit from the work of Rose Bay Rotary Club and from its attention to local causes.

Rose Bay Rotary Club has undertaken a number of initiatives in my local community, one of which is Art in the Park, an annual event held in partnership with Woollahra City Council. It is held in one of the local parks of my electorate, Lyne Park, which is transformed into an art exhibition area for the day. Stallholders showcase and sell a range of art consisting of paintings, photography and jewellery for local community members to admire and purchase. This year the event will be held on 24 August, which is coming up soon. The proceeds go to charity. The club also hosted a special evening performance earlier this year when the Great Moscow Circus came to Lyne Park in Rose Bay.

The club also provided volunteers with an opportunity to participate in the Eastern Suburbs Suicide Prevention wall and the REELise Film Festival, which aims to provide awareness among our community about cyber bullying. Cyber bullying often provides a platform for young people to feel harassed and intimidated and to question their self-worth. The REELise Film Festival is a great way in which young people use their phones to create short films and give expression to feelings of isolation which may result from cyber bullying. Rose Bay Rotary Club has thrown its weight behind the REELise Film Festival, as have I.

Rose Bay Rotary Club reported in its annual report that its members raised a very impressive \$3,344 for the Salvation Army as part of this year's Red Shield Appeal. This is a fantastic effort. I congratulate members of the club on their work to secure those important funds. This Sunday the Rose Bay Rotary Club will be out in force at the City2Surf in my electorate and the Sydney Running Festival. The club's members help to direct pedestrians across the main roads as the road race takes place and snakes its way through my electorate down to famous Bondi Beach. They also support Bondi Cottage, which helps local youth who fall into difficult circumstances and raise much-needed funding for Guide Dogs Australia, an important organisation that trains guide dogs for people who have vision impairment. As members can see, the Rose Bay Rotary Club is a very active group. I am very proud of them.

I wish to mention Mr Hugh Clarke and Gary Marx, who serve as secretary and treasurer of the club and who bring a strong service ethic to the community. In conclusion, I recognise the efforts of all Rotarians in the local Rotary groups in my electorate for making such a tremendous difference to my local community. What they do matters and is very important. Their service fills a gap between the community and government. I am pleased to congratulate all members of the club on their contribution.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.20 p.m.]: I join the Minister for Family and Community Services and member for Vacluse in condemning the disgusting, vile and offensive remarks and attacks on young Jewish students earlier this week. Those types of activities, that type of language and that type of behaviour, which is threatening, violent and anti-Semitic, have no place in modern Australia. It is unacceptable and it is un-Australian. Racism has no place in our country. As community leaders, regardless of our politics, where we come from and the area we represent, we must stand united and stamp out racism once and for all. The police and the courts will deal with these young grubs. We must have a zero tolerance approach to racism and racist abuse. What was particularly appalling in this instance is that the abuse was directed at young children who were going about their business, not hurting anyone, not doing anything other than going to school. This kind of activity must be tackled head on. As community leaders we must stand united with the Jewish community and condemn this racism for what it is.

SOUTH WEST SYDNEY ACADEMY OF SPORT

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [6.21 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about the South West Sydney Academy of Sport. Last Friday night I attended the academy's annual awards night with my parliamentary colleagues the member for Campbelltown and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney. We were all impressed with the achievements of the academy's sports men and women. South West Sydney Academy of Sport was established in 1997 by the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation to service the south-west Sydney region, which includes the local government areas of Liverpool, Camden, Campbelltown and Wollondilly. It is one of 11 such facilities operating in New South Wales.

The purpose of the academy is to facilitate the development and support of talented junior athletes in the region, to provide these athletes with access to specialist support services, including coaching, sports science and sport medicine, to identify and support the development of high-performance coaches at the local level and to provide a clear pathway for athletes from junior development through to State and national representation. The aim of the academy is to provide high-quality, community-focused talented athlete identification and development programs which assist athletes successfully to realise their sporting potential. More importantly, it assists these young athletes to grow and develop as wonderful young community leaders.

I thank the Executive Director, Gerry Knight, for his ongoing management of the academy and support of these young sportspeople. Of course, Gerry could not do this without the support of his board of directors, Chairman Peter Campbell; Deputy Chairman Ross Kelly; executive committee members Denise McGrath and Michelle Caruso; Ross Morrison, convener of the sports sub-committee; community representatives Professor Gregory Kolt, Dean of Science and Health and Professor of Health Science; local councillor representatives, Councillor Judith Hannan, Councillor George Greiss, Councillor Greg Copeland and Councillor Peter Ristevski; and subcommittee representatives Gabby Ripoll, Robert Szoszkiewicz, Mark Westley and Lila Sawko. All these people dedicate their time to oversee the running of this extremely successful academy.

I acknowledge the award recipients at the graduation. Coaches award hockey, Dylan Pardy and Shania O'Brien; softball, James Groth and Emily Fickel; development rugby league under 14s, Etuale Toa; development rugby league under 15s, Poiti Tuilotaua; Harold Matthews Cup rugby league, Hans Tala; netball, Tiana Mosca; golf, Tim Ryan; rugby union, Jonathan Giakoumelos; Jim Medway Memorial Trophy rugby league, Luke Puckeridge; Clive Graham Award Lone Star, Ben Clapham; Clive Graham Award Lone Star AWD, Jess Cronje; Campbelltown Catholic Club Coaches Service Award Bronze, three years, Ben Rogers, Jamie Clapham, Joe Brancato, Shane Milligan and Ben Towers; Silver, five years, Leanne Andaloro; and Gold, seven years, Tony Jackson, Karen Southwell, Sue Woolner, Fiona Ioannou and Peter Doherty; and Chairperson award, Ben Clapham.

There were seven nominations for the Chairperson award, and these young people need recognition as well. They might not have received the award but they all trained and played just as hard as anyone else at the academy: I congratulate Liana Hogarth, Isaac McDonald, Harrison Keomoungkhoun, Mark Critchley, Shondre Lee, Riley Alcorn and Taylor Thomson on their outstanding efforts. Thank you to the academy chaplain, Grant O'Donnell, whose guidance is much appreciated. His role is to support the needs of our aspiring athletes, their families and coaching and support staff members. My electorate is a proactive sporting area. Recently I had the opportunity to show the Minister for Sport and Recreation the newly proposed sporting hub in the Camden local government area. I thank the Minister for his time. Camden Council has earmarked land at Narellan to build a sporting hub. The complex will accommodate 44 new netball courts, which will enable the Camden and District Netball Association to hold regional and State competitions.

A new athletics field will be built, and the complex will complement Macarthur Regional Hockey, which is currently located at the site. Minister Ayres also took the opportunity to visit the new site for the Police and Citizens Youth Club [PCYC] to be built in Elderslie. The facility will be built on land owned by Camden Council under the guidance of PCYC committee chairperson Dave Shorrocks. I am sure it will be a great success. Dave is a former New South Wales police officer and a great friend of mine. He is well aware of the positives that a PCYC can and will have on the youth in my area.

JEWISH STUDENTS RACIAL VILIFICATION

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.26 p.m.]: Today I condemn yesterday's attack on young Jewish school students, who attend schools that serve children in my electorate. Firstly, I express my outrage that in 2014 Australia is a country where this behaviour exists. Not 10 months ago members of this House condemned the heinous attacks on Australian Jews in Bondi. It appears now that this anti-Semitism has filtered down to the younger generation, and it is a terrifying prospect. The children, aged between five and 12, who were victims of this atrocious behaviour attended Jewish day schools of Mount Sinai College, Moriah College and Emanuel School. My two sons attended two of these schools. We do not tolerate this kind of reprehensible behaviour in Australia, and it should not be tolerated anywhere in the world.

Where is the hope in the world when a Hamas television station aired a children's show which told children to "join the fight and kill Jews"? Children who were asked what they wanted to be when they grew up responded, "A policeman so I can shoot all the Jews." The television presenter's response was, "Good." How can there be hope when anywhere in the world a generation of children are being fed these messages? I hope that

this persecution has not reached our shores. For thousands of years Jewish people have borne the brunt of persecution. We think that recent events throughout the world which we condemn are a world away. In France Arabic rioters looted and burned Jewish shops and attacked synagogues.

In Germany this month an Imam preached death, saying "Oh Allah destroy the Zionist Jews ... Count them and kill them to the very last one." In Austria Israeli soccer players playing a friendly social match were kicked by pro-Palestinian protesters. In Brussels this year four Jews were gunned down allegedly by a French Muslim. What has always distinguished Australia from many other Western countries is our acceptance of other religions and cultural groups. When I attend Arabic Friends of Labor functions I am warmly greeted. My friend the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane from the other place has no hesitation in inviting me to functions where we both know different views are held. There is a reciprocal respect for each other's positions. That is Australia.

Australia is when I walk to the synagogue on Shabbat or on festivals through Eastlakes wearing a Yarmulke; and when I pass my friends in the Muslim community, many Bangladeshi, I am greeted with warmth, friendship and respect. What is not Australia is this kind of behaviour. To think that the Federal Attorney-General Senator Brandis stated that people have the right to be bigots. That is what happens when people think they can be a bigot; they start to act like a bigot. Then the benchmark is set. It seems that this attack on the Jewish students was not targeted. The teenagers were local hoodlums who were allegedly intoxicated.

Exactly what was said to the students is not clear, however, the principal of Mount Sinai College has confirmed that it frightened the students enough for the school psychologists to be brought into the school today. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that the perpetrators yelled, "Kill the Jews", "Palestine must kill Jews", "We are going to cut your throats", "We are going to cut your throats open" and "Heil Hitler". This disgusting anti-Semitic behaviour, no doubt fuelled by the conflict in the Middle East, has no place in our communities. I understand that for some time Mount Sinai College has been making representations through the member for Maroubra to have a regular bus driver for security reasons, so that the driver can identify children who should be on the bus.

I am told that the bus driver picked up intoxicated hoodlums who then saw Jewish students on the bus and proceeded with their appalling attack. This event is likely to have a lasting effect on those students. There comes a time when enough is enough. When innocent children in Australia become the victims of abuse fuelled by a conflict they have nothing to do with, then there must be change. Two attacks in 10 months send a frightening signal. It is time for a change and it starts with us, as leaders of the community.

STRATA UNIT MANAGEMENT

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [6.31 p.m.]: Large strata plans dominate inner-city developments and will dominate future Sydney housing. But strata and planning laws do not prevent corruption, and exploitation of owners and residents. Many of my constituents complain of escalating costs, poor amenity, and health and safety risks. Strata living will help Sydney house an extra 1.3 million people by 2031 without destroying natural habitat or the food bowl. Apartment living reflects the modern lifestyle and social change such as the desire to downsize or to have luxury views, a modern unit plan, modern appliances, easy access to transport, shorter commutes and less maintenance. Strata buildings create shared space, assets and funds that must be managed by elected representatives and hired officers. Strata title is essentially the fourth tier of democracy, but there is a lack of accountability and transparency within the system.

I am receiving an increasing number of reports about associations between some managing agents, caretakers, real estate and legal companies that seek to control large buildings to conduct illegal activities at the expense of the owners. One company allegedly runs a separately listed caretaker, strata manager and serviced apartment business, with the same staff and directors, to profit from overcrowding and short-term letting. One owners corporation successfully removed this company, but there are allegations that the company funded a single owner to take action in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal preventing its removal. The tribunal reinstated the sacked caretaker and manager and now owners of other buildings from which the company had been successfully removed are concerned about the precedent.

Short-term tourist accommodation causes major impacts and added costs in residential buildings. Short-term residents in holiday mode cause noise and a lack of permanent residents results in reduced building security. Long-term residents find they have a lack of the sense of community that people desire in a home. Short-term residents cause wear and tear to common property with luggage, and maintenance and cleaning trolleys damage hallways and lifts. Indeed, in 2007 the Land and Environment Court ruled that there is a

fundamental incompatibility between mixing residential and serviced apartments due to the difference in behaviour, living and activity patterns. Overcrowding of apartments causes additional impacts on bathrooms and lifts as a result of overuse, fire risks from access points being tampered with, and creates extra rubbish and recycling.

One building in the Central Business District [CBD] that had overcrowding in more than 50 lots was unable to get a normal lift maintenance contract with Schindler Lifts Australia Pty Ltd because overuse was identified as impacting on the condition of the lift. The same building could find only one insurer willing to offer coverage, making it difficult to get insurance at a reasonable premium. Residents in overcrowded apartments are in danger because smoke alarm systems are not designed to operate in rooms with large numbers of people. Many people living in overcrowded apartments are foreign students who are charged excessive rent with few tenancy protections. The enjoyment of their experience of studying in this State is affected detrimentally, something that may also affect our overseas student industry.

The Government must stop the buck-passing and blaming councils. While councils can take action against overcrowding and short-term letting based on planning, building and fire safety breaches, they must give notice to enter a premise and can be denied access. If that occurs they must get a search warrant. The process gives dodgy operators time to evict tenants or cancel bookings and hide evidence. Obtaining enough evidence for a warrant can be difficult given its purpose is to obtain evidence. Collecting evidence without inspection can be difficult if short-term letting and overcrowding are permitted or conducted by caretakers and managers. A manager can hide the rental roll, and caretakers, managers and letting agents can use proxies to block by-laws, court action or surveillance measures.

The Government should work with councils, including the City of Sydney, to establish stronger powers that allow them to inspect premises where there is strong evidence of dangerous overcrowding or illegal short-term letting and to collect conclusive evidence while ensuring there are safeguards to protect privacy and stop vexatious complaints. The Government should define overcrowding in strata law as the City of Sydney has done in its 2006 condition of consent for two adults per bedroom so that all buildings across the State are protected. I welcome the Premier's commitment this week to work with me and the City of Sydney towards a resolution of these matters.

Corruption by caretakers, managers and builders, especially through the control of the executive committee, can also involve kickbacks and commissions from contractors for work that is either never done or charged at uncompetitive rates while owners' levies rise. It can also involve avoiding the pursuit of defects. A group of CBD executive committee members in large blocks have joined forces to provide support and to press for reform to prevent overcrowding, short-term rentals and corruption. They represent more than 6,000 owners and expect to represent more than 20,000 by the end of the year.

Improving transparency and accountability should be a high priority for a Government undertaking major large-scale developments, including at Barangaroo, Darling Harbour, Central to Eveleigh and the Bays Precinct. I believe this is only possible if there is an expert independent oversight body with strong powers to investigate complaints of corruption and illegal activity in larger strata buildings—an Independent Commission Against Corruption for strata. We must protect democracy, amenity, investment and safety in strata buildings. I call on the Government to work with councils to stop overcrowding and short-term letting, and to introduce an oversight body to investigate serious allegations of corruption.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.36 p.m. until
Tuesday 12 August 2014 at 12 noon.**
