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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 12 August 2014

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

**The Speaker** read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.**

**Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.**

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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### BULLI HIGH SCHOOL

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [12.06 p.m.]: A high school in my electorate is an example of public education at its best. In the early morning of 26 March 2014 what can only be described as a deluge invaded the grounds of Bulli High School. Floodwaters invaded every ground-floor space then backwashed through the entire ground floor again, leaving a thick, smelly layer of refuse and mud. Tide marks on the walls stood as a testament to the height and ferocity of the flood. I was alerted early that morning by the Minister for the Illawarra, the Hon. John Ajaka. By the time we had arranged a visit to the school the clean-up was in full swing in what can only be described as a major disaster recovery.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the temporary principal of Bulli High School, Mr Lou Tome, on his calming influence during what was a herculean challenge. He went about his business without panicking or raising his voice, and I believe he needs to be commended for his guidance and management of this disaster. At this juncture I also recognise the fantastic job of the State Emergency Service in surveying the damage, making the site safe and assisting with the preliminary clean-up. I also congratulate the staff of Bulli High School who got stuck into cleaning their classrooms ready for professional cleaning and restoration. The parts of the school affected were: classrooms, woodworking, metalworking, special education, music, administration, teachers' offices, the canteen and year 12 study areas. Year 12 major works industrial arts were threatened by the rising damp, but I understand that because of fast action none were lost.

The Asset Management Team of the education department needs to be mentioned for its support and swift action to bring the school back in just five days, enabling classes to resume in some manner. The tight-knit community of Bulli supported the school while the disarray of the clean-up continued. The Minister for the Illawarra joined me on Friday 1 August 2014—a mere 18 weeks after the disaster—to celebrate the revitalised and renewed Bulli High School. During the celebration we viewed a short video presentation on the clean-up and restoration, a student trio sang and we enjoyed morning tea with emergency services and staff. I described the school as a "very soggy Phoenix risen from the mire", which encapsulated what happened at Bulli High School: the struggle and the success that the whole school community has achieved. In conclusion, I congratulate the Bulli community on supporting Bulli High School in its hour of need.

### MARRICKVILLE ELECTORATE

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT** (Marrickville) [12.09 p.m.]: Today I recognise the electorate of Marrickville. During the recent parliamentary break the final maps for the 93 electorates were released following the New South Wales electoral redistribution. As a result, at the next State election the Marrickville electorate will no longer exist, being replaced by the new electorates of Summer Hill and Newtown. The Marrickville electorate has existed since 1894, except between 1920 and 1927 when the State experimented with multimember electorates. While I will not contest the 2015 election and therefore will be unaffected by the

changed electoral boundaries, it is important to acknowledge the seat of Marrickville and its past members. Later in this session of Parliament I will make a farewell speech at the appropriate time, but I shall focus now on the eight members for Marrickville covering the past 120 years. I am indebted to Ayden Casey for his research that enables me to make this speech. For many reasons, 1894 was a significant year: Ethel Turner published her classic book *Seven Little Australians*, H. V. Evatt was born and the South Australian colonial Parliament passed a bill that gave women the right to vote. It was also the year that the Marrickville electorate was first contested.

The first two members for Marrickville were non-Labor: Francis Edward McLean, who held Marrickville for the Free Trade Party until his election to the Federal Parliament, and then former Marrickville mayor Richard Watson Walker McCoy, who held the seat until his retirement in 1910. McCoy's time as the local member of Parliament coincided with Labor's rise in the inner city. Labor's vote in Marrickville went from 26.6 per cent in 1904 to just over 52 per cent in 1910. Labor's successful candidate at the 1910 election was Reverend Thomas Crawford. He won the seat again in 1913, but his career ended prematurely on 24 March 1917 because of his support for conscription. In 1917 the seat was won by Carlo Lazzarini, a tailor and former campaign secretary to Prime Minister Chris Watson. Carlo Lazzarini was the first member of the New South Wales Parliament with an Italian name. He held the seat for 35 years, dying in office in 1952 after serving as Minister for State Industrial Enterprises, Acting Secretary for Mines and Colonial Secretary.

Mr Lazzarini survived a number of turbulent events during his time in office, including the abolition of the electorate in 1920 and the Lang Labor split, when he contested the seat as Industrial Labor. At that election he recorded a primary vote of 39.21 per cent—one of the lowest recorded by a winning candidate for the seat. I add that it gives me no pleasure to confess that I managed to win the seat at the last election with an even lower primary vote of just over 38 per cent. After Carlo Lazzarini's death, the seat remained vacant until the 1953 election, when the Mayor of Marrickville, Alderman P. N. Ryan, was elected with an extraordinary primary vote of 80.79 per cent. Norm Ryan joined another Marrickville local in Cabinet, Premier Joe Cahill, and was Secretary for Public Works with carriage of one of Cahill's most important projects—the construction of the Sydney Opera House. Norm Ryan resigned in 1973 and Tom Cahill, the former Premier's son, became the member for Marrickville. He also died in office in 1983.

The next member for Marrickville marked a changing of the guard when Andrew Refshauge, a member of the Left and a leading advocate for the Doctors Reform Group, was elected. Andrew was a tireless advocate for the electorate and achieved significant improvements in health, education and transport services. Andrew remained the member until 2005, serving as Deputy Leader of the Opposition and then Deputy Premier, and holding the portfolios of Aboriginal Affairs, Health, Education, Urban Affairs and Treasury. I replaced Andrew as the member for Marrickville in a by-election in 2005, making the transition from the Legislative Council to the Legislative Assembly. After the next election there will not be a member for Marrickville in this Chamber for the first time in nearly 90 years. Many, including me, feel sad about the loss of the name "Marrickville" from the list of State electorates. Of course, this stems in large part from the great pride that people take in what the Marrickville electorate encompasses. It includes parts or the whole of the suburbs of Lewisham, Dulwich Hill, Marrickville, Petersham, Stanmore, Camperdown, Enmore, Newtown, Erskineville, Darlington and Redfern.

While Marrickville is the third smallest electorate, at 14.6 square kilometres, it packs a lot into that space, including the Cooks River and surrounding parks and cycleways, the University of Sydney, eclectic King Street, multicultural Illawarra Road, and the clubs of many ethnic communities such as the Cyprus Community Club and the Fraser Park Portuguese Club. Marrickville electorate has wonderful schools, including the renowned Newtown High School of the Performing Arts and great facilities, and also includes the spiritual home of Sydney's Aboriginal community: The Block at Redfern. Above all, the people make Marrickville one of the best places in Sydney to live—a thriving, diverse, multicultural electorate with a strong sense of community. It has been an honour to represent the Marrickville electorate in the New South Wales Parliament.

#### AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS CENTENARY

**Mr DONALD PAGE** (Ballina) [12.14 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to congratulate the Australian Red Cross on its centenary, and commend its staff and volunteers for the incredible work they have done in our community since 1914. The Red Cross was formed in 1864 as a result of a battle fought in Italy in 1862 that involved 300,000 men. A young Swiss banker named Henri Durant was travelling through the area shortly after the battle and was appalled by the resulting carnage. He stayed to work with local villagers to treat the wounded and insisted that both allies and enemies be treated equally. Henri Durant went on to propose the creation of "national relief societies of trained volunteers to provide neutral and impartial help to wounded soldiers in times of war". Shortly after his proposal a committee of five was formed, including Henri Durant, and became the

International Committee of the Red Cross. In my electorate of Ballina the Red Cross is still going strong. The Wardell, Bangalow and Alstonville branches are celebrating 100 years of continuous service, and I congratulate the volunteers on their commitment to our local organisations.

The Northern Rivers has 13 branches of the Red Cross, most having formed in 1914. Each member, past and present, has done exceptional work for his or her community. The Wardell branch formed just three weeks after the start of the Great War, with ladies making clothing for the troops, including balaclavas, socks, scarves and pyjamas for wounded soldiers in makeshift war hospitals. At Bangalow the ladies were making soldiers' bags containing flannel shirts, pyjamas, socks and towels—all handmade. Many items were collected from farms by horse and sulky, boxed up and shipped from local wharves to Sydney. Materials for these items were purchased with money raised from fundraising events such as dances, sports days and card parties, where people mainly played euchre. Members of the Alstonville branch were also very active in raising funds for soldiers who had been blinded during the war—the money helping in their recovery and coping with their new disability.

Many branches locally, and across New South Wales, were forced to close between the end of World War I and the start of World War II when influenza hit local communities hard. However, the Bangalow branch did not close and has been operating continuously since 1914. Many women who volunteered at other local branches were forced to assume nursing roles and, naturally, their Red Cross work took a back seat. The Wardell volunteers continued working and were busy providing mosquito nets and linen for the Ballina hospital. The ladies also helped to plant a memorial grove next to the Wardell Sports and Recreation Club as a place for reflection and to honour those who lost their lives in World War I. In 1938 that all changed when, sensing the unrest in Europe, Red Cross branches in Australia, including in the Northern Rivers, again were mobilised—and what a force they were. From a population of seven million, nearly half a million people were Red Cross members, most of whom were women.

In places such as Alstonville, Wardell and Tintenbar women were saying goodbye to their husbands, fathers and sons who were going to war. Being a member of the Red Cross allowed them to make a contribution to the war effort. The women involved in local Red Cross branches were also a source of comfort, companionship and support for each other. After World War II the focus of the Red Cross in the Northern Rivers naturally changed but the tradition of volunteering and community service has continued locally for almost 70 years. As the Red Cross in Australia celebrates 100 years, so too is the Red Cross in the Northern Rivers. On 1 August local branches opened a combined display at Crawford House Museum, Alstonville, which displayed a great history of the organisation in our region. I congratulate Kerrie Gray, the Red Cross Country Zone Representative, on helping to coordinate the display, and of course the volunteers and members of the public who combed their personal archives for memorabilia to exhibit.

Today the Red Cross continues its work in the community and its programs have changed with the times. Locally, Red Cross volunteers run the Telecross initiative, which involves making a daily telephone call to people who are elderly, housebound, frail or vulnerable. When volunteers are unable to contact these people an alarm is raised. Kerrie Gray says this service has saved quite a few lives. The Red Cross also runs the TeleChat program, which involves volunteers making a longer call, once a week, to socially isolated people. The Red Cross is still there in times of emergency and natural disaster, and is a friendly face at the front door of evacuation centres, particularly during floods. The Tintenbar branch was also formed in 1939 and has been meeting in the local hall ever since. It does a lot of work to raise money to support the Ballina women's refuge and people also still volunteer at local blood donation services.

The Red Cross organisation and its volunteers have played a huge role in the social fabric of communities in the Ballina electorate since its inception in 1914. An organisation that has morphed and changed with the times over the past 100 years, is still supported by volunteers and that continues to make enormous contributions to people's lives is something to recognise and celebrate. Well done to the Red Cross and its wonderful, hardworking volunteers—and particularly to those branches in the Northern Rivers and in my electorate of Ballina.

### CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson) [12.19 p.m.]: Madam Speaker, as you acknowledged recently in the New South Wales Parliament, we have recently marked the 100th anniversary of the commencement of hostilities now known as World War I—the so-called "war to end all wars". In that war 16 million died and 20 million were wounded, making it one of the bloodiest conflicts in history. Of almost 332,000 Australians

who served overseas, more than 60,000 lost their lives and 137,000 were wounded. In the 10 years after the Armistice, another 60,000 died as a result of their combat, representing an astounding 65 per cent casualty rate in a country of then only five million people. We also remember the battle at Pozieres in the Somme, which was a two-week campaign commencing on 23 July 1916. Ku-ring-gai's own 18th Battalion took part in that campaign. As a result, Ku-ring-gai will always have special ties to Pozieres. Today its colours and battle honours lie in the Warrior Chapel at the Church of St John the Evangelist in Gordon, along with the wooden battalion cross, which stood at the cemetery of Contalmaison, some two kilometres south of Pozieres.

Pozieres is a small village in the Somme Valley where bitter and costly fighting took place. The battle resulted in the 1st Australian Division losing 7,700 men. The 2nd Australian Division had 8,100 casualties and the 4th Australian Division lost 7,100. From 27 July to 13 August the 12th Division suffered 2,717 losses. The historian Charles Bean wrote that Pozieres is more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other battlefield in the world. The civilians of Pozieres also suffered greatly as a result of this conflict and have never forgotten the Australian contribution to the liberation of their town. The Mayor of Pozieres recently made a visit to the Church of St John the Evangelist in Gordon to see the cross and chapel. Shared wartime experiences have resulted in an enduring bond between the people of Ku-ring-gai and Pozieres. In recognition of this bond and as the Centenary of the First World War approached, Ku-ring-gai Council decided to formalise this relationship.

In June 2014 the council adopted a resolution to sign a friendship agreement between Ku-ring-gai Council and the village of Pozieres. The Mayor of Ku-ring-gai, Councillor Jennifer Anderson, signed the memorandum of understanding on 23 July this year. It has also been signed by the Mayor of Pozieres, with a French and English version to reside in each mayoral office. This friendship agreement was displayed, in French and in English, at a special service that I attended at the Church of St John the Evangelist in Gordon on Sunday 3 August. Members of the Pozieres Remembrance Association have attended the anniversary commemorations at Pozieres since the ninetieth anniversary, in 2006.

They have initiated a project to build a memorial park in Pozieres, to be opened at the centenary in 2016. They are seeking help from all Australians to make the memorial park a reality by offering Australians the opportunity to buy a brick to finance the project. I am pleased to have bought a brick and I urge other members of Parliament to do likewise. In conclusion, we remember with sadness the commencement of World War I, the people of Pozieres and our Australian soldiers in Pozieres. We remember their lives, we reflect on their spirit of service and sacrifice, and we respect all those still living who have similarly served our country in protection of our freedoms.

### ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM

**Mr ROBERT FUROLO** (Lakemba) [12.24 p.m.]: Again, I highlight to the House another education matter affecting the people of the Lakemba electorate. Access, equity and funding for schools and education have been regular topics of my speeches in this place. In fact, a quick review of my private member's statements reveals that approximately a third of my contributions have been on these issues, and I speak on them again today. Unfortunately, once again I have to highlight the effects on my community of the callous and unnecessary cuts by the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals in the area of education. English as a Second Language [ESL] programs in communities such as the Lakemba electorate are not niche luxuries that give some kids benefits over others.

The ESL program is an essential service that delivers equity and opportunity for students who would otherwise be disadvantaged. This program supports schools like Riverwood Public School, Punchbowl Public School, Wiley Park Public School and Lakemba Public School that have up to 98 per cent of students from a language background other than English. The teachers who deliver ESL training in our schools do a fantastic job. They are dedicated, decent and committed people who recognise that a proper understanding of our language is a key requirement for better educational outcomes. That is why the decision by the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals to cut funding for the statewide coordination, planning and support of ESL teachers makes absolutely no sense at all. Worse than being just an ignorant decision, cutting funding for ESL support services undermines the students in our education system who are most in need of help.

But I should not be surprised as this Government has a record of further disadvantaging those who are already disadvantaged. I give the example of the decision early in this Government's term to introduce fees for government-run preschools in the most disadvantaged communities in New South Wales. When there is so much evidence of the importance of early education why on earth would the Government introduce fees for what was previously a free preschool service to support disadvantaged families? The ESL teachers, who support

and help students with English language needs, require the support of the Department of Education and Communities with coordination of programs, curriculum planning and training. This was the role of 32 ESL support and community information officers within the department. These positions have been cut.

Further, schools—even those with massive numbers of students with ESL needs like those in my electorate—are now being asked to make choices about which programs should get funding and which should not in a process that pits the needs of some students against the needs of others. Principals now have to make decisions about funding for this service within the overall budget of the school. The inequity of these changes and the cut to ESL support programs are highlighted by the fact that New South Wales continues to be the most popular destination for new migrants, receiving more than 70,000 new settlers in 2012 alone—almost one-third of Australia's share of migrants. It makes no sense to cut 32 positions that support the work of ESL teachers in our classrooms. Such important programs that serve the needs of disadvantaged students in our schools need to be supported, monitored and resourced properly.

The ESL teachers are not islands, operating independently of the broader objectives of the Department of Education and Communities, and the department should provide them with professional development and curriculum support. We should be proud of the role of the ESL program in supporting and helping children improve their educational opportunities. We should be funding the essential support services for ESL teachers, not cutting 32 positions from this critical program. The ESL program is widely regarded as one of the key reasons that students in New South Wales from a non-English speaking background have closed the academic gap between them and students with strong English language skills.

A 2012 Canadian study attributed this success in large part to the infrastructure that has supported ESL teaching over the past few decades. A 2005 PricewaterhouseCoopers review conducted for the Northern Ireland Department of Education also noted the specialist support and professional development programs in New South Wales ESL programs. A 2013 study by the Australian Council for Educational Research found that the New South Wales ESL support model met all the criteria to achieve high educational outcomes for students. With this evidence and the obvious need to build opportunity and equity into our education system, it defies logic why support and coordination for our ESL teachers would be cut. On behalf of the hundreds of students in my community and the thousands around New South Wales who depend on the ESL program, I urge the Minister and the Government to recommit to the valuable ESL program and reinstate the 32 support positions.

### **TRIBUTE TO FIREFIGHTER BRIAN PASCOE**

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [12.29 p.m.]: Today it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge an event on 8 July that celebrated Brian Pascoe's 50 years of voluntary service as a retained firefighter. Fire and Rescue NSW relies on retained firefighters to supplement its need for firefighters in an emergency. Brian was on call as a retained firefighter in Broken Hill. His wife, Sue, daughter, Nadine, and sons, Nathan and Brendan, have all experienced the life of a retained firefighter. Brian acknowledged that the bells that alert him to a fire are located under his bed. At any time of the day or night those bells would call him to the fire station. Brian's son Nathan acknowledged that Brian had erected some bells on the outside of the house so that he could hear them ring when he was in the shed so there is no doubt that his neighbours were well aware when there was a fire call.

On the evening of 8 July Brian was acknowledged for attending 14,500 callouts during the time of his service. He joined the union in 1969 and is its fourth longest serving member. Stories were told about a group of retained firefighters from the past, which acknowledged some of their work. Bruce Halliday spoke of the time when Brian was at Broken Hill's central fire station when he and Dick Elliot from South Broken Hill fire station attended a major fire at the Broken Hill hospital. They saved the life of Ivan Buskariol, a quadriplegic, who was a resident at the hospital. They entered without any of the apparatus that exists today, battled the smoke and were able to put Ivan on a mattress, which they slid down the stairs so that he was out of imminent danger.

Brian still serves as a retained firefighter. Peter Hynes, captain of the local retained firefighters, certainly encouraged Brian to continue. There is no doubt that his work for the Broken Hill community has been valuable. I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and the community of Broken Hill, to thank Brian for his sacrifice and his great service to the community. His legacy of volunteering as a retained firefighter has been passed on through the family. Brian's son Nathan is now a full-time firefighter, located in Batemans Bay, and his son-in-law, Steve Gibson, has also joined as a retained firefighter. I wish Brian all the very best. Thank you, Brian, for 50 years of great service to this State.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garry Edwards):** Order! Before proceeding with private members' statements, I welcome to the gallery 14 year 11 legal study students from Colo High School, who are guests of the member for Londonderry. Welcome to Parliament.

### ELECTION FUNDING AND EXPENDITURE

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [12.34 p.m.]: Today I feel compelled to speak on behalf of the people of my community, my electorate and the wider Hunter region. They are dismayed and feeling disappointed in light of the recent revelations and allegations of impropriety in the funding of election campaigns in the electorates of Newcastle and Charlestown. I am sure the decent, hardworking representatives of this Parliament feel gutted with the revelations. It has become increasingly apparent that business interests have influenced key events in our region and the community is now legitimately questioning whose interests have been served by those important decisions, notably those made during the term of this Government. Is it the interests of the community or the interests of patrons and benefactors of political parties?

Members know that great changes are afoot in Newcastle, with the planned revitalisation of the inner city. If Newcastle is not the engine room of the regional economy it is certainly the control centre. It is the second largest city in New South Wales and it needs to be strong and economically diverse if the region is to prosper and to have resilience in the future because the entire Hunter has a stake in its redevelopment. While the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] is yet to rule on the matters before it regarding alleged illegal donations and other questionable behaviour, there are issues that support the call for a transparent review of the process behind these decisions. We know that two local Liberal members of Parliament took donations from developers.

There is a rollcall of prominent businesspeople whose financial support has given them privileged access to elected representatives all the way up to the ministerial level—but not the Minister for Health, who is in the Chamber. They are part of an apparent nod-and-wink club in the city, which is a cosy collective of self-interested business and political operatives who think the end justifies the means. We know the campaign of the former member for Newcastle, who is an honourable and effective politician, was actively undermined by business interests with the approval and cooperation of people involved in local Liberal campaigns. Disturbingly, it appears Jodi McKay became a target because she was not prepared to extend patronage or favour to certain businesspeople. There is little doubt that she would still hold that seat if it was not for the dirty tricks campaign that was mounted against her.

**Mr David Elliott:** By her own side.

**Mr GREG PIPER:** Notably by some of her own party members. Thanks to powerful opposition by politically connected business interests with an alternative agenda, the proposal for a container terminal in Newcastle never stood a chance of gaining approval even though it was regarded by many as a sound, viable proposition that would have contributed to the diversification of the local economy. No doubt there are many more startling revelations to come. Forget the *Game of Thrones*. A real drama of similar proportions and moral ambiguity is playing out in Castlereagh Street, where the Operation Spicer hearings are unfolding. On Saturday the *Newcastle Herald* articulated the mood in the Hunter in a front-page editorial. The editorial stated that the people in our region need to feel confident that the decisions behind the redevelopment of inner-city Newcastle have been considered properly and professionally. It further stated:

The nagging sense that what is being presented is a hastily cobbled together lean-to of plans that suit particular players with their own special interests can't be allowed to persist, and must be swept away with a complete and transparent review.

I call on the Premier to conduct a timely and transparent probity audit of all the key decisions that were made in regard to the revitalisation process. It is the only way that community confidence in the process can be restored. The moral code that was adopted by some of our elected representatives and business leaders falls far short of community expectations. The community wants to reset the moral bar and the ICAC is giving us the opportunity to do so. This morning's revelations by the member for Newcastle heighten the need for the Premier to act. While the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Jeff McCloy, has not yet appeared before the ICAC, his name has featured prominently in the hearings and he should either stand aside or be stood aside until this tawdry mess is resolved. In the interests of the people of Newcastle and the Hunter region, I urge the Premier to act now and examine the decisions by placing a moratorium on controversial projects until they can be subject to a probity review.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT** (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.39 p.m.]: Yesterday I met with representatives of the Lisa Harnum Foundation from my electorate. As members would recall, Lisa was the young lady who was tragically murdered by her boyfriend when he threw her off the balcony. It was an appropriate time to meet, given the current attention that Parliament has paid to matters relating to domestic violence. Last week, during the giving of a notice of motion, I asked the Deputy Leader of the Opposition if any Labor candidate had been on the record as defending domestic violence or justifying domestic violence as an act in the home.

She said she was "disappointed" in me and stated, "I thought he would take the matter much more seriously." I too am disappointed, as is my community. We are disappointed because Labor members should have taken domestic violence more seriously. They should have considered prospective candidates views on domestic violence before endorsing them. It has since come to my attention that the endorsed Labor candidate for Seven Hills, Susai Benjamin, has made comments that warned women about reporting domestic violence to the police.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garry Edwards):** Order! The member for Shellharbour will come to order.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The candidate said that reporting domestic violence "leads to a total breakdown of family relationships". I can say confidently that this is completely out of touch with the views of the people of Seven Hills, some of which currently falls within my electorate. Many constituents have expressed concern about the views of Mr Benjamin. It seems pretty clear to me that once a man hits a woman and the relationship is violent—once domestic violence is present—there has already been a total breakdown of the family relationship. Reporting violence is the first step to ensure that victims live a life free from repression.

Mr Benjamin's response to these significant community concerns is extremely worrying. He describes it as a "storm in a teacup", and refers to victims who have called police as follows, "Sometimes they are told they should not have called them about an argument and then it is too late to make alterations." As I heard yesterday, women in The Hills feel very strongly about this. It is unacceptable to pressure a victim of domestic violence not to report the crime, or to try to manipulate victims so that they regret reporting domestic violence. Candidates for public office should not attempt to prevent victims seeking help.

When I asked the Deputy Leader of the Opposition whether any Labor candidate was on the record as defending domestic violence or justifying domestic violence as an act in the home, she was silent. The Opposition was silent. Why did the Deputy Leader of the Opposition not confirm that no candidate was on the record as defending domestic violence or justifying domestic violence? Was it because she knew it would be misleading in the House to do so? Did she know about Susai Benjamin's comments? If she did not clearly there is a breakdown in the probity tests undertaken by Sussex Street and this place. The very next day we were reading about Mr Benjamin's regressive views in the national press and hearing about them on radio 2GB.

I am sure that Sussex Street is embarrassed that his views made the international press, as the *Daily Mail* also reported his comments. It worries me that a person who works for the Toongabbie Legal Centre—a service that aims to look after the vulnerable—is telling victims of domestic violence not to report it and making victims feel ashamed about reporting domestic violence. We should encourage the reporting of domestic violence because it is only when it is reported that we can begin to help those who are vulnerable. We do not need apologists of domestic violence in Parliament. I note Susai Benjamin's factional ally, Laurie Ferguson, has condemned the comments. Good on him. Will Linda Burney, the shadow Minister for Family and Community Services, condemn these comments? Will John Robertson, the Leader of the Opposition, condemn these comments? I know that the citizens of The Hills and local community leaders do not support these comments.

**Ms Anna Watson:** It is an important issue.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The member for Shellharbour is correct; it is an important issue.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garry Edwards):** Order! The member for Shellharbour will come to order.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The member must condemn the comments made by the Labor candidate. I note that Liberal members of this House condemn the comments. Pru Goward, Minister for Women, Gabrielle

Upton, Minister for Families and Community Services, Jillian Skinner, Minister for Health, and Mike Baird, Premier of New South Wales, condemn Susai Benjamin's comments as unacceptable and wrong. This Government is committed to reducing domestic violence in our communities. The budget provided \$4.6 million for Staying Home Leaving Violence, to support women and children to stay in their homes, whilst being safe from violence.

The Government provided \$9.8 million in funding for It Stops Here, which will provide a single contact point to ensure that victims do not have to search through a maze of different services or suffer the indignity of being blamed for a family breakdown. It is a matter of pride for me that in my community there is less than half the rate of domestic assault compared to the rest of the State. Susai Benjamin needs to know that. Both sides of politics used to work together to reduce domestic violence rates, but with this candidate that cannot continue.

### **HOLBROOK YELLOW SUBMARINE**

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [12.44 p.m.]: This month marks one year since the opening of the Holbrook bypass along the Hume Highway—the last of 22 bypasses between Sydney and Melbourne. This is a transformation event for the town. The Yellow Submarine project has been an exercise in community engagement with the arts. The project began as an idea to encourage visitors to drive down the Hume Highway and to make the trip into Holbrook. The town's submarine, on permanent display in a park along the main street of Holbrook, was going to be wrapped in yellow wool. This type of community arts installation is called yarn bombing. People everywhere were encouraged to knit a square to help cover the submarine.

This would coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the tour of Australia by the Beatles, whose song *Yellow Submarine* provided musical inspiration. Yellow is the colour of sunlight and lemons, soap and hot potato chips. It is the colour of the leader's jersey in the Tour de France and of the Yellow Brick Road. Yellow just seems to make people happy. What seems clear is that the Yellow Submarine has caught people's attention. The many sections of yarn reflect the diversity of the people of Australia and, in some cases, the handiwork of people overseas. Over a four-month period, knitted pieces were donated from as far away as the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and the United States, as well as from right across Australia. One contributor wrote:

As promised, some bunting from Scotland! The anchor and starfish pattern are from traditional fisherman's guernsey patterns which are indigenous to fishing communities here!

Preparations were far-reaching. Indeed, the Submarine Cafe kept a basket of wool and needles so people could "knit a couple of rows over coffee". Thousands of sections of yellow knitting flooded into Holbrook. Over a few short days they were sewn onto HMAS *Otway*, which looked amazing in its bright cover. The installation was opened on 12 June. For Murray Arts general manager Karen Gardner two points stand out: First, is the ability of an arts project to cement community relations and to reach outside a community. She stated:

The Yellow Submarine was not just Holbrook doing something for Holbrook, but everyone doing something for Holbrook.

Secondly, a community arts project can have a very positive economic impact locally. Anecdotally, there are reports from traders that for this time of year—which is normally a cold and wet winter in Holbrook—they were experiencing peak season trading conditions. That is exceptional. The Holbrook event has inspired others. A diversional therapist with the Calvary Retirement Community in Canberra stated:

We saw the submarine and thought we can do something too. They reasoned that dementia patients, despite having forgotten many things, might still know how to knit. So they were organised to knit a winter covering for a bicycle.

There is a lesson here that local communities undergoing transition must be brave and embrace fresh opportunities to reshape their towns and local economies through working together and, importantly, have fun together. The Holbrook community has developed a renewed capacity to work together to get projects happening. Success feeds success and future projects are being discussed. We are incredibly fortunate in the Albury region to be home to such a vibrant and exciting arts community, including professional organisations such as HotHouse Theatre, the Flying Fruit Fly Circus and Murray Conservatorium.

In addition, with the redevelopment of the Albury Regional Gallery the whole area will continue to benefit from the people, skills and opportunities that arts and culture bring to our communities. This is what we now call cultural tourism. Australians are used to travelling to see art exhibitions and theatrical or musical performances. And come they did, in their thousands, to witness Holbrook's Yellow Submarine arts installation.

On 12 July, after a month of being on display, the knitting was removed, and all that wool is being put to new use providing animal blankets for regional animal shelters, including the RSPCA and Albury Cat Rescue. On the Holbrook Yellow Submarine Facebook page one can see photos of kittens enjoying the yarn at their various shelters. The New South Wales Government is proud to have been a partner in this project via its funding to Murray Arts. The New South Wales Government is a strong believer in the arts in regional New South Wales investing over \$2 million in the 14 regional arts boards.

I thank all those who had a hand in the Yellow Submarine project: Roger Cooper, curator of the Holbrook Submarine Museum; Karen Gardner, Jo Bartels and all at Murray Arts; Greater Hume Shire Council, Holbrook Sheep and Wool Fair; and all the crafty people, the knitters and textile artists whose work adorned HMAS *Otway* this winter. One of the reasons people move to a regional centre such as Holbrook, or Albury for that matter, is that these are great places to live—not just in the past but now and in the future. So let me encourage members to take the turn off the Hume Freeway to see Holbrook's submarine, which is now well and truly *Back in Black*.

### OLD BAR COMMUNITY GROUPS

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [12.49 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about the wonderful work of two fantastic community groups in my electorate: Lions Club of Old Bar and Old Bar Chamber of Commerce. Old Bar is a seaside resort just east of Taree in the number one electorate in this State—Myall Lakes. Myall Lakes is internationally renowned as Australia's water playground, with more than 200 kilometres of beaches, a fantastic lake system, the mighty Manning River, with the only delta formation in the Southern Hemisphere, and Ellenborough Falls, the longest single drop waterfall in the Southern Hemisphere, one of the top 10 New South Wales tourist destinations. The Lions club and the chamber of commerce are helping to paint Old Bar in all the colours of the rainbow.

The Lions club, as part of the Community Building Partnership program, has installed a shade sail at Badgers Park. One of the great things about local clubs is that the money they raise is largely given to needy organisations within local communities. Indeed, in the past 12 months the Lions club has also donated \$11,970 to a number of charities, including Barwalla RSL Day Care Club, Mitchell Island Public School, Old Bar Community Preschool, Old Bar Junior Cricket Club, Old Bar Little Athletics, Old Bar Men's Shed, Old Bar School Parents and Citizens, Old Bar Playgroup, Old Bar Public School, Oxley Island Pony Club and Taree Volunteer Rescue Association. I congratulate president Robyn Robertson, Ross Robertson, Gayle Bowman, Don McRae and Kevin Thornton on their hard work.

The Old Bar Chamber of Commerce, also as part of the Community Building Partnership program, has spent \$10,000 in colouring Old Bar. I congratulate president Adam Stevenson, secretary Carole Isaacs, treasurer Cozette Leonard, vice-president Greg Blanch and committee member Tim Leonard on their hard work in helping to colour Old Bar. In that regard the chamber of commerce has been ably assisted by Wesley Uniting Employment. Covered seating has been purchased, striped seating has been installed in the central business district, existing tables and chairs in the park have been repaired and painted and telegraph poles have been painted in red, blue and yellow stripes, which is having a dynamic effect on the central business district and on the parks adjacent to the beach.

The results have been far more comprehensive than one would have expected from a \$10,000 grant. I estimate that work to the value of \$4 has been completed for every dollar received. Old Bar got a great deal of bang for its buck. When grants such as these are given to community groups and not-for-profit associations so much more gets done through the work of volunteers, donations of building materials and work in kind. The Lions Club of Old Bar and Old Bar Chamber of Commerce have done some fantastic work at Old Bar, an important destination in the Manning Valley. Tourism brings dollars to regional areas and the tourism benefits to areas such as this should not be underestimated. The members of these groups are businesspeople who all have their own careers and professions, and some have businesses to run, yet they spend their time working to improve the area for the greater good of Old Bar and the Manning Valley. I commend both organisations to the House.

### CHINESE AUSTRALIAN SERVICES SOCIETY

**Mr TONY ISSA** (Granville) [12.54 p.m.]: Today I inform the House of the valuable work of the Chinese Australian Services Society [CASS], a community-based not-for-profit organisation. Thirty years ago a group of ordinary but very enthusiastic people gathered together to form the Chinese Australian Services

Society with the aim of assisting the Chinese community to resolve childcare needs; the society continues to work hard to achieve that goal. Over the years the CASS family has grown from a single service to a range of diverse services. These services are targeted not only at the Chinese community but also at the Korean and Indonesian communities. CASS has made achievements in six broad areas: family and children's services, health, ageing and disability services, settlement and miscellaneous services, cultural and artistic work, and social and recreational activities, as well as community capacity building work.

It is heartwarming to note that some of those who were enrolled at the Chinese Australian Services Society childcare centre in the early days are now following in the footsteps of their parents and continuing this valuable work. The number of Chinese migrants settling in Australia continues to increase and the services offered by CASS are correspondingly increasing to meet those needs. In addition to successfully establishing a Chinese school and an academy of arts, teaching children the Chinese language, drawing and dancing, CASS helps new migrants assimilate into their new homeland and make a positive contribution to society. In 2003 CASS established an Indonesian activity group at Campsie to provide social support to elderly Chinese people and to encourage them to participate in the local community. On inception the group had approximately 20 to 30 members but that number has expanded to more than 300 members, which clearly demonstrates how effectively CASS engages with and supports local communities.

Earlier this year it was with much pleasure that I represented Minister Dominello in celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Indonesian activity group, and to support fundraising for its new residential aged-care facility. Construction of the residential aged-care facility began last year but it is the result of many years of planning and hard work by CASS. This 63-bed facility at Campsie will provide a crucial service to frail aged people of East Asian backgrounds in years to come. Communities across Australia are facing the real issue of providing for our ageing population and it is vital to ensure that it is done in a culturally sensitive manner. CASS is to be commended for its vision and untiring work in a wide range of services. I also thank the Chinese community for the positive contribution it makes to our economy.

#### HOPE MISSION CENTRE

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta) [12.58 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of the House to the work of the Hope Mission Centre. Last weekend I had the pleasure of attending its fifteenth anniversary. For more than 15 years the centre, under the guidance and leadership of co-founders, executive directors and senior pastors Reverend Samuel Gunawan and Reverend Doctor Aileen Gunawan, has helped the community. In that time it has helped to transform the lives of many people who live in and around Parramatta. I have had the honour of attending a number of the centre's community activities, including the grand opening in August of its new premises at Church Street, North Parramatta and the international food fair held last year.

In 1999 the Hope Mission Centre was officially inaugurated. It began in the home of Reverend Samuel Gunawan and Reverend Doctor Aileen Gunawan, with a congregation of 12 people. Jubilee Hall, Parramatta, which is affectionately known as the "barn", was then rented to hold Sunday services. In new premises in Church Street they offer a range of programs and services aimed at supporting our youth and strengthening family values. These programs include providing church services on Wednesdays and Sundays. They run a migrant support network focused on helping migrants establish themselves in the Australian community. They organise community activities, events, courses and workshops to help and support new migrants settle into life in Australia. Their Christian youth group, Youthopea, runs services on Friday nights, helping support young people from across Sydney.

Upbeat is their school holiday program for primary and high school students. HopeKids is the Hope Church's children's ministry which provides activities including a Sunday school program, creative arts, outreach and community events in a safe and nurturing environment. It provides the support, encouragement and discipline to help kids develop confidence to make a positive impact in the community. Enlivening Caregivers [EnCA] supports caregivers of people living with chronic kidney disease. It provides events and activities aimed at addressing emotional and social wellbeing and tackling the sense of isolation felt by caregivers. It runs workshops and activities at Westmead Children's Hospital every fortnight to provide relief for parents and caregivers.

Dr Allison Tong, the program coordinator, recognises that "caregivers battle anxiety, exhaustion and uncertainty, and make sacrifices in their own lives, so they can support and help manage the complex medical needs of their loved ones." I recognise Dr David Gunawan who has been nominated for a ZEST award. The award celebrates innovation and creativity in the community sector and recognises extraordinary work and

leadership of people in greater Western Sydney. Pastor Gunawan was nominated for his outstanding dynamic leadership in the Hope Mission Centre since 1999. His leadership, mentorship and training programs have culminated in the long-term engagement of more than 80 adult and youth volunteers who come together to serve the community. He has helped to enrich the lives of others with hope, building strong community participation and social inclusion.

I also recognise Reverend Dr Aileen Gunawan who received the New South Wales Premier's Award for Community Service in 2013. She was recognised for her commitment to helping, equipping and empowering individuals in the community and her work in leading a team of more than 80 dedicated volunteer members to serve the community. She was also recognised for supporting people in the Asia-Pacific region by providing training seminars and counselling to individuals and families in need of help. Also in 2013 Dr Gunawan was selected as the recipient of the 2013 University of Sydney Community Award. At the ceremony Professor Gary Smith, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Engagement and International at the University of Western Sydney said the award was "a public recognition of the wonderful contribution you make to the cultural, social and economic wellbeing and resilience of others in the greater Western Sydney region. ... We believe that people like you are a powerful role model for our students, their families and friends."

Dr David Gunawan started in youth services. He led the congregation on Sunday for the celebration of Hope Mission's fifteenth anniversary. Hope Mission is run entirely by volunteers. I recognise volunteers including Mr Jonathan Gunawan, Manager of Outreach and Director of Youth; Mr Patrick Lim, Manager of Finance; Mrs Stephanie Tang, Manager of Creative; Mrs Elaine Teng, Manager of Operations; and Mr Kin Yew Teng, Manager of Development. I congratulate them on this milestone in the centre's history.

### BLUE MOUNTAINS TOURISM

**Mrs ROZA SAGE** (Blue Mountains) [1.03 p.m.]: Tourism businesses all over the Blue Mountains slumped dramatically after the October 2013 bushfires. However, the main tourist areas were not impacted and were far from bushfire-devastated areas. Unfortunately, local and international media vastly overstated and sensationalised reports, giving the perception that all the Blue Mountains and, indeed, all of Australia was on fire. Since then there have been concerted campaigns through extra funding from the State and Federal governments, and via Destination NSW and the local Blue Mountains Lithgow and Oberon Tourism Organisation [BMLOT] to bring back tourists.

By and large the local Sydney market has responded extremely well, with many of my parliamentary colleagues on all sides of politics indicating that they too were supporting Blue Mountains tourism by spending a short break there rather than in other locations. I thank all of you. Disappointingly, I was speaking to a tourism operator recently who told me that the international perspective has changed little, with some international tour operators still under the impression that the Blue Mountains has been burnt.

The visit by the Royal couple, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, prior to the Easter—Anzac public holidays, was an enormous boost to tourism and all tourism businesses reported a very busy and profitable time. This winter was also very good and the industry is starting to bounce back. Businesses are still recovering and the same high quality of tourism operators was demonstrated at the recent Tourism Accommodation Awards [TAA] of excellence in Sydney and the local BMLOT awards I attended on the weekend. At the TAA, Blue Mountains entrants were well represented at the finals including the Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort in the Lithgow local government area of the greater Blue Mountains region. This resort did extremely well in winning many categories.

The Regional Superior Accommodation Hotel of the Year category saw three of the seven Blue Mountains establishments represented—the Carrington Hotel, Katoomba; Fairmont Resort, Leura; and the winner, Echoes Boutique Hotel at Katoomba. Lilianfels Blue Mountains Resort was a finalist in the Regional Deluxe Accommodation Hotel category. The Fairmont Resort was a finalist in several categories including Aliesha Dickson for Hotel Industry Rising Star; Roni Hren for Finance Officer of the Year; Michaela Murray for Employee Excellence in Service; and the resort itself for Conference Hotel of the Year. It is very heartening to see the rise of Fairmont Resort under the ownership of Dr Jerry Swartz and the former manager, Geoff Yorke, and now Bernie Boller. The Fairmont is now a premier accommodation and conference centre, a far cry from the previous damaging ownership.

Finalists in other categories were Darley's restaurant, part of Lilianfels Blue Mountains Resort, in Regional Restaurant of the Year and the Old City Bank Brasserie, part of the Carrington Hotel, in the

Brasserie/Café of the Year. All these awards were hotly contested by the many entrants, so to reach the finals and to win are huge achievements. The local BMLot awards were held last Saturday at Scenic World in the Blue Mountains with Anthea and David Hammon, joint managing directors of Scenic World being our wonderful masters of ceremonies for the night. The judging panel included Maurice Cooper, chief judge, from Bygone Beauties in Leura; Eric Sward from Mountain Heritage; Phil Hammon and Amanda Byrne from Scenic World; and Glenda Grice from TAFE Western Sydney Institute.

Winners on the night were: Specialised Tourism Service, AskRoz, an online database service which is really useful; Tourism, Education and Training, the world-renowned Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School; Tour Operators, Life's An Adventure; Excellence in Sustainable Tourism, Wild Valley Art Park at Wentworth Falls; Apprentice of the Year, Thomas Ferguson from Fairmont; and Young Customer Service Employee of the Year, Megan Iovasi from Echoes Hotel.

Customer Service Employee of the Year, Jessica Fisher from Lilianfels; Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services, Leura Garage at Leura; Deluxe Accommodation, Mountain Heritage Resort; Festivals and Events, Sculpture at Scenic World; Adventure Tourism, Life's An Adventure; Major Tourist Attractions, Blue Mountains National Parks; Tourist Attractions, Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens; Business Tourism, Fairmont Resort; Young Employee of the Year, Roxanne Campbell from Lilianfels; Employee of the Year, Darryl Walker from Lilianfels; and Luxury Accommodation, Mountain Whispers. All the winners will now enter the New South Wales Tourism Awards. I congratulate all these businesses and wish them the best.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garry Edwards):** Order! Before I call the member for Camden I congratulate him on his election this morning to the position of Chief Government Whip.

#### **NARELLAN ROTARY CLUB**

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [1.08 p.m.]: Thank you, Mr Acting-Speaker. I had the opportunity to attend the Friends of Rotary Charity Ball last Saturday night. I thank the President of the Rotary Club of Narellan, Phil Dowd, and his board for a wonderful evening. The evening is the club's major fundraiser for the year and the club has support from many local businesses. I thank the businesses that contributed to the evening and other events during the year: Bob Ingham family; Harrington Grove Estates; Regal Innovations; Perich Group; Urban Growth NSW; Adco; Narellan Town Centre; Bradcorp; Douglas Partners; Freedom Foods; Dart West Developments; A2 Milk; Camden Hire; MainBrace Constructions; TRN Group; Nepean Engineering; Brown Company; Masterton; Wisdom Homes; Cameron Brae Emerald Hills Estate; Eden Brae Homes; Gunlake Concrete; Glenfield Waste Services; Sydney Truck and Machinery; Macarthur Automotive; Clintons Toyota; Kelly & Partners Accountants; Marsdens Law Group; Oran Park Town; Perfection Landscape Services; Lily Homes; Fairmount Homes; and the Liverpool Catholic Club.

Since its inception in 1992, the Rotary Club of Narellan has supported many deserving charities. The following organisations are grateful for its ongoing support of their worthwhile activities: CareFlight, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney, Ingham Institute, Stellar Violets, Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, Lifeline Macarthur, Eggtober Foundation, Miracle Babies Foundation, University of Western Sydney, Mater Dei Camden, breast cancer services, Camp Quality, Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation, Mater Dei Ladies Lipstick Luncheon, Kiss Goodbye to Multiple Sclerosis, Christmas in Narellan, TAD Disability Services NSW, Youth Solutions, Rotary Foundation, Rotary International, DreamCricket and the Cobbitty Rural Fire Service. These organisations offer various services to our community and help out in many different ways.

The Rotary Club of Narellan is to be commended for its hard work fundraising for so many organisations. The club is not considered to be a large club but it is certainly a very active club. The members work very hard to ensure that no-one is left out. The Rotary Club of Narellan recently adopted the DreamCricket program for children with disabilities. The program offers the opportunity for students with special needs and disabilities to develop skills in baseball. With the coordination of the Movement Disorder Foundation, the Bradman Foundation and the combined Rotary clubs of the Southern Highlands, the program has become a reality.

Another organisation in my electorate is the Macarthur Magic Special Needs Football Club. This organisation was established by parents of children with special needs to enable these children to participate in soccer games each Saturday. The organisation recently received a grant of \$10,000 towards the construction of a fence around its home ground so that the children have a safe environment in which to play soccer. I would like

to thank the Hon. John Ajaka, MLC, Minister for Disability Services, for the grant. I know the club is very appreciative. Club President Geoff Golden and Secretary Lynda Jordan saw a need in our area for all children to have an opportunity to play what is considered by some to be the greatest game of all.

The Rotary Club of Narellan also supports students at the School of Medicine at the University of Western Sydney by offering scholarships. Five local students are supported each year. The scholarships encourage talented students to study and train locally and to work in the Macarthur region. I congratulate the President, Phil Dowd, his board—President-elect Andrew Moyle, immediate past President Roger Chater, Secretary Ruth Morrison, Treasurer Louis Sbirziola, Community Services Officer Marty Magro, Rotary Foundation Officer Debbie Roberts, Vocational Services Officer Peter Roberts, and New Generation and Youth Officer Barry Grimes—and club members for their extremely hard work to assist our community. Many have benefited from their ongoing generosity.

I spoke last week about all the local service clubs in my electorate. The Rotary Club of Narellan is just one that continually supports our local community and those organisations in the wider community. As I have said before, and as I will continue to say, clubs such as the Rotary Club of Narellan do wonderful work. They are volunteers. No level of government—local, State or Federal—could afford to pay them enough for the work they do and for what they contribute to our local community. If any level of government had to pay them then either the job just would not get done or it would not be done to the same outstanding level achieved by the Rotary Club of Narellan. I commend every volunteer in that organisation and their partners for the way they contribute and make the Macarthur community a much better place to live in.

### LONG JETTY HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE** (The Entrance) [1.13 p.m.]: Last month I had the pleasure of attending the Long Jetty Hospital Auxiliary's Annual General Meeting. I always enjoy attending their annual general meeting and hearing of the great work they have done in the past 12 months. I also had the great honour of surprising the President of the auxiliary, Mrs Thelma Peck, with a New South Wales Government Community Service Award. There could not be a more worthy recipient of this award. Thelma has been president of the Long Jetty Hospital Auxiliary for over 27 years and her membership spans 32 years. She has made an enormous contribution to the local community in that time. Thelma and her team work tirelessly to raise funds for the local hospital through raffles, fetes and other fundraising events, as well as working with the local health district, other community groups and organisations—all for the benefit of Long Jetty hospital.

One of the most iconic fundraising items of the auxiliary is the hand-knitted chicks that hold an Easter egg. Thelma and other members of the auxiliary spend hours walking up and down the main street of The Entrance selling the delightful Easter chicks. They raise a significant amount of money each year from their sale. Every year the auxiliary hosts the Long Jetty Hospital Auxiliary Fete, which has a great number of interesting stalls, entertainment, raffles, and food and drinks. It raises more funds than any fundraiser throughout the year. The auxiliary, led by Thelma, put in an outstanding effort to organise the fete. They are exhausted by the end of the day but they always say it is completely worthwhile as it raises thousands of dollars to put towards equipment for the hospital. The Chief Executive of Central Coast Local Health District, Matt Hanrahan, said to me:

Thelma leads by example. During the course of the year, you are likely to see Thelma and her ladies conducting raffles outside the shops, selling handmade knitted chicks in the lead up to Easter, spreading flyers around the neighbourhoods promoting various fundraising events, attending meetings and networking with other community organisations, not to mention conducting the Hospital Fete and Carols by Candlelight.

Perhaps the best example of the commitment and energy Thelma and her team has is the annual Hospital Fete. Held in October each year, the planning begins in January when Thelma and fete coordinators map out their plans for the fete including organising stalls, chocolate wheels, raffles, entertainment, food, marketing and promotion. This is a community event that brings people together to help others.

Sadly, this will be the last year the fete will be held, as Thelma says they are all getting a little too old to put on such a large-scale event. They are now looking to other ideas to raise the funds that the fete would ordinarily raise. When surprised with her award, Thelma could not accept it without sharing the credit with her team, commending their hard work and commitment to the auxiliary. It is evidence of her own commitment to not only the cause of the auxiliary and the hospital but also her own team.

Some time ago, Thelma, along with two of her auxiliary executive members and Matt Hanrahan, came to see me in my office to discuss the possibility of opening a renal dialysis unit at Long Jetty Health Care

Centre. Recognising that they already had the space, they needed only funding for the fit-out and the necessary equipment. Anyone who knows Mrs Peck knows that she is a very difficult lady to say no to when she is petitioning for the hospital. The Gosford Hospital renal dialysis unit has recently begun undertaking a third session of dialysis daily to try to keep up with demand, with some patients not leaving the hospital until the early hours of the morning. This not only makes getting treatment difficult for the patients themselves but also places a burden on their loved ones to ensure they can get to and from treatment. The Long Jetty Health Care Centre renal dialysis unit will go a long way towards meeting the health needs of the residents of the Central Coast.

I was delighted to be able to advise Thelma that her petitioning had been effective. In the 2014-15 New South Wales budget \$1.3 million, of the total \$3.5 million required, was allocated to get the renal dialysis unit at Long Jetty Health Care Centre underway. Thelma and her auxiliary team deserve to be congratulated on their great achievement. It is a hallmark of their tireless work for Central Coast residents. The renal dialysis unit at Long Jetty will have the capacity to accommodate 20 chairs, eight of which will be initially commissioned with further chairs to be added to meet the expected increase in demand. I have been advised by Matt Hanrahan that tenders have already gone out for the works and it is expected that the initial chairs will be in place by October 2015. This is fantastic news. Thelma should be extremely proud of her achievements in her many years of service to her local community. Sadly, volunteering is not as popular as it used to be. Many of the members of the Long Jetty Hospital Auxiliary are now aged 80 or more. Thelma said to me:

This becomes a way of life; you know it's helping someone else.

I know I am but one of many who wholeheartedly appreciate and commend Thelma Peck on her outstanding commitment to her community and to the Long Jetty Hospital Auxiliary. I place on the record my great thanks to her for her exceptional service.

#### **Private members' statements concluded.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Garry Edwards) left the chair at 1.18 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the gallery 22 year 11 legal studies students and their teachers from Holy Spirit College, Lakemba, guests of the member for Lakemba.

### **GLEN TURNER TRUST**

**The SPEAKER:** For the information of members, I inform the House that the member for Tamworth will shortly be circulating details of a trust account established to receive contributions to support the family of Glen Turner, a compliance and regulation officer for the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage, who was shot and killed on duty the week before last.

### **CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR**

**The SPEAKER:** During this week, a century ago, our city was abuzz with the gathering of thousands of men drawn from all corners of this State for what most thought would be the adventure of their lives. By the end of this week those men—many of them still only boys and not yet men—had marched through our street, past this very place, cheered and feted by enthusiastic citizens, to Fort Macquarie where the transcendent Opera House now rises from the harbour's waters, and thence crossing to Cockatoo Island where they embarked on HMAS *Berrima* to start their journey to the other side of the world.

Most had no idea why they were making this journey, only that it was their duty as Australians to be fighting for King and Empire and that their Australian spirit told them that it was right to resist the naked aggression of the Kaiser and his ilk and that little nations like Belgium deserved to be protected. These men and boys of the Australian Naval and Military Expedition Force would disembark near Rabaul to secure Australia's northern approaches from the predations of the German Empire and to take its people into our own.

There our nation suffered its first two fatal casualties in a conflict that would take the lives of another 60,000 of their fellows and see 156,000 wounded or taken prisoner. There we would forge our first meaningful links with another country not of the Empire but one with whose destiny we would become inextricably linked

and with a people who, in another great conflict yet to come, would prove to be such stout allies and true friends. Our nation's role on the wider stage thus began—born out of conflict but now—and hopefully for all time to come—as a harbinger for peace and a better world.

## ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

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

T F BATHURST  
Lieutenant-Governor

Office of the Governor  
Sydney, 7 August 2014

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

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

**Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.**

## ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CHARLESTOWN

### Resignation of Andrew Stuart Cornwell

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of a letter from Andrew Stuart Cornwell resigning his seat as member for the electoral district of Charlestown.

## ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF NEWCASTLE

### Resignation of Timothy Francis Owen

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of a letter from Timothy Francis Owen resigning his seat as member for the electoral district of Newcastle.

## VACANT SEATS

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [2.21 p.m.]: I move:

That, pursuant to section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, the seats of the members for Charlestown and Newcastle be declared vacant by reason of the resignations of Andrew Stuart Cornwell and Timothy Francis Owen.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: Is it in order for me to request that those letters be tabled before the House?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Yes, copies will be provided.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Routine of Business

*[During the announcement of notices of motions sought to be accorded priority.]*

**Mr David Elliott:** What about Susai Benjamin? Are you going to bring him out? Condemn Susai Benjamin. What about your candidate in Seven Hills?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will come to order.

**Mr David Elliott:** I just hate hypocrisy.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will come to order. Members should not be speaking while I am speaking.

**QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.24 p.m.]*

**ELECTION FUNDING AND EXPENDITURE**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. I wrote to the Premier more than three months ago offering bipartisan support to implement reforms, including full public funding of elections. Given the ongoing revelations at the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC], will the Premier finally join with us to implement full public funding to remove the corrosive influence of donations once and for all?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It is interesting that he is talking about bipartisanship now because, having run through the reforms, we offered him the opportunity to work with us and he decided not to do so. So I welcome that the Leader of the Opposition seems to have had a change of heart and now wants to work in a bipartisan way. We have taken action in relation to donation reform, and we look forward to the Opposition's support for that process. We have put in place—all of us know what we have done—Kerry Schott, who is in charge of overseeing donation reform, and the words we put in place were exactly the words used by the Leader of the Opposition, that is, to take away the corrosive influence of donations and its impact in New South Wales. We look forward to Labor's support because it needs to be done. In this whole debate there is a stark difference: there is action on this side of the House and there is nothing coming from the opposite side.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order. The member for Keira will come to order. I do not expect interjections, which are disorderly.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Since I came into this role we have undertaken a range of things. In relation to our party, the first thing we did was appoint a former director of ICAC, Michael Symons, to look at the governance of the party. We need to ensure that there is governance of the party. We need to have the best party it can possibly be, and we need to improve. So that is what we have done. We have also appointed Kerry Schott, who is an outstanding public servant, to do exactly what the Leader of the Opposition said today he wants to do that is, to remove the corrosive influence of donations, look at public funding and see if it is possible to make it happen.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** That is my stated position and I have said that from the beginning.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Importantly, on that, we have two sides. We have Andrew Tink, who is well respected on this side, and we have John Watkins, who is well respected on the other side. There are opportunities to come together to achieve some meaningful reform for the long-term good of the State. So I welcome the change of heart from the Leader of the Opposition today because it is time that happened. At the same time we have asked John Fahey to come in and oversee the finances and the fundraising of the party to ensure there is confidence across the community in regard to our processes. We know we need to improve, and that is why we have taken the action to ensure we are doing exactly that.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: It is standing order 129. It is whether the Premier will do it now, not after the next election.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It is clear that we want him to do it properly to ensure that it can be set up for a generation to come.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We do not want a political quick-fix, which is what members opposite want. We want to do it properly and we want to get it right.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I say to the Leader of the Opposition: The actions we have taken stand in stark contrast. He might like to answer to the House.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Leader of the Opposition might like to explain why seven members of his shadow Cabinet have gone to him and said, "Why don't you take action on your own team?" Members opposite are looking down because their leader is not taking action.

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

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: It is standing order 129. The question was on public funding.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have already ruled that the Premier has been relevant to the question.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** If the Leader of the Opposition has come in here to throw rocks, which he clearly has, he must get his own house in order. He stands up on his moral high horse. The members of his shadow Cabinet know one thing.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Is it relevance?

**Mr John Robertson:** It is relevance; it is standing order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier continues to be relevant.

**Mr John Robertson:** He is not talking about public funding.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I know what the question is. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** He has nothing to say because he has not taken action. All the members of his shadow Cabinet are saying, "Why don't you take action on this matter?"

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The simple thing is he has not got the guts.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will stop yelling.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Your actions stand here, and ultimately that is a question for you. On this subject matter we on this side of the House are happy to take action.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question he was asked.

**Mr Michael Daley:** It is Standing Order 73. If the Premier wants to debate this he should move a motion. Bring it on.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. There is no point of order. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

## COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SYDNEY ELECTIONS

**Mr GARETH WARD:** My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government giving business a voice in the City of Sydney?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I thank the member for Kiama for his interest in this matter. As the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, the member for Kiama is determined to make a difference in this State. It is great that he has made this contribution. It is great that the Committee has brought forward these recommendations to give businesses in this city a voice in their future, which is exactly what this is about, and I am pleased to bring it in. Recommendation 15 in this report states:

The Committee recommends that the Government introduce the model used by the City of Melbourne for the City of Sydney in all its respects including the deeming provisions and the compulsory voting aspect for electors on the non-residential roll.

Today the Government and the Minister for Local Government announced implementation of that recommendation. The Minister for Local Government is doing an outstanding job travelling from one end of the State to the other making a difference in his portfolio. They love him everywhere.

**Mr Ryan Park:** They don't love him in Bathurst.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** They love him in Bathurst.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will come to order and stop shouting, screaming and interjecting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The law that will be introduced will give business a voice in the City of Sydney by allowing non-resident owners and occupiers to be automatically enrolled with up to two persons eligible to be enrolled, and they will also remain on the non-residential roll between elections. It is important to give the background. In the 2012 City of Sydney elections, 1,709 businesses were enrolled to vote with only 1,498 actually voting from an estimated 80,000 that were eligible to vote. This equates to less than 2 per cent of business voting, despite contributing 78.5 per cent of the council's rates. This demonstrates a fundamental flaw in the democratic system of these elections. It denies many businesses a say in how their council is run. Taxation without representation certainly applies.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. The member for Kiama should not be tempted to respond to Opposition members.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It is essential that we work together to remove any obstacles that get in the way of people exercising their democratic rights. The law will be modelled on arrangements that have worked successfully in the City of Melbourne. It will be implemented effectively in the City of Sydney without excessive cost or inconvenience. We on this side of the House welcome democracy, and its principle is pretty simple: businesses that operate in the city should have a voice in its future. It is not only the Government's voice; the good news is that it has also been widely endorsed in the community today. I note the Sydney Business Chamber stated:

This has been an issue that has angered the business community for decades and it is good news for business owners across the city.

The Property Council of Australia stated:

Creation of a permanent electoral roll for commercial property owners and businesses fulfils a basic democratic principle.

It also stated:

The current process of cleansing the roll after each council election is irrational and forces reregistration through a process that is narrow, complex and discourages participation.

This is not a debate about personalities or party politics but a basic democratic principle—that if you contribute substantial rates and taxes, you earn the right to vote.

The Urban Taskforce stated:

The bustle of urban areas is now about shops, work places, cafés and the residential apartments above this. It is therefore appropriate that the businesses as well as the residents are treated equally and vote for local councillors.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order and generally stop wandering around.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Property Council of Australia also stated:

The fact that nearly 80% of the rates come from businesses in the City of Sydney, demonstrates the importance of businesses being represented but only 2% of the votes at the last election came from them.

This law is a response to a long-held pursuit of reform. I thank not only the chair but all the members of the parliamentary committee who made these recommendations. They are determined to give businesses a voice in the future of their city. We have seen the benefits it has provided in the City of Melbourne. We are obviously very happy to implement the findings of that committee and give businesses a voice today. The Government will be supporting this bill when it is introduced and clearly anyone who wants to run for council elections in 2016 obviously needs to respond to his or her constituents, of which businesses are a part. They give us a capacity to respond. We look forward to their platforms being brought forward and we look forward to democracy being given to businesses that operate in this city. It is a good, long-needed reform and it will be implemented.

### ELECTION FUNDING AND EXPENDITURE

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier take action this week to restore faith in this Parliament and democracy in New South Wales by immediately banning lobbyists and removing the influence of donations by supporting full public funding of election campaigns before the next election?

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** What did you do for 16 years? You did absolutely nothing, you hypocrite.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier will come to order. I have already asked the member for Keira to come to order. He will sit back. I will wait until members come to order before I call on the Premier to answer the question. I call the member for Mount Druitt to order for the first time. I ask members to cease interjecting and generally showing a lack of discipline, especially Opposition members.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** They are spectacularly consistent in their hypocrisy. Those opposite understand. We have put forward a range of lobbying reforms, not least of which is to set up an independent regulator of lobbyists. In addition, we have said we are happy for ministerial diaries to be made public at the end of the quarter because the Government wants to be transparent about the purpose of its meetings. That is a first for this State. Did we see any of that type of reform in 16 years under those opposite?

**Government members:** No.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order; this is his last warning. The member for Maroubra will come to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It gets worse because do members think the Leader of the Opposition, who is calling for this, will ask his shadow Cabinet Ministers to put their diaries on the table?

**Government members:** No.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** No, he will not ask that.

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

*[Interruption]*

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We know what is in the diary.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will cease interjecting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** This side is taking action and will continue to do so. The Leader of the Opposition needs simply to answer the question: Why have seven members on his frontbench said to him, "You need to take action on your own team." He is not taking action.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I cannot pick the voice from the Government benches, but when I do I will place that person on a call to order.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129. The question was on lobbyists; he is deviating from the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question he was asked. There is no point of order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We will not be lectured by those opposite on the matter of ethics. It is like listening to the mafia, for heaven's sake.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Leader of the Opposition also needs to explain—

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** —if he is leading this charge, why close to 30 per cent of his team are bugging out at the next election? Why?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the first time. These interjections are inappropriate.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The member for Maroubra is doing the numbers as we speak. I will go through them.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The members representing the electorates of Mount Druitt, Kogarah, Lakemba, Auburn, Toongabbie, Marrickville—

**Mrs Barbara Perry:** I haven't gone anywhere. Get it right.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We are backing you in, Barbara.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: The question was about lobbyists.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question he was asked. I have no power to instruct him to answer the member's question to his liking.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It is very clear that we are taking the action on this side of the House.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Ultimately what those opposite need to know is that the Leader of the Opposition, who is leading the charge, all of a sudden wants to be bipartisan. If that is what he wants I look forward to that.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Maroubra that he is on two calls to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I think the member for Lakemba said it all. He was asked on radio this simple question about the Leader of the Opposition: "Is John Robertson's performance up to scratch to get Labor back into power?"

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: Madam Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. He seeks to raise the same point of order that I have just ruled on. Does the member have a different point of order, something new and original?

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** No.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. The Premier remains relevant.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: Standing Order 73 says that if personal reflections are going to be made, they should be made by way of a substantive motion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard some from the member for Maroubra in the past. The member will resume his seat. The Premier has the call. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the third time. This is his last warning.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I know you have been to him and asked him to act; I know you have asked him to act. Linda Mottram asked the question: "Is John Robertson's performance up to scratch ...?" Robert Furolo: "Well, that's a matter for other people." If the Leader of the Opposition wants to attack us he needs to ensure the members of his own team are in order because they are angry about the lack of action from the top.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The good news for the people of New South Wales is that we are taking action on this side to get New South Wales back on track.

#### **MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN**

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals. How is the Government creating jobs in communities impacted by the Murray-Darling Basin?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** It is refreshing to get a question about good governance on behalf of the people that make this State the great place it is. I know that the member for Murray-Darling advocates for and represents many people in his huge electorate of Murray-Darling in the west of our State.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the second time. The member for Fairfield will come to order.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Government members know that the Murray-Darling Basin is the most productive food and fibre region in Australia. In fact, it produces one-third of the national food supply and exports produce to many other countries—everything from rice to cotton to fruits and vegetables, to wines, oils, dairy, poultry, beef and lamb. I am proud to say that this Liberal-Nationals Government has always backed our basin communities. We stood up for them in the dying days of the Federal Labor Government over its plans for blunt water buybacks that would have crippled those inland economies.

Thankfully the new Liberal-Nationals Government in Canberra shares our vision for prosperous regional communities. Both levels of government are committed to the long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability of the Murray-Darling Basin. This commitment is demonstrated through increased funding, which will go towards further water infrastructure and management projects as well as economic strategies to address the impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan on those inland communities. Today I am pleased to announce \$32.5 million in Commonwealth funding for New South Wales basin communities via the Murray-Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification Program.

This program will provide funding for economic development projects and diversification initiatives that create new jobs in this terrific region of our State. Under the program, funding will be given to projects judged to have a positive impact on regional and rural communities in the Murray-Darling Basin through the creation of new jobs and the broadening of economic opportunities. I know that all the hardworking people in those communities everywhere from places such as Leeton, Griffith, Narrandera down to Wentworth, and all the very many inland communities all the way up to Tamworth that are all part of the Murray-Darling Basin are innovative. They will adapt to new water technologies and new economic opportunities.

We are keen to receive applications from regions identified by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, in particular, areas such as the Murrumbidgee and the Murray, as being most likely affected by the implementation

of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We think the funding for basin communities will go a long way towards building resilient economies along the Murray-Darling river systems. This comes on top of the \$700 million of Commonwealth funding that we have already secured for a number of important basin infrastructure projects, including basin pipe and farm modernisation and more recently the \$180 million Nimmie-Caira environmental water delivery project and up to \$80,000 for further work on the Menindee Lakes water saving project.

Today I acknowledge the hard work of a number of members of this Government, in particular, the former Minister for Water and member for Burrinjuck, the current Minister for Water and member for Barwon and the member for Dubbo through his previous role as the Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources. Collectively these and other members of the Government are delivering strong outcomes for these inland communities, which when all is said and done deliver the food that goes into our restaurants and cafes in Sydney and generate enormous export income for New South Wales.

I know my colleague the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water is pushing for efficiency in what the Murray-Darling Basin Authority does to ensure that the management of joint programs is as efficient, effective and customer-focused as possible so that the cost to be met by New South Wales water users through those water charges will deliver real benefits to users. As I announced to the House last week, the Government is also delivering some \$366 million for the Water Security for Regions program, which provides funding for drought-proofing infrastructure projects in regional communities and for the first major inland dam in New South Wales in 30 years.

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I hear groans from members opposite. They are obsessed with metropolitan areas and their own internal factional machinations. This Government is about representing all of New South Wales, all the hardworking families who make this State the great place that it is. As I was saying, our Water Security for Regions program is funding a major new dam on the Belubula River in the electorate of the member for Orange at a site known as Needles Gap. Expressions of interest for funding under the new Murray-Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification Program that I announced earlier open today. Applications will need to be lodged with the Government on or before Friday 31 October 2014. This program is yet another example of how the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is driving regional jobs and economic growth through increased investment in infrastructure and improved service delivery. I look forward to updating the House on further items in this regard in coming months.

**NEWCASTLE LORD MAYOR JEFF MCCLOY**

**Ms SONIA HORNER:** My question is directed to the Premier. Why has he failed to suspend the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Jeff McCloy, given formal allegations made by the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and evidence from the recently resigned members representing the electorates of Charlestown and Newcastle?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The member knows there must be formal findings from ICAC in relation to this.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Minister also made the point this morning and said the lord mayor should consider his position, and that is absolutely right. It is very clear that that is something he should take into account and consider. I will say this because those opposite are touching on it: This is a very serious matter and everyone in New South Wales has every right to feel appalled, to feel angry and to feel betrayed. I feel that and I am sure that is how every person across New South Wales feels. We will take whatever action is necessary to ensure that we deal with whatever allegations come before it.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We will do that in a considered way and we will deal with every one that comes but, importantly, we will continue to get on with the job of looking after this great State of New South Wales. There is so much that needs to be done. The Treasurer oversaw recent statistics that show that New South Wales is leading the nation again in jobs growth and economic growth. It is back where it should be: leading the country. Those opposite left this State dead last. This Government is taking action on jobs growth, economic growth, family and community services, and health. There will be a record health infrastructure spend.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** In answer to the question I refer to what the Minister said today. He has asked the lord mayor to consider his position, and he should do that. It is a matter for him.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order.

#### **FEDERATION OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How is the Government providing parents of the 775,000 children in the State's public schools with better representation?

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Members will recall that in May this year the Parliament passed legislation to take the necessary action to reform the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales [P and C] following years of internal conflict. Garry Payne took over as administrator in May and has done a great job of rebuilding and re-establishing confidence in the federation. Before I comment further on Mr Payne's work I pay tribute to the local school-based P and Cs for their ongoing great work. There have been significant problems with the statewide organisation, but on a day-to-day basis every member of Parliament is aware of the work that each P and C does to raise money and man canteens, among other things.

Mr Payne was appointed in May and will exercise all of the functions of the federation until the election of councillors and delegates concludes by the end of this year. The Opposition raised concerns during the passage of this bill about the length of time the process will take. I am advised that all of those procedures are in place and that elections should have concluded by the end of this year. Mr Payne has put together a small number of office staff who are working hard to restore and improve the level of service required by more than 1,800 school P and C associations. Now that Mr Payne has been in place for a few months, I will detail some of the reasons why we had to take the rather drastic and decisive action we took in May.

The cost of the dysfunction of the federation was significant and will not be realised fully until at least the end of the year when a new board of management is in place. Actions by the federation prior to the Government and Parliament's response incurred additional costs, including six weeks of down time for the federation staff at a cost of \$45,000; the temporary appointment of an executive officer at a salary of \$170,000 per year, a salary higher than that of the top earning principal in this State; and the legal costs to represent the federation as a result of the dispute of \$160,000, plus the \$10,000 in costs for discontinued court proceedings.

To underline the reasons why Government took action I inform the House that recently the administrator received a reimbursement claim for costs associated with the forced entry to federation offices in April this year. Those costs include charge back to P and C of \$1,055 to change the locks and open the cabinets, and a claim of \$76 for food and beverage consumed by those who entered the premises during the overnight stay. That includes a claim for the cost of three extra-large chickens, creamy potato salad, bacon and egg salad, tomato sauce, coleslaw and orange drink. I am not going to name them, they know who they are. The audacity of that claim underlines the dysfunction in that organisation.

Excluding the department's costs for legal work associated with the constitution, there are federation costs to re-establish the office, revenue foregone if members do not renew membership and the significant time spent by departmental and ministerial staff. The Electoral Commission will conduct the first election of councillors and delegates. It will allow P and C associations in 16 geographic areas to select 16 councillors and 32 delegates to represent them on the board of management. The Electoral Commission will reduce the board and the annual general meeting.

The exorbitant costs of the annual conference, which peaked at \$141,000 in 2010, will stop. Over the past four years \$700,000 was spent on formal meetings. Obviously significant reforms have had to be undertaken in respect of the P and C. I acknowledge the support of all members of the Parliament. This is about making sure that the parents of children in public schools across New South Wales have a voice in Government decision-making and an opportunity to be part of democracy—that includes the criticism of governments when criticism is due. This is about making sure we get that representation.

**ELECTORAL DISTRICTS OF NEWCASTLE AND CHARLESTOWN BY-ELECTIONS**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. Given the Liberal members for Newcastle and Charlestown have resigned in disgrace, will he guarantee a by-election for the electorates of Newcastle and Charlestown to ensure that these communities have a voice in Parliament?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The short answer is yes. I reiterate that everyone in New South Wales has the right to feel angered and betrayed by the actions of those members. That is the natural response that people feel. I made some comments in relation to this at lunchtime. I note that the members have reconsidered their position and have resigned, and that is an appropriate response. The Government will continue the work being done for the Hunter and the people in those two electorates. This Government has every reason to be proud of what it has delivered for the Hunter. It has done more in three years in the Hunter than those opposite did in 16 years in Government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The members for Macquarie Fields and the member for Marrickville will come to order. The member for Keira will come to order. The member for Cessnock will come to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Those opposite took the Hunter for granted and pretended it did not exist. This Government has taken action and delivered on the ground up and down the Hunter region, from one end to the other. It has taken this Government to deliver \$350 million for the Hunter Infrastructure Fund and to complete the Hunter Expressway, the missing link, following 10 years of inactivity.

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

**Mr Nathan Rees:** What do you expect?

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** That is what you will see.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Government will provide an opportunity for those communities to seek new members. The Government is proud of its record of delivery, which is in stark contrast to what those opposite delivered. If members recall the fiscal strategy of those opposite, they were against the lease of the Port of Newcastle.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** They do not want change or investment in new infrastructure; they want to leave the city as it is. The Leader of the Opposition does his best to wreck and hold back progress. This Government looks forward to presenting a positive plan to the whole of New South Wales on how great this State can be. It will be a different campaign to that which those opposite run, but we are proud to stand by our record. What a proud State we will be.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields is on his final warning. I call the member for Cessnock to order for the first time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Those communities deserve nothing less. Every community in New South Wales deserves nothing less.

**WESTERN SYDNEY HOUSING**

**Mr BART BASSETT:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Minister for Women.

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

**Mr BART BASSETT:** How is the Government improving housing affordability for the people of Western Sydney?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I did not hear that question due to the interjection of the member for Canterbury, which was highly inappropriate. The member for Londonderry will repeat the question. Members will come to order so that I can hear the question.

**Mr BART BASSETT:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Minister for Women. How is the Government improving housing affordability for the people of Western Sydney?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I thank the member for his question and for his deep commitment to the people of Western Sydney.

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

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** As we know, buying a home is the most important decision most people will make in their lifetime. It is a decision that often requires trade-offs in other areas of family life, like holidays or even eating out; but no matter how much Australia has changed over the years, no matter how different Sydney looks to when most of us were children, owning a family home is still the great Australian dream. We on this side of the House are committed to ensuring that it is the great Australian dream that is achievable for Australian families, as opposed to those opposite who, when they sat on these benches, put the great Australian dream further out of reach. In fact, it became a nightmare. When those opposite saw Sydney's population was increasing, what was their response? The Premier appeared on national television to declare that Sydney is full.

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

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Those opposite put their heads in the sand. They stopped releasing land and stopped planning for the future. It was just too hard. We know that is not good enough and the community voted them out for exactly that mismanagement. The community expects us to deliver what the Labor Party could not, and we are delivering. We are ensuring that land is being released for new homes; that is why Sydney has released and rezoned greenfield stocks at the highest levels since the 1980s. We are ensuring that new homes are being built for families to buy. That is why, in the last year alone, more than 50,000 new homes have been approved—the highest number in a decade.

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

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** It is why I was able to announce with the Premier in June that more than 100,000 new homes have been completed since we came to office. But we cannot stop there. We must also ensure that there is more affordability and more choice for homebuyers in Sydney. That is why, starting from yesterday, rules around lot sizes and innovative dwellings have been streamlined across the growth centres. These allow for terrace-style homes for around \$400,000, manor homes on corner blocks and even "Fonzie flats". Finally, we must make very strong decisions about where there are opportunities to increase housing supply and choices based on existing transport links and job centres. That is why a number of weeks ago I announced the latest three urban activation precincts to be developed around three stations on the North West Rail Link.

These are on top of precincts such as Epping, North Ryde and Wentworth Point, which will create up to 39,000 new homes, as well as support almost 40,000 new jobs. We are planning smarter for the future to deliver the housing choices families want, because we know the population is growing. Sydney will grow by 1.6 million people by 2031. We know families are changing. The highest growth households are singles and couples without children. Most importantly, we know we have to do better than the Labor Party did. The best those opposite could offer was a 50-year low in housing approvals. They did so well that the Housing Industry Association called the former Labor Government the worst State Government in history, which is in stark contrast to more recent comments from the same Housing Industry Association about the Baird Government and its policies.

On 13 July the association issued its report card titled "NSW Surges Up the League Table". What did it say about how New South Wales is faring on increasing supply into the market to keep a lid on affordability? Affordability is something I thought the Labor Party was interested in. In May the association said that the housing affordability index actually improved in Sydney by 2.2 per cent, whereas in Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart and Melbourne it either went down or stayed the same. This is a Government that is achieving results, that recognises how important affordable housing is to our families and that sees it as an issue of fairness. We are committed to ensuring our families not only dream of a home of their own but can afford to buy one.

### GOING HOME STAYING HOME

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** I direct my question to the Premier. Will he establish an independent inquiry to examine the Going Home Staying Home tender process, which has resulted in the closure of scores of women's refuges across this State, as experts who are in the gallery today have been requesting?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. The member for Bankstown will come to order. The question has only just been asked and she is interjecting. The Premier has the call.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The answer is no. The very simple fact that we on this side of the House have stood by, and one that I stated last week, if not before, is that homelessness in this State is increasing. We have thought about ways to break the cycle and make a difference. We have consulted far and wide with all of the players within the sector to come up with the best way to make a difference to the level of homelessness in this State. Yes, the process will require change. Transition comes with difficulties, but the overall approach is to work with all of the providers to actually reduce homelessness in this State. That is something we are proud of, something we should be doing and something that we are doing. There are more services available. There is more funding available for homelessness and, importantly, we are looking at intervention.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: It is relevance under Standing Order 129. This is about specialised women's services—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

**Mr John Robertson:** The Premier continues to talk about homelessness, which shows a complete lack of understanding of what is actually being asked.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I will not respond to those interjections, since the importance of this matter is for the Government to get it right. We are completing the reforms. We are working directly with all existing services that have missed out on the tender process to see whether there is an opportunity to provide more services that may be required across all communities and applied overall to make a difference to homelessness. We are determined to do what is right, we are determined to work with the sector and we are determined to provide more services, which is exactly what we are doing.

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

### NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

**Mrs ROZA SAGE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. How is the Government supporting the NSW Rural Fire Service in its preparation for what appears to be another challenging bushfire season?

**Mr STUART AYRES:** I acknowledge the member for the Blue Mountains, who has been a very strong leader in a community that has been affected by bushfire quite significantly in the past 12 months. The NSW Rural Fire Service and its teams of volunteers have already been faced with a number of ferocious bush and grass fires very early in this season. As of yesterday there were 35 active grass fires and more than 300 volunteer firefighters deployed across New South Wales. With an El Niño weather pattern consisting of very hot, dry and windy conditions forecast for this upcoming season, the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service has commenced the formal bushfire danger period in several locations across the State. This is almost two months earlier than the statutory start of the season, which is scheduled for 1 October. This means that residents in affected areas must contact their local fire control centre before undertaking any type of burning.

Because the Government recognises the need for and the right of people to protect their own property through effective preparation, we passed legislation recently that reduces unnecessary red tape to allow this essential work to happen. The 10/50 vegetation clearing code of practice is a user friendly guide that will help people living inside a 10/50 area to clear vegetation around their home without seeking prior approval. In these zones trees can be cleared within 10 metres of a home and other types of vegetation such as shrubs and

understorey can be cleared within 50 metres of a home. Land owners who visit the Rural Fire Service website to access the online tool to determine their eligibility will find a very easy-to-use online map. Arrangements also apply for high-risk facilities such as schools, childcare centres and hospitals that are located in the 10/50 area.

If an owner of land situated within a 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement area undertakes vegetation clearing work other than in accordance with the code, the normal offence provisions and remedies under the relevant New South Wales law will apply. To be clear, persons who live outside a 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement area will not be covered by the scheme. Recently we increased the penalties for 18 fire-related offences under the Rural Fires Regulation, reiterating our Government's commitment to cracking down on irresponsible behaviour during the bushfire season. The people of New South Wales do not tolerate members of their community putting others at risk unnecessarily. Penalties now range from \$440 to \$2,200 depending on the offence. Among the increases are penalties for littering involving cigarettes and matches, the fine for which has doubled to \$660 and to \$1,320 when littering occurs on a total fire ban day.

I am pleased to note that the Government is also providing our firefighters with the highest standard of resources, including state-of-the-art bushfire tankers. The New South Wales Government has continued to allocate significant funding to the Rural Fire Service [RFS] to enable the deployment of a large and effective fleet to support the 2,000 rural fire brigades and around 72,000 volunteers. The RFS "red fleet" operates around 7,000 vehicles, up to 4,000 fire trucks, and 3,000 support and logistics vehicles. The 2014-15 budget allocated \$30.4 million to the RFS for new tankers and logistics support vehicles, which will continue the ongoing tanker replacement and refurbishment program. In addition, over the past three years the New South Wales Government has invested nearly \$35 million in the Fire and Rescue NSW fleet replacement program. This includes 15 new class 2 pumper fire trucks. Four of these are already in operation—one each in Katoomba, Umina, Cardiff and Lambton—with another to be delivered to Bathurst Fire Station next week.

Fire and Rescue NSW will also commission 18 new four-wheel-drive fire trucks in the coming months. Two new incident command vehicles are being built to assist with our ability to fight fires across the State. As we prepare for another difficult fire season, I am confident the RFS and other emergency service agencies will continue their exemplary work to protect the people of New South Wales from the threat of bushfire. There are very few people the community recognises and respects more than the people who don the yellow overalls to fight fires in our community. As we approach this season, it is also important to remind people of the importance of preparing for bushfires. We know that properly prepared property is more likely to survive than property that is not properly prepared.

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

**Mr STUART AYRES:** A well-prepared property, including trees and shrubs that have been trimmed and gutters that have been cleared, will ensure the property has a greater chance of surviving. The New South Wales Government strongly encourages people to formulate their own bushfire survival plans as early as possible, particularly in the current conditions, by providing information through initiatives such as the Prepare, Act, Survive information campaign. The RFS website also has extensive and detailed information for homeowners to assist in the formulation of their own bushfire survival plan, including the Bushfire Survival Plan and the MyFirePlan smartphone application. With hot and windy weather forecast for the upcoming season it is particularly important that people heed these messages and prepare properly for the upcoming bushfire season.

**Question time concluded at 3.13 p.m.**

**GOVERNMENT WHIP**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS, on behalf of Mr Mike Baird:** It is with great pleasure that I inform the House that this morning the member for Camden, Mr Christopher Stewart Patterson, was elected as Government Whip in the Legislative Assembly. I wish him well in his role.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Kiama will resume his seat and cease arguing with the member for Keira. I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time.

## UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

**The SPEAKER:** Pursuant to Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 12 August 2014.

## LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

### Report

**Mr Stephen Bromhead**, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 59/55", dated 12 August 2014, together with minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 58/55, dated 5 August 2014.

**Report ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Stephen Bromhead.**

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

### Report

**Mr O'Dea**, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports September 2012-March 2013", dated August 2014.

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

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS

### Membership

**Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:**

That Mr Christopher Stewart Patterson take the place of Mr Andrew Stuart Cornwell, resigned, on the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics.

## STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

### Membership

**Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:**

That Mr Christopher Stewart Patterson take the place of Mr Andrew Stuart Cornwell, resigned, on the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee.

## PETITIONS

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

### Women's Refuges

Petition calling on the Government to adequately fund women's and girls' refuges and to reinstate such refuges where dedicated services are no longer available, received from **Mr John Robertson**.

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

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

### Companion Animals on Public Transport

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

**Edgecliff Interchange**

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

**Same-sex Marriage**

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

**Inner-city Social Housing**

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

**Pet Shops**

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

**Pig-dog Hunting Ban**

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

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

**Slaughterhouse Monitoring**

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

**CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY****Regional Water Supply**

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [3.18 p.m.]: In this world there are three distinct groups of people. The first is a group of people who make things happen, and those people are sitting on this side of the House. The second is a group of people who watch things happen, and those people are sitting on the crossbench.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. I remind members that many of them are on three calls to order. It has been agreed that there will be no interjections during the three-minute speeches to establish priority.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** There is one other group: the group of people who ask, "What has happened?" That group is sitting on the opposite side of the House. The group on this side of the House is prepared for the future.

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

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** This motion is about preparing for the threat of drought. Unfortunately, those opposite have never experienced a drought; where they reside, they can build a desalination plant.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** On the other side of the Blue Mountains a desalination plant is not an option. Communities are living day to day in drought. If planning is not in place and if the work has not been done to ensure a reliable water supply during times of drought we will have serious problems. We saw

that happen with the former Labor Government when it asked what happened with those communities Coalition members represented that were unprepared for drought, whose water supply was challenged and who had to put measures in place at the spur of the moment to ensure that they received the water they critically needed.

This side of the House is taking affirmative action. We will ensure that before we start feeling the effects of the next drought we have something solid in place so that we can give a guarantee to those communities west of the Blue Mountains who face the threat of a critical lack of water that they will not go dry. Broken Hill was most unprepared for the last drought. The Darling River ceased flowing and the communities of Wilcannia and Broken Hill, in particular, suffered a critical lack of water. We want to ensure that does not happen again. This motion is about action.

### **Women's and Youth Refuges**

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [3.21 p.m.]: My motion deserves to be accorded priority. This Government stands condemned for the brutal slash-and-burn tender process that has destroyed our State network of women's and youth shelters across the State. Valued services that have served this State for decades have been lost overnight—services such as Kempsey Women's Refuge, Bega Women's Refuge, Innari Housing in Marrickville, Killara in Bondi Junction, the Muslim Women's Association Shelter in Bass Hill and B Miles Women's Foundation.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will cease interjecting during the three-minute speeches to establish priority.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** The great tragedy is that this did not have to happen. Experts in the field of homelessness—some of whom are in the gallery today—urged and advised the Government not to pursue this course of action; they urged the Government to take a district-by-district approach. Stakeholders advised the Government to be transparent in the assessment of tenders. But the Government has ignored that advice. The Government has chosen to use a brutal competitive process against the advice of the sector. Homelessness NSW has described the process as "wrong" and has said that it has caused "disillusion, anxiety and frustration".

This needless application of competition policy is being paid for by the most disadvantaged. The losers are women and children fleeing violence. The losers are those who have dedicated their careers to assisting homeless women who are fleeing violence. Four hundred jobs will be lost—people such as the staff of Kempsey Women's Refuge who were marched off the premises on Friday. The losers are young people like the children who have been living at Lillian Howell's place in Erskineville but who will now be forced to move again. The losers are people like the community of Campbelltown where the Marcia Women's Refuge will close in October.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury will be heard in silence.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** The peak bodies estimate that 149 individual services will close. The Government pretends that it is all a figment of Labor's imagination. The Government argues that it is only the buildings that will close. But the truth is that the specialist services delivered within those buildings—specialist services by women for women—are gone. Women and children who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault need a safe haven—safe havens such as Erin's Place and the Bega Women's Refuge, which were closed more than a month ago.

I acknowledge the more than 14,000 petitioners who support the call for common sense to prevail. I also acknowledge the women in the gallery today who have dedicated their careers to supporting women and young people. The truth is that this Government's ideological commitment to competitive processes has seen specialised services consolidated into generic packages. At a time of growing concern about domestic violence, how can this Government close 80 services? I have visited those services and have seen the excellent work they do. I call on every member to support this motion, which supports women and children across the State.

**Question—That the motion of the member for Murray-Darling be accorded priority—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 59**

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

**Noes, 22**

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

**Pairs**

Mr Barilaro	Ms Burton
Mr Humphries	Ms Hay

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY****Motion Accorded Priority**

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [3.39 p.m.]: I move that this House:

- (1) Notes that the State Infrastructure Strategy:
  - (a) found it is more productive to be prepared for inevitable droughts than it is to restrict supply; and
  - (b) recommended a comprehensive program for dams across New South Wales.
- (2) Supports the Government's record funding towards ensuring water security for our regions.

This is a clear demonstration of the Coalition Government's commitment to regional communities in New South Wales. No doubt one of the greatest challenges we have in New South Wales is a water supply that is guaranteed on a continuous basis to remote and central communities in this State. To get on with the job of rebuilding the infrastructure that is so vital to a water supply for these communities is a commitment of this Government. It has been clearly demonstrated that we have now allocated \$118 million for water security infrastructure across New South Wales, and \$20 million of that has already been delivered for priority projects in Bourke, Wilcannia, Cobar, Nyngan, Lake Wallace and Forbes. These communities have been identified as those communities most at risk in a drought.

The need to ensure that they have a secure water supply in the event of a drought is critical. This is about being prepared. During the previous drought we saw in Wilcannia—I can speak about the Wilcannia community—that the water sitting above the weir was not drinkable; indeed, it was not even suitable for reticulation. The Wilcannia community had to rely on bores of low quality and make do with what was available. We go into this drought prepared to ensure that there will be a supply of water to that community in the event of no further intakes in the Darling River. There are 10 more water infrastructure projects worth \$17 million in Brewarrina, Glen Innes, Liverpool Plains, Narromine, Parks, Tumbarumba, Walgett and Warren. They have also received funding under the latest round of the program that was announced last week.

An expression of interest process for allocation of \$80 million under the 2014-15 program is now open and closes on 30 September 2014. Nearly 60 local government areas are eligible to apply for funding. Projects will be assessed by the NSW Office of Water and Infrastructure NSW, with assistance from a regional independent assessment panel. Projects must demonstrate that they will produce a net economic benefit and meet the objectives of the program. Water security for regions reflects the New South Wales Government's commitment to deliver infrastructure for our regional communities and to meet the 2021 target on access to potable water. I urge all interested parties listening to this debate online or reading *Hansard* to refer to the attached guidelines for the Water Security for Regions Program or visit [www.insw.com](http://www.insw.com).

People and organisations in the region are best placed to understand the water needs of their communities so we are again seeking community input for local infrastructure projects that will improve water security and provide measurable economic benefits, not only for the local government area in which the projects are situated but also for the State. I note that the 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 is urging all potential applicants to embrace this opportunity and give consideration to projects that will improve water security and stimulate economic growth. Collaborations between local councils, regional organisations of councils and regional water bodies are encouraged. As we recognise that partnerships can often deliver most cohesive local solutions, projects that are ready to proceed will be viewed favourably.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR** (Cessnock) [3.43 p.m.]: I speak proudly about water security in this State—about which Mr Assistant-Speaker knows the history and the potential. It is one thing for members of The Nationals to talk in this place as though they care about water security but it is another for them to deliver on that front. I refer the member for Murray-Darling to the 19 water storage facilities in this State. I challenge him to name which of them were committed to, constructed and implemented by a Liberal-Nationals Government. It is a short list of only three or four compared with the significantly longer list of 15 that Labor committed to, designed and built with Treasury funds. The great problem for the Liberal-Nationals Government is that there is not enough money in campaign donations from the water sector—and if there are no brown paper bags coming their way it hardly seems worth doing.

We talk about fodder and stock transport subsidies because drought is inevitable. The Labor Party has a proud tradition of supporting farmers during times of drought, when water is scarce. During the millennium drought Labor provided \$535 million in drought assistance to farmers. The member for Northern Tablelands advocated for his community in the north-west, which was in drought. Yet the model implemented by his Government late last year would have delivered \$300 million less for farmers. At the time Labor did not skimp: We made sure \$535 million went to the farmers. The Nationals members seem to suggest that that was a waste of money. They should ask the farmers and families whose farms were saved during that drought by Labor's commitment of \$535 million.

Last week the Deputy Premier, the member for Oxley, touted in this Chamber his epiphany regarding the State's future water security: sink a few more bores and run a few more pipes. We know that the number of bores and the quality of the water they produce are diminishing. Shallow bores are drying up so bores are getting deeper. It seems to me that sinking a few more bores, or spending an additional \$17 million on them, is not a great solution. However, that was not the Deputy Premier's only furphy in this place regarding water security. Late last year there was an announcement of about \$20 million in additional funding for water security measures across the State. At the time we were not told that that money would come from the Federal Government because of its long-term plan for water security in New South Wales.

The Government sacked the Water Commissioner, Mr David Harriss—a man with 25 years' experience in the water sector—at the same time as it changed water Ministers. The former Minister and the current Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water were not clear about their responsibilities. The Water

Commissioner should not have been removed at that time. One would also have thought that, upon its election, the Coalition Government would not remove tens of millions of dollars from the catchment management authorities or deconstruct them entirely. But that is exactly what the mob opposite did. The Government has also cut the Native Fish Strategy, which brings environmental and economic benefits to inland communities through our waterways, and is now talking about damming the Lachlan. The reality is that the Lachlan River sometimes does not flow far enough to reach the Murray-Darling. No cost benefit analysis and no impact statements have been done but apparently that is the way forward for this Government. I am proud to talk about former Labor governments' achievements in the area of water security, and feel a little embarrassed for the mover of this motion.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [3.45 p.m.]: I take great pleasure in supporting the motion moved by my colleague the member for Murray-Darling. I was interested in the comments of the member for Cessnock, who talked about Labor's record on water security. I draw his attention to the budget and the Government's announcement of its intention to construct a new dam at Needles Gap—the first dam to be constructed in this State during my lifetime. No dam was constructed in New South Wales for almost 30 years—not even in the 16 years of the former government when the member for Mount Druitt was a Minister of this State. This Government will build the first dam to be constructed in this State for 30 years—longer than I have been around—at Needles Gap in the electorate of the member for Orange.

I turn now to the new Water Security for the Regions Program, which is at the heart of this motion. As the member for Murray-Darling said, we have seen in the past week an announcement of 10 projects to ensure water security in regional New South Wales, worth a total of \$17 million, and applications are being called for an additional 41 local government areas in this State for round two, which are worth \$80 million. Those projects will ensure that rural communities are drought proofed and are able to market themselves—businesses can grow knowing they will have a water supply that not only is potable but also will continue to support their communities. Mayor Col Price of Glen Innes Severn Council, which is in my electorate, said, "It's wonderful to see finally large amounts of money supplied to allow communities to protect themselves from the ravages of drought."

Glen Innes Severn Council received \$970,000 from the Water Security for the Regions Program to complete a project that will boost the town's water supply by an extra 565 megalitres, in effect doubling its water storage. It will increase the community's current drought reserve of around 100 days to basically a year's worth of town water supply. Earlier this year the community almost ran out of water so I am pleased that it has secured funding from this program to undertake this project. It will ensure that the 5,000 or more residents of Glen Innes do not have to worry about running out of water. It is great that Glen Innes, which has been dealing with this issue for more than 40 years, finally has a solution to this vexed problem. The Water Security for the Regions Program is magnificent. It is a demonstration of this Government's commitment to water security for regional communities and will ensure that those residents enjoy what their metropolitan counterparts have enjoyed for many years.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [3.48 p.m.]: The Opposition will not oppose the motion, although it would like to change some of its emphasis. It is not necessary to vote against the bill because of semantics regarding the priorities placed on some aspects of water supply. The member for Cessnock said that the Labor Party will not be lectured to by a Coalition government about water infrastructure or proper water policy in this State. The Opposition welcomes the contribution of the member for Northern Tablelands in relation to this Government's plans for water infrastructure, but there is still a long way to go to get anywhere near the impressive record of past Labor governments. It is not an exaggeration to say that in the past 100 years it is Labor that has delivered for rural and regional New South Wales, particularly for water infrastructure.

The member for Cessnock highlighted that approximately 80 per cent of all irrigation dams built in New South Wales were built by Labor governments. Of course we welcome the Government doing more but it has a long way to go to make a dent in Labor's proud record. It is not a matter of asking, "Are dams more important?" The motion seems to suggest that it is more productive to be prepared for a drought than to restrict supply. It is not about suggesting what should have priority. Of course dams are important and certainly have played an important role in drought-proofing industries and towns, particularly from the ravages of long droughts. However, it is equally important to have a water policy to ensure that people value the price of water, that water is priced appropriately and that it is allocated appropriately. It is important that rivers are protected and sustainable.

Labor has done that through the bill it introduced in 2000, a bill that was supported by the then Opposition and the then shadow Minister, the member for Ballina. That water policy incorporated not only

environmental flows but water trading—a policy supported by all sides. It is not a matter of dams being more important; it is equally important to have water security and water supply sustainability. The future of agriculture in rural New South Wales must be sustainable. We must have the natural resources, both the soils and water, to ensure that our multibillion-dollar agricultural industry continues into the future. Labor has a proud history of protecting that industry.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [3.51 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Cessnock, the member for Northern Tablelands and the member for Mount Druitt for their contributions to this debate. My experience is that the communities in regional and rural New South Wales are more comfortable with the Coalition's policy than with the situation that existed in the past. This process will prepare us for a drought and guarantee water security. In the last drought I saw Labor members running around responding to what was necessary in a critical situation. No action was taken in advance. Labor was reactive; this Government is being proactive.

The member for Mount Druitt spoke about Labor managing water in the State. It really was the result of the National Water Initiative, which was headed up by the Federal Government and passed on to the States. Most of the guidance for that process came from the Federal Government, which basically got the States to agree to it as the best way to manage this resource in New South Wales. Most of it did not apply to a water supply for communities, and this is where it becomes critical. Recently I held a meeting with Essential Water to plan for the future management of water. Highlighted was the fact that without any further intakes in the unregulated Darling River the water supply for Broken Hill after December would be challenged, so we are heading towards a critical situation.

Work to ensure sufficient water supply for Broken Hill has already started. I think back to the days before the Menindee pipeline when trains brought water to Broken Hill and we relied on two local reservoirs. During the last drought we almost reached that stage in Broken Hill. We were close to putting water on trains and bringing it to Broken Hill. We can do it a better way. Opportunities exist, particularly along the Darling River, for good flowing bores that can supplement water supply for Broken Hill. We will be prepared, unlike experiences in the past.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The motion accorded priority having concluded, and pursuant to sessional order, Government Business will now be proceeded with.

## **PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Rob Stokes, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [3.55 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. This bill is the next instalment in this Government's plan to reinforce the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] as a strong environmental regulator for New South Wales. In 2012 this Government re-established the Environment Protection Authority as a statutory authority with an independent board, appointed a new chief executive officer and chief environmental regulator, required that pollution incidents involving material harm be notified immediately and increased penalties for failing to comply with these requirements, and improved the community's right to know by requiring industry to publish pollution monitoring data.

Members will recall that only last year this Parliament passed the Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Illegal Waste Disposal) Bill 2013 to crack down on illegal waste dumpers and break the business model of illegal waste activities. This bill is the next step. It will strengthen and align environmental penalties, enhance enforcement provisions, enable timely and cost-effective enforcement by the EPA and support the ecologically sustainable development of our State. New South Wales already has some of the highest maximum court-imposed penalties in Australia for environmental offences. In this bill we are

increasing a number of maximum penalties in the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997 to align with penalties for similar offences in other environmental legislation, particularly the Protection of the Environment Operations Act. In particular, the penalty for a corporation that is responsible for contamination and does not comply with a direction specified in an EPA management order will be increased by over \$800,000.

The maximum penalties under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act reflect the seriousness with which this Parliament views these offences. Given the environmental impact of contamination incidents, offences under the Contaminated Land Management Act should attract similarly significant penalties. It is also proposed that the power within the Protection of the Environment Operations Act to make regulations that provide for higher penalty notice amounts for repeat offenders be replicated in the Contaminated Land Management Act and the Radiation Control Act. These increased penalty amounts are intended to be proportionate to the seriousness, harm and nature of an offence, provide an effective deterrent to committing environmental offences and recidivism, reflect community expectations regarding the financial penalties that apply to environmental offences and be comparable to similar offences in other environmental legislation.

Members of this place will be aware that this Government has announced its intention to amend the regulations under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act to increase penalty notice amounts for the 10 most serious environmental offences to \$15,000. The Government will also be increasing a range of other penalty notice amounts to ensure that they keep pace with the consumer price index. These increases will become effective by the beginning of September. Alternative sentencing options provide courts with a range of responses to environmental offences. The options include significant fines and imprisonment, but also include orders to publicise the offence, to provide financial assurance, to restore or enhance the environment, to recover monetary benefits accruing to the offender from the offence, to attend training and to establish a training course. This bill ensures that a consistent range of orders are available to a court where an offence is proven under the Contaminated Land Management Act and the Radiation Control Act.

This provides the court with a greater range of responses to appropriately address the harm caused by offences to the community and the environment. It also encourages public confidence in our environmental legislation by promoting consistent responses to incidents of environmental harm. In addition to aligning existing sentencing options available to the court, this bill introduces to each of these three Acts an additional order which would be available to the Land and Environment Court: a restorative justice order. Restorative justice involves both a process in dealing with an offender, as well as different outcomes. It is a process already in place for many criminal offences. As a process, it brings together both an offender and a victim to address the actions that should be undertaken by the offender to repair the harm that has been caused. It also ensures that the victim has the best opportunity to explain to the offender the impact that the offender's actions have had on the victim.

As for outcomes, restorative justice allows the court to require offenders to undertake actions that are not restricted to restoring or benefiting the environment, but may also directly benefit those impacted by the offence. It should be recognised that whilst there will sometimes be an identified victim for environmental incidents, often the actions of the offender will impact on the broader community. For instance, water pollution may render a local waterway unsuitable for swimming or fishing. Under this bill, the actions that may be ordered by the court may go beyond restoration or enhancement of the environment to also include social or community actions. This will result in a more cost-effective response to environmental crime and better outcomes for impacted communities and the environment.

For the same reasons, restorative justice actions can be included in enforceable undertaking agreements between the Environment Protection Authority and offenders. The bill also makes a number of amendments to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act, the Contaminated Land Management Act and the Radiation Control Act to facilitate timely and cost-effective enforcement by the Environment Protection Authority across a number of areas. First, the Environment Protection Authority can require a financial assurance to secure funding for the carrying out of actions under a management order for contaminated land. Secondly, this bill clarifies that where a deadline to carry out a requirement or direction under the Act is missed, the relevant person is still obliged to carry out that work. Further, any relevant daily penalty for each day that the work has not been undertaken will still apply after the deadline is missed. These new provisions align with equivalent provisions in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act and will assist in the effective enforcement of obligations imposed under the Contaminated Land Management Act.

The fourth amendment will improve the ability of the Environment Protection Authority to revoke or suspend an environment protection licence where this is warranted. A decision to revoke or suspend a licence is

only taken in the most serious of cases, such as when a company goes into liquidation or shows continual disregard for their environmental obligations. This amendment will remove the requirement for the Environment Protection Authority to issue a licensee with a notice of intent to revoke or suspend a licence and ensure that the revocation or suspension of a licence will have effect during any merit appeal proceedings against that action. This is important because the requirement to issue a notice of intent to revoke a licence means the actual revocation is delayed and the licence holder can continue to operate between the date of the notice and the date of the revocation. As with the case of the fire that smouldered for weeks at the Chester Hill waste facility, this can lead to environmental damage being compounded during the period of the notice, posing an unacceptable risk to the community.

The fifth amendment will include the owner of the land on which a licensed activity is undertaken to be listed as a person who may be issued with a clean-up notice. This will provide one more avenue to recover the costs of a clean-up in the event of the polluter's insolvency, which would otherwise be funded by the New South Wales Government out of the Environmental Trust. This power will only be exercised in accordance with the Environment Protection Authority's Compliance and Enforcement Policy and will not be used against landowners who are innocent victims of illegal dumping.

The sixth amendment will complement the measures adopted in last year's amendments that addressed illegal dumping. It will enable the Environment Protection Authority to require specified waste transporters to be fitted with an approved global positioning system device. The final amendment addresses a gap in reporting environmental incidents involving material harm and will require that odour must be reported as it may be the only indication that an incident has taken place. Sometimes, a pungent odour may be the only clue that a serious environmental pollutant has escaped into the environment. An obligation to report such an odour could have protected those workers who fell ill by continuing to work after odour was first noticed upon uncovering buried drums of hazardous materials during the Pacific Highway upgrade last year.

There are also a few miscellaneous amendments in the bill. These amendments do not represent a significant policy shift. The first amendment is to remove an obsolete process regarding affixing labels to defective vehicles. The second change is to clarify what is meant by failure to comply with a management order under the Contaminated Lands Management Act. The third miscellaneous amendment clarifies and restores a legislative requirement to prevent or minimise fugitive air emissions from industry, especially dust from coalmines and quarries. The decision of *Environment Protection Authority v Ravensworth Operations Pty Ltd* [2013] NSWLEC 92 had the effect of removing this requirement.

Finally, this bill provides a speedy response to facilitate implementation of recommendation 10 of the New South Wales Auditor-General's report "Performance Audit: Managing Contaminated Sites". The report recommends that the Environment Protection Authority gain a better understanding of its costs and develop procedures that support the recovery of costs and begin recovering the costs of managing certain sites. This bill amends the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991 to provide for certain fees and charges under the legislation administered by the Environment Protection Authority to be paid into the Environment Protection Authority Fund rather than into consolidated revenue.

This includes fees payable under contaminated land, radiation control, pesticide licensing and the control of environmentally hazardous chemicals and dangerous goods legislation. These changes will align this new Environment Protection Authority legislation with existing arrangements for revenue retention in respect of regulatory fees and charges under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act. This bill will strengthen and align environmental penalties, introduce alternative sentencing options and provide important legislative support for timely and cost-effective enforcement by the Environment Protection Authority. I commend the bill to the House.

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

## **WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2014**

### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 29 May 2014.**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [4.07 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in this place on the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. The shadow Minister with the carriage of the bill is the Hon. Steve Whan in the other place and he will deal with the bill in more detail than will I. The Opposition does not oppose the

bill. The bill has a number of objects. One is to amend the Water Management Act 2000 to define the term *overland flow water* and confirm that overland flow water is included in the State's water rights under the principal Act; to clarify the meanings of certain terms used in the principal Act and update terminology; to make further provision with respect to harvestable rights and the matters dealt with by harvestable rights orders.

Further objects include to enable a new general dealing with an access licence to be created; to make further provision with respect to the proper operation of metering equipment and the keeping of metering records; to make it an offence for the holder of a bore driller's licence not to ensure that the terms and conditions of the licence are not contravened or for a trainee driller under the holder's supervision to contravene the terms and conditions of the licence; to make further provision with respect to the calculation of the balances in water allocation accounts for access licences; to re-enact, with certain modifications, uncommenced amendments in the Water Management Amendment Act 2008.

Further objects include to provide for the controlled allocation of access licences for a part of an area or water source and for the setting of the minimum price and participation fees for the acquisition of the right to apply for licences that are subject to controlled allocation; to enable the consolidation of management plans and approvals; to enable the regulations to make provision for the conversion of actual or proposed flood water usage into floodplain access licences and to make other amendments to streamline processes concerning licensing, approvals and the trading of water entitlements. Another object is to amend certain water sharing plans to standardise the use of the expression "worst period of low inflows" into a water source in those plans and clarify its meaning.

The bill deals with various aspects of water management including facilitating and issuing floodplain harvesting licences through altered compensation rights. It provides landholders with the flexibility to take advantage of their harvestable rights and it alters the way supplementary water is made available to users. It clarifies controlled allocation orders in relation to their scope and provides a new dealing regime to allow water allocation to be traded for a term of up to 10 years. The bill defines overland water—that is water that flows overland and is not within a watercourse—to assist with floodplain harvesting. The new terminology will also assist with projects conducted through urban stormwater harvesting policies conducted by councils.

There are a number of changes relating to supplementary water licences, regulated rivers and floodplain harvesting licences. As the Minister noted in his second reading speech, supplementary licences are something of an anomaly. Holders of such licences have no compensation rights if allocations are reduced because of a change in a water sharing plan. Compensation rights are extended by this bill to those holders of supplementary water licences in regulated rivers and the tenure of licences is made perpetual. Additionally, compensation rights are extended to plain harvesting licences, and because groundwater sources are being phased out this is not being extended to that category.

Changes are made to the way in which supplementary water is made available to users. Access to supplementary water will now be able to be provided through announcements rather than ministerial orders. There are also changes to the principal Act in relation to the provisions concerning harvestable rights. Harvestable rights orders will be able to set rules for using single dams and multiple dams to store both harvestable rights water and licensed water. Other types of works will be able to be used to capture harvestable rights water. The bill also clarifies that a minimum price for licences can be set by controlled allocation order. It can define the coverage of the order to be part of the water source. There are also provisions relating to trading licences and high security licences. As I indicated, the Opposition does not oppose the bill.

**Mr BART BASSETT** (Londonderry) [4.11 p.m.]: I support the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. As a former mayor of Hawkesbury and more recently a government representative for three years of the historic Sydney food bowl area, I have seen the see-saw of circumstance experienced by farmers along the Hawkesbury-Nepean flood plain. Bumper crops, rising transport costs, crop disease, pest infestations, noxious weeds, hail, wind damage—I could go on. However, from flood to drought, by far the biggest issue for farmers is water—where to get it, how to mop it up, how to get enough of it.

Farmers have had it tough enough without having their land and crops choked as a result of red tape. That is why the Water Management Bill 2014 is a much-needed update to the Water Management Act 2000, the primary legislative authority for managing the water resources of New South Wales. It includes provisions relating to water management planning, licences to take water and enforcement mechanisms. However, the 2000 Act includes unnecessary provisions and does not provide certainty to water users who rely on

supplementary licences and floodplain harvesting. Such issues are crucial to large parts of my Londonderry electorate, with many of my constituents being farmers who rely on the water drawn from the Hawkesbury-Nepean River, often referred to as the lifeblood of Sydney.

Since the very earliest days of European settlement, farmers have taken water from the mighty Hawkesbury-Nepean. Today, we cannot afford to take the waters of our rivers for granted. We cannot be led by our bellies, figuratively speaking, and do whatever it takes to feed ourselves with no regard for the environment. I can assure the House that over the past decade farmers have changed their operating practices and they are very conservative when it comes to water usage. We have to balance the need to supply farmers with sufficient water for their crops—our food—with nurturing the land we take it from. In the past few decades, the Hawkesbury-Nepean River has suffered the worst foreign noxious weed infestation in its history, crippling drought, devastating flood and almost unbearable pollution.

I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of farmers throughout the whole State, not just the Hawkesbury-Nepean flood plain, in doing their bit to protect and conserve this most precious and vital resource by embracing new technology and environmental practices. I think especially of the turf farmers whose properties line the riverbanks. I know of at least one business which has gone to great effort and expense to build more dams to harvest more rainwater and reduce their impact on river levels. They have also gone to a great deal of trouble over time, with the support of the Environmental Protection Agency, to create settlement ponds so that water that runs off the farms is in a much healthier condition when it returns to the river. Other farmers have also fenced off the riverbanks to prevent stock wandering near the river and polluting the water. Fruit and vegetable growers constantly review their spraying practices and fertilisers to minimise pollution, not only along the Hawkesbury-Nepean but also along the South Creek flood plain area.

But we cannot leave the whole burden to farmers. What the Water Management Bill 2014 does is provide a framework for issuing floodplain harvesting licences, establish compensation rights for supplementary licences and streamline licensing and approval processes. It creates a new deal for licence holders called a term water allocation transfer and clarifies parts of the principal Act to better reflect existing practices. This bill provides for water sharing plans for regulated rivers to be administered on the basis of drought information held by the Office of Water at the beginning of those plans, so as to exclude drought periods after that time.

Twenty two per cent of Australia and 12 per cent of New South Wales sits on the Great Artesian Basin, that enormous prehistoric underground watertable occupying an area of more than 1.7 million square kilometres beneath the arid and semi-arid parts of Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory. One of the largest groundwater basins in the world, it is often the only reliable source of stock water in the far west of the State. While the vast reserve of potable water beneath the earth is a priceless natural resource, it is not an endless bucket. We need to implement measures to protect this supply now, before the taps run dry. This bill will complement Australian Government and other States' legislation aimed at doing just that for the Great Artesian Basin and other underground reservoirs around the State.

The bill also clarifies that water flowing over the ground is included within the State's water rights. The Division of Local Government has raised concerns that these amendments will require licensing of existing urban stormwater harvesting projects. As somebody who supports local government, I can say that these amendments do not expand the scope of the State's water rights, which already include all water occurring naturally on the surface of the ground. The purpose of this amendment is not to require more urban stormwater harvesting projects to have licences but rather to clarify the scope of the State's water rights and bring them in line with terminology used in other States' water Acts.

The Office of Water has agreed to work closely with the Division of Local Government to develop an urban stormwater harvesting policy to facilitate stormwater harvesting, for example, through the use of appropriate licence exemptions, while providing safeguards for other water users. The Water Management Bill 2014 advances the Government's policy priorities in water management by providing business certainty for water licence holders. It will facilitate increased trade in water and reduce red tape. Like many of my colleagues and most, if not all my constituents, I am a fan of reducing red tape.

Having had discussions with the Minister and other people concerned with flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean flood plain and the ongoing management of Warragamba Dam we are consulting with the community on how that may be managed differently in the future. We are looking at how to reduce water flows early when we know that inflows are increasing ahead of a minor flood. That is something that the local community, farmers and people who are affected when roads and bridges are closed have been asking for for a

long time. This Government and the Minister are looking very carefully not only at how those assets are used to hold the water but also at how water can be used appropriately to make farmers' lives easier. If we release water early and manage outflows better it may reduce the impact of a flood. Therefore, I commend the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [4.18 p.m.]: I cannot support the Water Management Amendment Bill in its current form. I share community concern that this bill could further damage our vital rivers and the wetlands that depend on their floodplain ecosystems. This issue is important to all New South Wales residents. Our rivers and wetlands are vital to our food production, water supply, water quality, biodiversity and climate and they must be protected. The bill provides a framework for floodplain harvesting licences, creating a new right for the diversion and capture of water flowing across a flood plain. Our dismal failure to regulate such activities in the past has resulted in illegal works, and additional licensing and compliance monitoring resources will be needed to ensure unreported changes to works and other on-farm infrastructure to delay or redirect overland flows do not erode the interests of valid licence holders and the environment. This is especially important given floodplain harvesting licences will have complex arrangements and compliance will focus on metering water put into storage, not the total volume being diverted from its natural course.

Illegal works will be grandfathered into the system, essentially allowing the transfer of water access from floodplain graziers, the environment, and downstream towns and industries to the owners of current illegal floodplain works who have pushed up embankments to form shallow and often highly inefficient storages over the past 20 years. Only those works that were in place in the mid-1990s when the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council cap was implemented should be grandfathered into the system. The Floodplain Harvesting Policy outlines a process for assessing existing floodplain works before providing retrospective approval. The bill should implement this process. Grandfathering all works into the system will only reward illegal and often shallow, inefficient works; reduce the water available to existing users and environments through which the water traverses; and limit future opportunities to restore river flows and floodplain health.

Under the bill, floodplain harvesting licence holders will be eligible for compensation if their flood-flow water allocations are reduced, with no clear basis on how to measure interests and values. The bill would also give supplementary water access licence holders access to compensation if licences are cancelled, allocations are changed inconsistent with the underlying water sharing plan, or future access is reduced to support additional environmental flows. The plan rules include express provisions to reduce supplementary water access to account for growth in use by higher priority users and licence holders, and that these reductions will not be compensable.

I cannot support compensation for supplementary water access licence changes because it locks future Governments into existing plan provisions and reduces the flexibility to accommodate changing circumstances. Supplementary water access licences arose from unlicensed "off allocation" diversions by licensed irrigators, following the implementation of licence embargoes and the cap on development, to ensure that all available water was used economically. When they were issued in 2004, holders were put on notice that access was temporary and would be forfeited if initial environmental allocations were insufficient. Indeed, they will continue to be reduced under the proposed arrangements, potentially to the point of no allocation. Why would the Government offer compensation in such a situation? This will forever lock in the interests of holders over and above ownership of water by the Crown.

The bill will see future allocation decisions based on wishful thinking instead of the best available information on climate, which will simply result in transferring water allocations from high-security licence holders to general security licence holders. High-security holders could seek compensation for a reduction in the most valuable drought allocations that they receive. Allocation announcements for general security are based on existing storage volumes and anticipated inflows based on hydrological modelling that reflects historical climatic conditions. The amendments would freeze the modelling at the commencement of a plan and ignore new climate knowledge.

During the record Millennium Drought, when allocations were made in excess of availability, high-security licence holders suffered reduced allocations, and environmental water provisions had to be suspended. The drought saw the unit value of market water increase by 20 times. Who will compensate high-security licence holders for this transfer of water and wealth? While high-security holders received an excessive allocation throughout the generous volumetric conversions undertaken last century, we should avoid making concessions to small groups of general security licence holders without evidence of benefit. Water sharing plans and allocations should be based on the best available information on climate.

This Government has a poor water management record, which has seen increased pumping by irrigators in the Barwon-Darling water sharing plan, demands to reduce the amount of environmental water purchased in the Murray-Darling Basin, increases in the amount of groundwater that can be extracted by mining and gas projects, and exemptions for the mining industry from rules that protect the environment and other water users. If only the Government's conservative attitude to budgets could be extended to conserving fresh water, which is vital to life and at constant risk of diminishing. I cannot support the bill.

**Mr JOHN FLOWERS** (Rockdale) [4.23 p.m.]: I support the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 and congratulate the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, Kevin Humphries, on his commitment to this essential area. The principal Act, the Water Management Act 2000, is the main legislative authority for managing the State's water resources. The Act includes provisions relating to water management planning, licences to take water and enforcement mechanisms. However, the Act contains unnecessary provisions and does not provide certainty to water users who depend on supplementary licences and floodplain harvesting.

The bill will amend the Water Management Act 2000, the principal Act, to define the term "overland flow water" and confirm that overland flow water is included in the State's water rights under the principal Act, to clarify the meanings of certain terms used in the principal Act and to update certain terminology. The bill will make further provision with respect to harvestable right and the matters dealt with by harvestable right orders. It will enable a new general dealing with an access licence, called a "term water allocation transfer", to be created. It will make further provision with respect to proper operation of the metering equipment and the keeping of metering records.

Further, the bill will make it an offence for the holder of a bore driller's licence not to ensure that the terms and conditions of the licence are not contravened, or for a trainee driller under the holder's supervision to contravene the terms and conditions of the licence. The bill will make further provisions with respect to the calculation of the balances in water allocation accounts for access licences. It will re-enact, with certain modifications, un-commenced amendments in the Water Management Amendment Act 2008 concerning nominated water supply work and water tagging zones. It will provide for the controlled allocation of access licences for a part of an area or water source, and for the setting of the minimum price and participation fees for the acquisition of the right to apply for licences that are subject to controlled allocation.

The bill will enable the consolidation of management plans and approvals. It will enable the regulations to make provision for the conversion of actual or proposed floodwater usage into floodplain access licences. It will make other amendments to streamline processes concerning licensing, approvals and the trading of water entitlements, and make provision for matters of a savings or transitional nature. This bill will amend certain water sharing plans to standardise the use of the expression "worst period of low inflows" into a water source in those plans and clarify its meaning. It will also make consequential amendments to certain other legislation.

By way of background, this bill is a package of amendments to the Water Management Act 2000 that seeks to improve the legislative framework for water in New South Wales. The key proposals for amendments will provide a framework for issuing floodplain harvesting licences; establish compensation rights for supplementary licences; streamline licensing and approval processes; create a new dealing for licence holders called a term water allocation transfer; provide for water sharing plans for regulated rivers to be administered on the basis of drought information held by the Office of Water at the beginning of the those plans, so as to exclude drought periods after that time; clarify parts of the principal Act to better reflect existing practices; and enhance offence provisions for take of water and bore drillers' licences.

The bill also clarifies that water flowing over the ground is included in the State's water rights. The purpose of this amendment is to clarify the scope of the State's water rights and bring them in line with terminology used in other States' water Acts. The Office of Water has agreed to work closely with the Division of Local Government to develop an urban stormwater harvesting policy to facilitate stormwater harvesting by use of appropriate licence exemptions, while providing safeguards for other water users. The Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 is an important, comprehensive package of amendments to the Water Management Act 2000, designed to ease the regulatory burden on water users.

Since this Government came to office, there has been a great deal of activity in the water space. The Government has stood by rural communities during this time with a commitment to ensure that water management activities in New South Wales achieve triple bottom line outcomes. Ensuring a sustainable

balance of economic, social and environmental interests in New South Wales water resources remains a key priority for this Government. We recognise the vital role water plays in driving economic growth, creating strong communities and providing social, cultural and environmental benefits across New South Wales.

The final significant set of amendments relates to the sharing of water between high-security and general security licences in regulated rivers. Regulated river water sharing plans currently require water to be set aside within a dam to ensure full or near full water allocations to high-security licences can be maintained if there is a repeat of the worse drought on record. This water sharing rule was developed prior to the recent Millennium Drought. The amendments proposed in this bill allow for the worst drought that occurred prior to the commencement of each of the current water sharing plans to continue to be used to determine the size of the storage reserve. This will have the effect of maintaining the water shares between the environment, high-security licences and general security licences, as agreed when the water sharing plans were first developed.

Amendments in this bill are directed at ensuring that water licensing allocation and use is carried out in a best practice, modern regulatory environment. For this reason, the bill includes a package of new and refined offence provisions. This bill also includes important provisions to clarify the processes by which certain Water Act 1912 licences were converted to licences under the Water Management Act. One of these rules relates to situations where a person held a stock and domestic licence under the Water Act that has converted to a Water Management Act licence. This amendment ensures the validity of such licences in cases where a domestic and stock right also applies.

With the introduction of the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 the New South Wales Government reaffirms its commitment to balanced water management outcomes on behalf of New South Wales communities, particularly rural communities that rely on safe, secure water supplies. The bill makes improvements in every significant aspect of water management, from planning processes to licensing and trade through to compliance. These amendments promote triple bottom line outcomes; reduce red tape and the regulatory burden on water users; promote open markets and free trade in water so that our water resources can bring the greatest benefit to all residents of New South Wales; and provide the regulatory clarity and stability that is so important to continued investment and growth for water-dependent businesses. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT** (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.33 p.m.]: I support the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. New South Wales leads Australia and the world in creating free and open markets for trade in water entitlements. In New South Wales, water entitlements can be traded for a term or permanently, allocations can be traded for a season, water can be moved to locations where it can be used more efficiently, and in some unregulated river systems, a smaller entitlement to take water in all flow conditions can be exchanged for a larger entitlement to take water in high flows.

By establishing flexible rules for water trading we have allowed the efficiencies and competitiveness of market mechanisms to facilitate the movement of water to its highest-value uses. There is already significant evidence that this is happening in New South Wales. Research shows that permanent trade increased approximately tenfold in the Murray-Darling Basin between 1995 and 2010. Temporary trade increased by 300 per cent in the southern basin over the same period. It is estimated that the net benefit of water trading in the Murray-Darling Basin is approximately \$300 million a year. This bill will help extend and increase these benefits with additional reforms to bring more flexibility to the water trading market.

The first trade reform proposed in this bill is a new dealing called a term water allocation transfer. The dealing will allow licence holders to trade their right to future water allocations for a defined term. The trade can be for up to 10 years. Under the trade the buyer will receive and have the use of all or part of the seller's water allocation for the term of the trade, but the seller will retain the shares under the licence. For additional flexibility, there is a provision to allow the trade to take effect up to five years into the future. This new dealing fills a gap in the existing trading framework. Currently, a water licence can be traded permanently or for a term, but the allocations under a licence can only be traded once the allocation has been made, effectively preventing the trade of future allocations.

This new dealing will make it possible for licence holders to supplement water allocations under their own licence over several seasons. Businesses will be better able to plan ahead and will have the flexibility to take advantage of changing conditions without the need to buy or sell a licence permanently. This new dealing

could have substantial benefits to New South Wales in relation to environmental water. Just this year the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office traded water allocations to productive use in the Namoi and Gwydir valleys.

In the future it may be the case that an environmental asset will not require additional water for some time. Environmental water holders will have the option of selling water allocations back to productive use for the period the water is not needed for the environment. Instead of doing multiple dealings over many seasons it will be possible to do a single trade. Such a trade would not reduce the volume of water held permanently by the environmental water holder. However, having this new trade mechanism could help reduce impacts on water users from the basin plan.

A second trade reform in this bill relates to the dealing under which a water access licence nominates a water supply work. This is the mechanism by which a water licence, which is legally not tied to the land, is attached to the physical place where water is taken. Currently, the Act is designed so a licence nominates a physical water supply work, such as a pump or a regulator. While this system has worked well for the purposes of irrigation and other traditional uses of water, when applied to some newer uses, such as mining or environmental uses, the language of the Act is unclear and confusing in some cases. The new amendments clarify that a licence may nominate an extraction point rather than a particular water supply work. If a mining company purchases a licence on the market to cover water seeping into its mine, the company can nominate the mine as an extraction point.

If an environmental water holder purchases a licence it intends to use to leave water in the river, it can nominate a place in the river where that water is to be accounted. These reforms to the provisions in the Act for trade allow more flexibility to new water-dependent businesses entering the water market and demonstrate this Government's commitment to continuing to ensure that rules for trading water licences are adapted to changing circumstances. Open and well-developed markets in water are the key to making the best, most economically efficient use of limited water resources. The market reforms in this bill go hand in hand with the amendments to reduce red tape and provide secure water entitlements that have been highlighted by my colleagues. With these important reforms this Government has reaffirmed its commitment to vibrant, growing regional communities. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.39 p.m.]: I am pleased to contribute to debate on the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. While I understand that the amendments to the Water Management Act 2000 largely pertain to overland water flows and the storage of water in large dams in regional and rural areas, the issue interests me as I have lived without potable water, which I have spruiked and boasted about many times. I am proud that I live in a very sustainable manner, although it is being tested at the moment with the return of my daughter from Cairns. As I have said many times in debates, when she was 18 years of age she took 45-minute showers; it was costly to keep her well bathed. But she went away and now has returned home at a time when we have a shortage of rain. I hope that we are capturing some of the rain today.

I am pleased to contribute to this debate, basically because of the water storage techniques that have been used on our small rural property on the periphery of the Sydney metropolitan area all of my life. It is interesting to note that the term "water flowing" will be changed to "overland flow water", the definition of which confirms that such water is included in the State's water rights. The water that flows onto my property and into my dam is owned by the State. I hope that the State is not looking forward to getting any recompense from me any time soon. I think that pertains largely to whether a person has a commercial interest on the property before that person is charged for water rights. I think I am reasonably safe. I will continue to use the State's water, and the State can be rest assured that I will use it in the most responsible way. I use the water in my gutters for washing my vehicles and any other purposes outside the house that I may need. Interestingly, new section 4A (1) states:

... **overland flow water** means water (including floodwater, rainfall run-off and urban stormwater) that is flowing over or lying on the ground ...

However, new section 4A (3) (a) states:

water that is collected from a roof (including water collected from a roof using a rainwater tank) ...

The State does not own that water. Therefore, I own the water in my tank, but the State owns the water that flows into my dam. I am not being facetious, but I wonder what happens when the tank is full and overflows.

Does that water revert to State ownership, or is it simply surplus to my requirements but I still own it? I throw out these questions simply to confuse the Minister. I do not mean to be facetious, but the question of who owns what water on my property is interesting. Recently I spoke on the Water Industry Competition Amendment (Review) Bill 2014. I always like to speak on bills relating to water, water storage, sustainable water and harvesting of water. In that debate I mentioned the Rouse Hill Treatment Plant. If I remember correctly, that bill allowed private investors to compete in the market both to provide water and to treat waste water, black water and grey water, recycle that water and return it to homes.

I am fortunate to have a private enterprise operating in the Pitt Town area of my electorate. Flow Systems is treating both stormwater and grey water, and returning that recycled water to homes. I was keen to debate that bill because I think there should be more of that. I also mentioned the fine Rouse Hill Treatment Plant, which was established not far from my property. That state-of-the-art treatment plant commenced providing recycled water in 2001. It was set up by the private sector, but it has since been handed back to Sydney Water. Given that Rouse Hill Treatment Plant was originally constructed as a state-of-the-art treatment plant and then reverted back to Sydney Water, it is easy to forget that private enterprise utilised modern technology in constructing the plant. Technology continues to improve to the point that we now have better technology in other treatment works in the Pitt Town area.

It is poignant to note that Flow Systems, which runs a facility in Pitt Town, uses what I would call stormwater or water that is run-off from roofs that is collected in reticulated tanks on particular properties. Interestingly, that relates to this section of the bill. Therefore, I wonder about the ownership of that particular water. The point is that there is a huge benefit in utilising stormwater run-off. In the previous debate I pointed out that Flow Systems captures and recycles that reticulated water and sends it back to homes; if there is any excess that is not required or cannot be used in homes, the company provides a service to the local council for watering parks. Indeed, I think it has a deal with the local school to water its fields. We are seeing a complete collection of stormwater run-off—water that would otherwise be wasted; water that would be piped through expensive stormwater drainage and eventually end up either in the Hawkesbury River or ultimately wasted out to sea.

I remember many, many years ago hearing that the Sydney metropolitan area used 600 giganlitres of water. However, on average we receive some 1,200 giganlitres in rainfall—I suppose that is averaged over many years from dry to wet years. Therefore, we use only half of the water that falls in the Sydney metropolitan catchment area. An enormous amount of water, even on a dry continent such as Australia, flows out to sea. As I said, this private system captures that water and utilises it. Water is kept in tanks on new urbanised blocks of land. Reticulated tanks are not new; for probably more than a decade they have been installed in backyards of homes. It is great to see new technology and the innovation of the private sector in capturing that water, cleaning it and sending it back for reuse.

I may be a little facetious in relation to the water that I collect on my property and who owns it. However, I feel content in the way that we have used, and will continue to use, the water on our property. I am proud of the fact that neither I nor my family has ever paid a water bill and we do not intend to do so in the future. Regardless of who owns the water that flows onto the property, we will continue to use it and use it in the most appropriate way.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [4.47 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak on the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. In doing so, I take this opportunity to use the Parliament as an important forum to discuss an essential topic. Coming from regional New South Wales, I know that water is a vexed and often controversial issue. Indeed, I come from a community that has one of the most beautiful rivers in the State, the mighty Shoalhaven River. In the past it has been the subject of much controversy, particularly in relation to the attempts by the former State Labor Government to take water from Tallowa Dam. The Speaker, the member for South Coast, and I have fought, and will continue to fight, against that in an effort to ensure that our water supplies are secure. I remember when I was a councillor standing up for my community on those issues.

As a nation it is important that we discuss this issue. We are the driest inhabited continent on the face of the planet, yet we still myopically, some might say, use drinking water to flush our toilets. While that may not change in the interim, I think we should work towards more sustainable water usage in many respects, not just in the home but for commercial use and reuse as well. I am reminded when I travel abroad at how forward thinking and visionary some countries have been when it comes to managing their water supplies. In a dry continent like ours, where rainfall is limited to coastal areas, it is important that we use every opportunity to conserve water and to use our water supplies appropriately, respectfully and sensibly.

The Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 makes substantial amendments to the current New South Wales water management framework across the board, with updated provisions for water planning trade in water entitlements, basic landholder rights and more. Throughout the bill there are new provisions to implement the Government's key priorities in national resource management, reducing red tape, adding further flexibility to water markets, providing clarity and stability in the regulatory system, and supporting economic growth in regional communities. I am particularly pleased with the bill's emphasis on the foundation of best-practice water management: clearly defined, secure, tradeable licences to take and use water. The bill includes significant reforms for floodplain harvesting licences and supplementary water licences. Best practice is something that is incredibly important, particularly in regional areas in relation to local water authorities.

When I was a councillor I was delighted to be an important part of the Shoalhaven water strategic planning committee, which is a jewel in the crown of Shoalhaven City Council in relation to sustainable water management practices. Its director, Carmel Krogh, is a leader in water management and should be highly regarded for the role that she plays not just in the Shoalhaven community but across the board. As the member for Hawkesbury said, we can all play a part in best-practice water management. I have a water tank. I cannot confess to the same level of water conservation management as the member for Hawkesbury, who has never had a water bill. I have received them, but I am happy to make a contribution. Shoalhaven Water, a leader in its field, does an exceptional job. I take this opportunity to commend all the staff of Shoalhaven Water, particularly Carmel Krogh, for their great work in my community.

This bill establishes a framework in the Water Management Act to provide water users who take water from the flood plain with the security of a floodplain harvesting licence that defines their right and recognises it in law. These provisions implement the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy, which this Government approved in 2013 after years of development and consultation with stakeholders. The Floodplain Harvesting Policy sets out in detail this Government's policy directions regarding floodplain harvesting licences. Some of them include: licences will be issued within the limits of floodplain harvesting in current water plans, which will be recognised and not scaled back; licence holders will have the flexibility to carry over water allocations from year to year in recognition of the boom-and-bust nature of floodplain harvesting; it will be possible to trade floodplain harvesting licences once accounting and monitoring mechanisms are established; and floodplain harvesting licences will be issued in perpetuity and with full compensation of rights.

In summary, floodplain harvesting licences will have the flexible characteristics of other water licences used to put in irrigation. The policy directions set out in the Floodplain Harvesting Policy cannot be realised easily. However, the Water Management Act currently provides only limited pathways for issuing new water licences, and none of these are appropriate for floodplain harvesting licences. The bill includes the measures needed to allow floodplain harvesting licences to be issued effectively. It creates licence categories for floodplain harvesting that occurs in association with other extractions from regulated and unregulated water sources. The bill gives government the power to develop regulations establishing the characteristics and volumes of the floodplain harvesting licences to be issued to individuals. It clearly authorises the establishment of advisory committees to provide advice to government in connection with the process for issuing floodplain harvesting licences, ensuring that water users and regional community stakeholders will be closely involved until implementation of the Floodplain Harvesting Policy is complete.

The bill also addresses a longstanding need to improve the security of supplementary water licences that take water from regulated rivers. Supplementary water licences, contrary to their name, are a vital source of water that is essential to the business activities and planning of many irrigators, especially in the northern valleys of the State. I know that Mr Deputy-Speaker is very familiar with those areas. To take but one example, in the Border Rivers catchments extractions under supplementary licences has constituted more than one-third of overall water availability in recent years. Clearly, this water cannot be seen merely as a "supplement" to water taken under other licences. Yet, alone among the major categories of water licences used for commercial purposes, supplementary licences are not granted in perpetuity and are not covered by the compensation provisions of the Act.

Supplementary licences exist only as long as a water sharing plan provides, and they may be cancelled without any recompense to the licence holder. This means that any licence holder who relies on supplementary licences must undertake business planning, attempt to obtain finance and conduct their operations in the knowledge that it is possible for this vital source of water to be taken away. The lack of security inherent in supplementary licences is especially worrisome in the current situation where large amounts of water are being transferred to the environment under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The bill corrects this anomaly. Supplementary licences that take water from regulated rivers are provided with full compensation rights and perpetual tenure.

Supplementary water licences for groundwater sources that are, and always have been, intended as temporary entitlements are not affected by the amendments since the supplementary licences are slowly being phased out as part of a process to reduce total entitlements. The bill ensures that holders of major commercial water licences in New South Wales can rest assured that their entitlements to water cannot be taken from them arbitrarily, without compensation. There can hardly be any feature of a water management system that is more important to creating a positive environment for investment and economic growth in rural communities. I take this opportunity to commend the Minister for his foresight. I thank all his staff who have played a vital role in a process that is essential to regional communities.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** Hear, hear!

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I note that the member for Tweed is getting particularly excited about those commendations. I am sure that he will regale the House with more commendations when he has the opportunity to do so.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** Absolutely.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Because he is that sort of a nice fella. We commend the member for Tweed for so many things, and particularly for this. The Opposition's record in this area is extremely poor. I remember when the former Government sought to override the Shoalhaven community and take water from Tallawa Dam without consultation. The former Government was backed into a corner by our community when the member for South Coast and I took them on. We know that Opposition members are not interested in regional communities. The lone member of Country Labor sits on the bench opposite like a solemn beacon of light to his country community. The member for Cessnock is all that is going on for Labor in country areas—which speaks volumes about the doldrums that Country Labor is in. We know Labor does not know country New South Wales. Labor's definition of rural and regional New South Wales is anything south of Tempe and north of Gordon.

The Opposition needs to develop policies that encourage debate on issues in rural and regional New South Wales. At the moment Labor is a policy-free zone on matters that affect rural and regional communities. Recently an Opposition spokesperson came to my electorate to announce a dairy policy. The Government was already doing every single thing in that policy. The Opposition has no gift or imagination when it comes to rural and regional New South Wales because it is not interested in those communities. This Government is, and this bill speaks volumes about that. We will continue to stand up for rural and regional New South Wales.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.57 p.m.]: In speaking to the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 it would remiss of me not to compliment the member for Kiama on his fine contribution to the debate. As always, I am a little in awe of him and of following him in debate. I have big shoes to fill. I know the people of Kiama are 100 per cent behind him all the time.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Kiama certainly motivated the House this afternoon.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** He certainly did.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Sorry to wake you up, Mr Deputy-Speaker.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** The Deputy-Speaker is always sharp and always on key.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Tweed will return to the leave of the bill.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** Absolutely, Mr Deputy-Speaker. Even in the fine electorate of Lismore water is life: Without water, there is no life. It is an extraordinary commodity, and people have lots of different views about it. I reiterate the comments of the member for Kiama when I commend the Minister and his staff for their good work. It is important to bring common sense to the legislation and the regulations, and ultimately apply it out in the field. Many of those affected are land managers who are trying to earn an income. More importantly, farmers and others in regional and rural New South Wales are concerned about the environment and water flows and discharges.

The Government's commitment to simple, sensible regulation applies equally to the water sector and to the economy. That is why the bill includes a variety of measures to simplify processes and reduce costs in

relation to licensing and trading, supplementary access announcements, harvestable rights and water plans. It is about streamlining licensing and trading. Currently, a person wanting to trade an entitlement must apply to the Minister for consent to trade. Once consent has been granted, the applicant must apply to Land and Property Information to have the dealing registered. The amendment will allow applicants to submit a single application relating to the trade, which is a sensible measure. The bill contains further key measures, such as an additional proposal to improve application processes to allow an applicant for a licence or approval to withdraw his or her application before determination.

Currently, the Act lacks provisions to allow a person to amend or withdraw an application. If circumstances change an applicant may need to withdraw the application. This new provision to allow an application to be amended or withdrawn will make the application process clearer, more flexible and efficient. Another streamlining measure allows an approval to take effect immediately upon its granting. At present, when an approval is granted it does not take effect until the 28-day period for appeals has expired. This can result in unnecessary delays and costs for landowners. It can also result in lost opportunities to have works constructed and can affect harvesting. In view of the present weather pattern in regional and rural areas, that 28-day period could delay harvesting a vast quantity of water that could be used for sensible production.

At present landowners are required to build a dam in order to exercise their harvestable rights. In some cases, such as urban stormwater harvesting, dams are not necessarily the most appropriate and efficient means of collecting water flowing over a landowner's property. The bill allows works other than dams to be used to capture harvestable water rights. The bill also clarifies that landowners can use one dam or multiple dams to collect and store harvestable water rights and water taken under licence. Currently, if a landowner wants to construct a dam that is larger than the maximum harvestable rights dam capacity, the landowner must obtain a licence for all the water. This is a costly and unnecessary burden for the landowner. In recognition of this, the bill allows harvestable rights orders to set out methods for accounting for the use of harvestable rights water and licensed water in the same dam or multiple dams. It will also allow surrounding landowners to understand what is occurring on their neighbour's property.

I have been involved in constituent issues where one landowner received approval to build a dam to harvest water, much to the annoyance of near neighbours. It is a fairly complex and confusing process. I am led to believe this bill will not only make it easier for landowners to exercise their rights and use common sense in implementing their practices but also allow surrounding neighbours, who are often impacted, to understand the process. It will help them understand what the department is doing rather than the department just being the meat in the sandwich. Once again, this bill clearly demonstrates the commitment of the Liberal-Nationals to regional and rural areas. It is about taking a common-sense approach that normal people can understand. Ultimately, it is an enormous plus for our great State and I have no hesitation in commending the bill to the House.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [5.07 p.m.]: Mr Deputy-Speaker—

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Forty-one years.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY:** No, 31 years—and when I leave I hope to take 31 of your members with me. The Opposition will not oppose the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. I will not go through the lengthy explanatory note outlining the bill's definitions, such as overland flow, the responsibility of the Crown, and the responsibilities and rights of water users. Instead, I will make one or two comments. I will speak in more detail about the comments of Government members, who have used this machinery bill to make political points, to praise the Government and to suggest that the former Labor Government did little regarding water resources. The first object of the bill is to amend the Water Management Act 2000. I do not expect Coalition members to read that Act but it was legislation that I put through this place as the then Minister for Land and Water Conservation. It was a major rewrite of the State's water legislation. I will not say much about it except that the then member for Tamworth, crossbencher Tony Windsor, spoke about the consultation with and efforts of the then Government in bringing the legislation to fruition. I refer members to the *Hansard* report of the debate on the bill. Mr Windsor said it was a model of legislative consultation that all Ministers and governments should follow.

**Mr Geoff Provost:** He was a model of consultation.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY:** I hear grumbling from Government members; perhaps their lunch was off or something. The member for Tweed, having listened to the member for Kiama, began his speech by saying, "I am in awe of the member for Kiama". I heard the speech of the member for Kiama. I must admit I have also

said that in this House from time to time. Members may recall that during the condolence motion for Neville Wran I said that when I walked in the door of the Chamber on 1 November 1983 I was in awe of Neville Wran. Why would I not be? Neville Wran was the sort of person one would be in awe of. But if the member for Tweed is in awe of the member for Kiama, I can only suggest that he get out more. He should mix with more people in political circles if that is his standard for being overawed.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I think the member for Tweed was overawed by the presentation of the speech.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY:** In relation to the comment by Mr Deputy-Speaker, I can only say, "Ditto"—whatever applies. The member for Hawkesbury posed an interesting question about who owns the water that falls on one's land. It has been much discussed but also misrepresented—particularly by many radio commentators down through the years—as to what is owned by the Crown, the Government, and by the property owner on whose land the rainwater falls. It is absurd to suggest that rainfall on private property belongs to the Government but the property owner is liable for it. The fact is that most moderate rainfall is absorbed and very little water is discharged as run-off to catchments and rivers. The issue of legal ownership raised by the member for Hawkesbury is defined in the bill. The Crown or the Government controls the water determined as overland flow or run-off. Without government control of overland flow at the top of a catchment what would happen to the farmers, irrigators and property owners downstream of a catchment?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Don't bring logic into it.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY:** With The Nationals members in the Chamber you have to be careful about using logic. There is a Scottish saying: Whisky is for drinking and water is for fighting over. That is the reason the Government has to control the run-off. If farmers are able to harvest—a lovely term—or dam the water at the top end of a catchment then people at the bottom end get nothing. The member for Hawkesbury should not be concerned or raise his eyebrows because the Government has control of run-off water. It is essential that the Government control it. There have been changes in the definitions of other water that falls on properties.

Sydney Water now allows residents to capture rainwater and store it in tanks. It was not too many years ago that having a water tank in Sydney was illegal because it affected the economic viability of Sydney Water. With the advent of water conservation and pricing regulation, water tanks are now encouraged. That has been recognised in legislation and in this bill. Turning to the contribution by the member for Kiama, it is absurd to suggest that past Labor governments did nothing in relation to water management. Labor has refuted the Government's claims about water storage and dam construction. Eighty per cent of all water storage and dam construction in New South Wales for irrigation purposes was commissioned by Labor.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Eighty-six per cent.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY:** I am prepared to say that 80 per cent to 86 per cent of irrigation dams built in New South Wales were built by Labor governments. Crucially, this bill defines issues concerning overland flow and other aspects of water management. The Government is uncomfortable with the term "environmental flows" which, put simply, is the management and allocation of water for the environment from water catchments around the State. The environment is not about The Greens or a bunch of people who live in Paddington or Newtown but about the sustainability and health of a river and its catchment.

Unlike the water policies of both Labor and Coalition governments in decades past, which involved extracting all surface water and pumping as much water from aquifers as was required for an economic return, in recent years water management has taken on an environmental and sustainability bent. Those principles are in place today because of the legislation introduced by Labor governments. A Government member made the absurd comment today that Labor governments have done nothing in the area of water storage construction. The truth is that we have done most of it. Labor is responsible for sustainable practices and water management such as sustainable management, proper licensing, water trading and the recognition of water rights.

I have checked with the department concerning an important policy for which I was responsible: the farm dams policy. Farmers can now build a dam without licensing or approval as long as it is of a certain size and for domestic and stock purposes. I have been assured by people in the department that the policy is still in effect and the Government intends to allow more flexibility. I support that approach. I conclude with those comments. The Opposition supports the bill. Why would we not? Our fingerprints are all over water management in New South Wales.

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [5.15 p.m.]: I support the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. Within the 458 square kilometres of the electorate of Heathcote there are four water catchments that are crucial in supplying drinking water to the Sydney basin. Those catchments are the Woronora, Cordeaux, Avon and Cataract dams. With the introduction of the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014, the New South Wales Government has reaffirmed its commitment to ensure that water management activities in this State achieve triple bottom line outcomes. In particular, the bill focuses on reforms that allow water users and rural communities that rely on safe and secure water supplies to make even more productive use of the State's water resources.

The recent millennium drought and the Federal Government's involvement in the Murray-Darling Basin has emphasised more than ever the need for water management mechanisms that are simple, clear and provide water users with the flexibility they need to manage their businesses and make the most of their water entitlements. This bill takes on board the lessons of the millennium drought with amendments that optimise the setting of storage reserves in dams to ensure the equitable, economically efficient sharing of water between higher security licences and general security licences. These amendments are described in more detail in my colleague's speech on preparing for drought.

The bill also improves our ability to make the most productive use of water through provisions to improve the security of water entitlements, allow greater flexibility in the use of infrastructure to harvest water and minimise water users' need to spend time on government regulatory requirements. Water users need to be able to plan to make the most productive use of their water, and in order to do that they need a stable regulatory environment from the government and secure water entitlements. Until now, water users who have relied on supplementary water licences have had to plan their business activities, attempt to obtain finance, and conduct their operations knowing that their licences could be cancelled, without compensation. Water users who have relied on floodplain harvesting have had to go about their business without the security of a licence.

The bill remedies that situation. For the first time, supplementary water licences that are used to take water from regulated rivers will have perpetual tenure—meaning that they cannot be cancelled merely because a water sharing plan no longer provides for them—and they will have compensation rights. Water users who rely on floodplain harvesting will be given licences that recognise their legitimate water harvesting activities and, like supplementary licences, have perpetual tenure and compensation rights. The bill also provides water users with more flexibility to make the most productive use possible of their harvestable rights. Currently, in order for a landholder to harvest rainfall run-off from their property under a harvestable right, the landholder must build a dam, regardless of whether they have a suitable site or a dam is the most cost-effective means of harvesting water.

The bill gives landholders the ability to use the infrastructure that is most appropriate to their needs and allows the most productive use of the rainfall run-off on their property by permitting them to capture their harvestable right with any type of water supply work. Finally, the bill simplifies and streamlines licensing and trading, eliminating processes that result in delay and unnecessary expense and freeing up water users to spend their limited time and resources on making productive use of their water.

Such reforms are known as the straight through processing of dealings. Currently in order to trade a water licence the licence holder must first apply to the New South Wales Office of Water to approve the trade and then to the Land and Property Information access register to have the dealing registered. This bill will allow the Office of Water to arrange for dealings to be recorded on the Land and Property Information access register on behalf of the applicant. An additional measure to improve application processes is to allow approvals to take effect immediately upon granting. Currently, when an approval is granted it does not take effect until the 28-day period for appeals has expired. This can result in unnecessary delays and costs for landholders, and can even result in lost opportunities to have works constructed.

This bill allows the approval to take effect on the day the applicant receives notice that the approval has been granted, so that the water user can put their water to productive use as soon as possible. The appeal rights of the applicant and others are unaffected. This Government is determined to make the most productive use possible of the State's limited water resources. This bill's reforms to improve the security of water entitlements, improve flexibility for harvestable rights holders and reduce red tape do just that. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [5.21 p.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I address the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. This bill is important in finding a balance between the productive uses of

water and sustainability. In fact, I would argue that it is critical that we get this balance right. Of course, our concern in the past has been that this balance has not been correct and the so-called productive uses have undermined the long-term economic sustainability by reducing the capacity of the environment to respond to the harvesting of too much water.

I will focus on some questions that I have about the bill. I understand that it might not be possible for the Minister to respond to all of the issues. Of course, with the support of the Government and the Opposition, the bill will pass but it would be useful when the matter goes to the upper House if we can have a discussion about some of these issues. The first is the ignoring of the millennium drought and climate change by basing the high security decisions on pre-2004 data only. My understanding is that the legislation changes all of the State's water sharing plans so that the decisions about high security water retentions are based on "historical flow information held by the Department when this Plan commenced" rather than "flow information held by the NSW Office of Water". Schedule 2 item [3] amends clause 38 (1) (b) as follows:

Omit "worst period of inflows into this water source, as represented in flow information held by the NSW Office of Water".  
Insert instead "worst period of low inflows into this water source (based on historical flow information held by the Department when this Plan commenced)".

As members will know, high security water licences are guaranteed 98 per cent availability and in order to do this the Office of Water has to keep several years' worth of water in dams to ensure that there is enough water to meet high security needs in the "worst period of inflows". I understand that this change effectively means that instead of basing the decision on how much to keep on the most up-to-date and available information, the decision will be based on the data available when the plan commenced in 2004. Doing this means that the data from the millennium drought and future data will not be considered.

We know that with climate change we will see more frequent and intense droughts, despite the fact that a large proportion of New South Wales is still in drought. It is especially concerning because the second half of the twentieth century was unusually wet. My question goes to the issue of the data that will be used. In his second reading speech the Minister talked about regulated river water sharing plans currently requiring water to be set aside within a dam to ensure full or near full water allocations to high security licences. He said:

This water sharing rule was developed prior to the recent millennium drought. When the millennium drought is taken into account, implementation or implementing this current water sharing plan rule would result in significant quantities of water being taken out of production and held in reserve in case an equally severe drought occurs. Modelling indicates that the existing rule could reduce general security licence allocations by 8 per cent, on average, and up to 20 per cent in some years."

The issue here obviously will be important in the Murrumbidgee where high security licences are about 20 per cent of entitlements, and probably less of an issue in the Lachlan and Murray where they make up around 5 to 10 per cent. Is the Government arguing that the removal of the millennium drought and future conditions from the decision process will have net economic benefits as there will be less water held in storage and more available for use by general security licence holders? Obviously the challenge, when you look at the logic behind that, is that water trades at about \$20 to \$60 a megalitre in normal years and the price has risen to about \$1,000 in drought years. This indicates that droughts would need to be about 20 years apart to make this economic prediction work. Has the Government done modelling on the impact of removing the millennium drought from its modelling for high security licence requirements?

An associated issue of course is that as compensation is payable under the Act when water is taken from high security and given to general security, a licence holder could potentially seek compensation. If that is the case, what is the process for that? Is the Government confident that based on 100 years of climate data pre-2004 we have an understanding of what the future climate will be and that these plans will take that into account? If climate change models are correct and we will have a drier climate with more frequent and intense droughts, will these plans need to be refined in the future? Does the Government expect any applications for compensation from high security licence holders based on this change? If there is compensation, who is liable for that compensation?

The second issue is the compensation provided for supplementary water licence holders. The legislation allows for compensation to be paid for reductions in water allocations for supplementary water licence holders. Schedule 1.2 amends the principal Act. I understand that historically this has not been the case as the point of supplementary licences has been to make economic use of excess water availability. It has not been a guarantee that that water would be available and the idea over time, I understand, is that if conditions got significantly drier these provisions would be phased out.

This amendment locks the future Government into compensating these licence holders. It is not clear in the second reading speech why the Government has decided to allow compensation to be payable to supplementary water licence holders when it is my understanding that this was never the intention when the licences were originally granted. Will the State be liable for compensation if a future government decides to divert greater flows, for example, to the environment? I think that question needs answering. Will the Federal Government be liable for compensation if a future government decides to divert greater flows to the environment? If, as climate change models predict, we have a drier climate with more frequent and intense droughts, will this mean that a significant reassessment of licences is required if these models come to life, and if so will the State then be liable for compensation to supplementary licence holders?

The final point that I make relates to creating flood licences and allowing them to be compensable. The bill creates a new category of floodplain harvesting licence and then allows the conversion of existing floodplain usage into these licences and for them to be compensable. This means that an entirely new compensation liability for the State will be created by this bill and it also means that flood works that were developed after the 1994 cap on new works—that is illegal works—will be legalised and potentially compensated for. This may have significant ramifications for downstream users and also rewards inefficient or illegal diversions and of course, section 57A relates to that. I ask genuinely: will floodplain harvesting licences be granted to people who have illegally built flood works after the 1994 cap on new works?

What is the economic value of future water access that will be provided to owners of floodplain works that were developed after the announcement of the 1994 cap on development? Does the Government have any idea how many new licences will be issued? I think that is an important question. What will the impact of these licences be on sustainable diversion limits? And, of course, as a previous speaker said, what will the implications of these new licences be for downstream users? Finally, will inefficient diversion works be rewarded under this change by being issued with a licence, which they can then trade or seek compensation for if it is removed?

This is important legislation. I acknowledge that the Government has put in a lot of effort. As detailed in the second reading speech, the Minister has consulted many irrigators and others. I understand the Minister may not be able to answer all these questions in his speech in reply, but it is important that we get this legislation right not only for farming communities but also for the broader community. We need to strike the right balance and fully understand all the issues. I appreciate the opportunity to ask these questions; it is important to get right some of the details of modelling and the ideas behind the legislation before it is implemented. The last thing we want is to have to revisit this legislation, once it has been passed, in five, 10 or, if the climate change models are correct, 25 years to approve shelling out significant compensation.

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta) [5.30 p.m.]: I support the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. There are few things more important in water management than managing for drought. While we had improved rainfall conditions over several of the last few years in New South Wales, much of the State has once again suffered from drought in the past year. We know that whenever the rains return the next dry spell is just around the corner. The New South Wales water management framework already contains important provisions to take account of the State's variable climate. We have different water products to optimise the productive use of stored water in the form of high and general security licences, and other licences to take advantage of higher flows when they come, in the form of supplementary licences and floodplain harvesting licences.

Despite these provisions the extreme conditions of the millennium drought placed unprecedented pressures on our water management systems. The New South Wales Office of Water was required to suspend water sharing plans in order to allocate water to domestic, stock and irrigation uses in the most economically efficient and equitable way. The Government has drawn on the experience of the millennium drought in drafting the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 to propose reforms to improve our ability to withstand the inevitable pressures of drought.

The most significant of these, from the perspective of drought preparedness, is to change the way water is stored in dams in order to maximise productive use of that water during wet and dry times. Regulated water sharing plans currently require water to be set aside within dams to ensure full or near-full water allocations to high security licence holders can be maintained through any repeat of the worst drought on record. This water sharing rule was developed prior to the millennium drought. When the millennium drought is taken into account, implementing this water sharing rule would result in significant quantities of water being taken out of production and held in reserve just in case an equally severe drought occurs.

These amendments allow for the worst drought that occurred prior to the commencement of each of the current water sharing plans to continue to be used to determine the size of the storage reservoir. These amendments will maintain water sharing between high security licences and general licences agreed to when the water sharing plans were initially developed. In most years general security licence holders will benefit from these changes because the Office of Water will not have to lock up more water in the State's dams in case it is needed in the future. This locked-up water would generally not be available for economic production under other types of licences. These changes therefore maximise the overall productive water resources and improve our drought resilience.

A second measure of the bill is to improve how drought resilience relates to trade. We know that one of the most important mechanisms for water users to cope with drought is the water market. Licence holders who require cash flow can sell their allocations or entitlements and licence holders who require additional water can buy them. This bill includes a new dealing called a "term water allocation transfer" to allow licence holders to trade their right to future water allocations for a defined term up to 10 years. Under the trade the buyer will receive and have the use of all or part of the seller's water allocation for the term of the trade, but the seller will retain the shares under the licence. This new dealing will make it possible for licence holders to add to their water allocations, giving them increased security to plan to withstand drought. It will allow businesses with cash flow requirements the flexibility to sell their allocations for a defined term, without the need to permanently buy or sell a licence.

This Government is dedicated to assisting the State's landholders in managing the inevitable effects of drought. One of the most economically efficient ways to do that is to ensure that our water management system has the flexibility to work in both wet and dry years. This bill proposes important changes to improve the water management system's capacity to address drought, and to give water users the tools they need to use the water market to manage drought conditions. We know the importance of water. In urban areas such as Parramatta we may not appreciate what rural and regional areas experience. We expect water to flow if we turn on a tap, but it is not the same in rural and regional areas.

Water security is a big part of managing the State's assets. This bill is part of that. Having been a horticulturalist, I know about the importance of water security and managing this vital resource. We need to have provisions for harvesting water and maintaining the supply of water during droughts. This was driven home in 1999 when water restrictions in metropolitan Sydney came into effect. These restrictions affected many horticultural businesses despite the special exemptions in place. About a third of that industry in the Hills-Dural area was wiped out during that time, which was very sad.

This bill looks at water management for rural and regional areas and goes some way to addressing important issues in water regulation. Water is the lifeblood of our rural and regional areas, as it is of our cities. We need to use water effectively because it is vital for the agricultural sector that puts food on our tables. It is also vital for our cities. For example, Parramatta exemplifies the importance of water. When Governor Phillip rowed up the Parramatta River he stopped at what is now Parramatta Park, where he established the first farm in the colony. This saved the nation and Parramatta was the breadbasket of the colony. This farm was established where fresh water met salt water in the river. The river was a lot cleaner than it is now. It is sad to see the pollution, but water quality is improving.

Parramatta has some wonderful developments, exemplifying how we can use our rivers as distinguishing features of our cities. The Parramatta River is a unique asset. There is a master plan for the Parramatta Heritage Precinct, including State-owned assets such as the orphanage, the female factory and Parramatta Gaol. These will have wonderful views of the river. We will transform the precinct into a mixed-use area, from an industrial wasteland into 25,000 new residences. In other words, we can create a new suburb with waterfront living. We can build good, strong communities right in the heart of our cities. That is what a good government does: it looks at ways to build communities in the heart of a city with easy access to transport, and I commend the guys who are working on that. Developments in the Parramatta central business district along the river have fantastic views. I can see that you are very interested in that, Mr Deputy-Speaker, and that you are nodding furiously to indicate how important the bill is to such developments.

This bill addresses not only how we productively use our water resources, how we manage our assets and our important lifeblood—water—in times of drought, but how we capture rainwater during wet seasons so that we can use it most effectively in times of drought. It is about efficiency and how we best allocate water from environmental flows for production purposes and to ensure water security for our rural and regional brothers and sisters so that their livelihoods and their communities stay strong and viable.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [5.40 p.m.]: With the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 the Government is aiming to make the New South Wales water management framework streamlined, fit for the purpose and, above all, clear. The foundation for that clarity is in the State's water rights, which define the waters that are within the control of the State and within the State's power to regulate. This bill makes important clarifications to the State's water rights that will assist in the licensing of flood plain harvesting and the development of policy to facilitate stormwater harvesting. The bill includes an amendment that secures the rights of property owners to harvest rainwater falling on rooftops.

Because my electorate of Coogee is incredibly urbanised—and after the recent redistribution it is the second most densely populated electorate in the State—one might ask what floodplain harvesting and stormwater harvesting have to do with Coogee. They have a great deal to do with the electorate. I refer to the Minister's second reading speech in which he said that this policy will recognise the investment local councils have made in existing urban stormwater harvesting projects, facilitate new projects to provide additional environmentally friendly water supplies for councils and ensure that the rights of other water users are appropriately considered.

When I was the mayor of Randwick City Council from 2007 to 2009 I was most fortunate to see the implementation of a number of stormwater harvesting projects. We would tap into the base flow of old creek lines—which were regarded as stormwater channels—install a gross pollutant trap there and the water would be transferred to another tank and then up to a big holding tank, some as large as the 85,000-litre tank installed at Pioneers Park in Malabar, outside my electorate. The water would then go through a filtration system, which was quite extensive and expensive, to bring the water up to drinking quality. That water was used to irrigate the sports fields that we had resurfaced in the area. We were able to install the same system of harvesting the base flow at Clovelly.

In the past decade Randwick City Council has saved hundreds of millions of litres of potable water by using these stormwater harvesting projects. It not only saves water supplies and puts less demand on our dams and reserves but it also saves ratepayers an enormous amount of money. Waverley Council too has been at the forefront in implementing stormwater harvesting schemes and in the past two years the council has opened one at Bondi Beach. The benefit of this scheme for councils is that not only is water saved but the traps collect the gross pollutants and the water is filtered, ensuring that only clean water is used on the sports fields or in local amenities—for example, for toilet flushing or for council workers to use to wash down facilities.

It is very important that we remove the ambiguity around who owns the water and who has responsibility for it because there is a great deal of interest in my electorate in the harvesting and reuse of water not only at a local government level but also at a household level. People are installing water tanks and have been doing so for many, many years, but nothing focuses attention more on the need to preserve valuable water supplies than a drought. Mayors can drive around their city and see the nature strips, the sports fields and the parks all brown and turning to dust and the thousands of trees that have been planted wilting. It is extremely depressing to see. Any sort of water harvesting that can be done to get an area through a drought is welcome and necessary. I note that Randwick City Council installed 60,000-litre tanks to capture rainfall off the administration building and it is used for the building's air conditioning. Previously, potable water had been used. Those tanks frequently overflow.

Floodplain harvesting has been mentioned. Part of my electorate, around Randwick racecourse and in Kensington, is on an old flood plain. I remember the heavy rains of 1986 when water in Centennial Park overflowed into neighbouring suburbs and much of Kensington was flooded. That is not a rare event; floods like that have always been experienced along the Kensington flood plain. In the Coogee valley we experience one-in-20-year storms and, because of the topography, we get very severe flooding. We need to do anything we can to capture rain before it hits the ground and enters the stormwater system and permeable surfaces. If we can retain that rainwater on site for later use it removes a lot of the strain on stormwater.

Every time somebody builds a carport or covers a bit of permeable land the rainwater will hit that surface and enter the stormwater drain. Installing rainwater tanks for domestic use or stormwater detention tanks for larger developments is a benefit for both residents and ratepayers, who have to pay for the upgrading of the stormwater system. I fully support this. It is terrific that the Minister has taken this on. The bill covers so many areas; I have only addressed local government. The State's water rights are the foundation of the Government's water management activities. By bringing clarity to these important provisions and removing ambiguity, the bill lays the groundwork for issuing floodplain harvesting licences and facilitating stormwater harvesting projects. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [5.50 p.m.]: I support the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. The bill is one piece of comprehensive reform that aims to achieve a number of objectives when managing one of our most precious and limited resources—water. Through the proposed amendments, the bill aims to maintain the excellent level of water security that has served the people not only of New South Wales but also of this nation. In saying this, I commend the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water on introducing this much-needed bill that is both equitable and balanced, given the complex interests being competed for between the environment and water users, as well as between town supply, rural domestic supply, stock watering, industry and irrigation.

By having not only a safe supply of water but also an efficient free-market economy that recognises water as both a commodity and a crucial resource, we ensure its viability to thousands of businesses across this great State. The bill aims to achieve its objectives by cutting bits and pieces of red tape that exist in the current Water Management Act 2000, which ultimately will reduce disruptions to commercial production, reduce costs associated with allocation problems and ease the regulatory burden on water users. It also implements a number of new measures, which I will mention shortly. The OECD, in its 2012 report titled "Environmental Outlook to 2050", advised that water demand is projected to increase by 55 per cent globally between 2000 and 2050. Demand from manufacturing will increase fourfold, with electricity and domestic use demand for water increasing 140 per cent and 130 per cent, respectively.

Yes, those are macrolevel estimations on a global scale, but it would be foolish to say that this State is immune from water supply and access problems. It is only after many decades of world-leading sustained management practices that we have got to where we are, including the National Water Initiative established under the lead of the Howard Government as part of the Council of Australian Governments. On a microscale, agribusiness uses about 70 per cent of freshwater for irrigation, industry relies on quality water for production, and service industries that directly impact consumers rely on water for daily operation. The fact that we are experiencing water shortages and floods that are increasingly severe in consequence, given various changing factors such as El Niño patterns, means it is never too early to shape up our water management system.

I now turn to the contents of the bill. The bill amends the Water Management Act 2000 with respect to water licences, including floodplain harvesting licences and supplementary water licences. First, it deals with the issue of floodplain harvesting licences by clarifying the definition of "overland flow water" as a recognised water source under the State's water rights. Defining this enables the New South Wales Office of Water to determine rights and obligations regarding its urban stormwater harvesting policy, which is an increasingly focal area of new harvesting policy. New regulations will be made to further prescribe circumstances whereby existing floodplain harvesting operations will create a licence.

In doing so, the increasing scope of harvesting activities is recognised and those who undertake them will not be rendered as being non-licensed, and hence limited. This goes hand in hand with the increased flexibility with harvestable rights. The bill provides for harvestable rights orders to set usage of dam rules. This, importantly, cuts red tape to assist landholders store certain licenced water in large capacity dams. Secondly, the bill maintains security for holders of supplementary water licences and floodplain harvesting licences. Currently, there is no right to compensation if a supplementary water licence holder's water allocation is reduced.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Hansard is having difficulty hearing the member with the call.

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN:** This bill recognises the inequity of that constraint and enables compensation rights, as well as recognition of a perpetual tenure of licence. However, it is noted that this is against the background of a reducing overall entitlement under the new water sharing plan. We must plan accordingly, given the uncertainties of water supply into the future and given the heightened environmental and weather conditions. Thirdly, in planning accordingly for the future, the bill makes provisions for the scope of controlled allocation orders. A new minimum price will be set for licences in order to increase the economic efficiency of water use. Furthermore, it allows for the scope of controlled allocation orders to be defined by the water source, and thus match available water supply with demand.

Fourthly, the bill simplifies processes in the water market. It provides for new trade terms whereby a water allocation can be traded in one step, with terms of transferred allocations being up to 10 years while the shares under the licence are retained by the transferor. By reducing these regulatory barriers to trade, relevant licence holders help in optimising the utility of water. Similar simplification of licence processes are provided

for in dealings with government agencies, including foreshortening processes of registration of dealings with the Land and Property Information authority. Finally, the bill introduces various changes, including environmental crisis management whereby the most recent drought disaster is clarified to be a benchmark on which storage reserves are determined with respect to high and general security licences. In doing so, the bill seeks to optimise dam storage capacities in regulated rivers for future disasters.

Various offence-related provisions are introduced that simplify processes in water accounting, and provisions are made to recognise the validity of converted licences. This bill is a comprehensive measure that aims to clarify various provisions of the Water Management Act 2000 in order to improve commercial certainty and stability on the many businesses that rely on a quality and sustainable water supply. This Government is of the strong belief that water management practices by industry and affected landholders in harvesting water is best left to them, given their fiscal and operational interests in maintaining a secure source. Again, I thank the Minister and his team for delivering these necessary amendments that I am confident will produce effective outcomes that directly affect the livelihoods of the people of this State. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne) [5.59 p.m.]: I support this important legislation. As many speakers have noted, water is our most precious resource. I commend the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water for this bill and for his hard work behind the scenes. The bill will bring major and long-overdue reforms to the Water Management Act 2000. Primarily, it will ease the regulatory burden on water users and help the Government meet the challenges of managing the State's water resources. Water management plays a key role not only in agricultural communities throughout the State, but also in metropolitan and urban areas. It is also a key priority of this Government, and its importance has gained further impetus since the Federal Government's involvement in the Murray-Darling Basin.

There are a number of key provisions in the legislation. First, it will provide a framework for issuing floodplain harvesting licences. This will assist the New South Wales Office of Water in clarifying the rights and obligations of urban stormwater harvesting projects through an Urban Stormwater Harvesting Policy. I know that many residents in my electorate have implemented all sorts of water initiatives to save this precious resource, and to recycle it. A golf course in Concord is fully irrigated by the extraction of water from a stormwater channel. I note also in the foyer at Parliament House that staff are organising their own water harvesting with buckets to collect water coming from the cornice, but that is a story for another day.

This bill proposes a number of amendments that provide for a framework for issuing floodplain harvesting licences. It establishes compensation rights for supplementary licences that take water from the regulated river. The first trade reform proposed in this bill is a new dealing called a "term water allocation transfer". The bill provides for water sharing plans for regulated rivers to be administered on the basis of drought information held by the department at the beginning of those plans so as to exclude drought periods after that time, such as the Millennium Drought. The bill also clarifies parts of the principal Act to better reflect existing practises and enhance offence provisions relating to the take of water and bore-driven licences.

This Government is determined, as it is with most policies, to reduce red tape and this policy is no different. The commitment is simple and sensible. The regulation applies to the water sector as it does right across the economy. That is why I am pleased to report that this bill includes a variety of measures to simplify the processes. The bill eliminates several processes that result in delay and unnecessary expense for water users. In addition to streamlining measures for licensing and trading, the bill introduces new flexibility and clarifies provisions regarding harvestable rights. The bill also allows water sharing plans to be considered. In 2004 some water sharing plans were made for very small areas, often imposing elaborate and proscriptive rules. These amendments allow for the 2004 plans to be consolidated with larger catchment-wide plans made in recent years.

In this bill the Government has removed the unnecessary administrative requirements from the Water Management Act by simplifying the processes for making water available to licence holders, and facilitated a reduction in the number of regulatory instruments water users are subject to. Regulated river water sharing plans currently require water to be set aside within a dam to ensure full or near-full water allocations to high security licences. It can be maintained through a repeat of the worst droughts on record. This water sharing rule was developed prior to the Millennium Drought. When the Millennium Drought is taken into account, implementing this water sharing plan rule would result in significant quantities of water being taken out of production and held in reserve in case an equally severe drought were to occur.

These amendments allow for the worst drought that occurred prior to the commencement of each of the current water sharing plans to continue to be used to determine the size of the storage reserve. These

amendments will maintain the water shares between high security licences and general security licences that were agreed to when the water sharing plans were initially developed. In most years, general security licence holders will benefit from these changes because the Office of Water will not have to lock up more water within the State's dams in case it may be needed in the future. This locked up water will not generally be available for economic production under other types of licences. These changes therefore maximise the overall productivity of our water resources and improve our drought resiliency. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN** (Gosford) [6.05 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to debate on the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. The Water Management Act 2000, the principal Act, is the primary legislative authority for managing the water resources of this great State. The Act establishes provisions relating to water management, planning, rules for the granting of licences to take water, approvals to construct and use various water management works, and rules that govern the trade of water licences and enforcement mechanisms. However, currently the Act includes some unnecessary and overly formal provisions. The relaxed provisions will provide business certainty to some water users who rely on supplementary licences and on floodplain harvesting.

I can relate to water management, having been on a coastal council, with floodplain harvesting. During the 1990s when I was a councillor on Gosford City Council, the Gosford area was rated number two in the State for flooding. Gosford City Council was very prominent in the floodplain management authorities of New South Wales. I sat on one authority for many years, including a stint as deputy chairman. Floodplain management was an issue for the coastal council of Gosford. Our area is unique because it has low-lying areas and also a very strong and vibrant rural area where the management of water has become very significant over the years. Water management is very challenging in sandmining, for example, on the mountain and becomes a hotly contested issue. Any improvement to water management legislation that will provide better outcomes for areas such as Gosford is good.

Gosford has also suffered severely from drought over time. I fondly remember during the drought we were able to get support from other levels of government in the commissioning of the Mangrove to Mardi pipeline link. It is interesting to note that the link, which was environmentally considered, took the bottom of the catchment of water flows from Wyong Creek back up into the Mardi Dam and transferred them a long distance into the Mangrove Dam. It has been a very successful infrastructure project, which to date has seen more than 3,230 megalitres of water transferred to Mardi Dam to provide a secure water catchment for our area. Since the commissioning, 33,000 megalitres of water has been transferred from the lower reaches of our catchment into Mangrove Dam for storage. That water management issue in Gosford has been extremely successful.

The key proposals for amendment in the bill will enhance offence provisions relating to the take of water and bore drillers licences; provide a framework for issuing floodplain harvesting licences; streamline licensing and approval processes; provide for water sharing plans for regulated rivers to be administered on the basis of drought information held by the department at the beginning of those plans, so as to exclude drought periods after that time, such as the Millennium Drought; clarify parts of the principal Act to better reflect existing practices; and establish compensation rights for supplementary licences that take water from a regulated river. The bill advances the Government's policy priorities in water management by reducing red tape, providing business with certainty for supplementary licence holders and water users who rely on floodplain harvesting, and facilitating increased trade in water.

This bill is about getting it right; this bill is about ensuring that water management within this State is flexible. The bill will help to extend and increase benefits, with additional reforms to bring more flexibility to the water trading market. The first trade reform proposed in the bill is a new dealing called a "term water allocation transfer". The dealing will allow licence holders to trade their right to future water allocations for a defined term. Under the trade the buyer will receive and have the use of all or part of the seller's water allocation for the term of the trade, but the seller will retain the shares under the licence.

Currently, a water licence can be traded permanently or for a term but the allocations under a licence can only be traded once the allocation has been made, effectively preventing the trade of future allocations. This new dealing will make it possible for licence holders to supplement water allocations under their own licence over several seasons. The second trade reform in this bill relates to the dealing under which a water access licence nominates a water supply work. Currently, the Act is designed so that a licence nominates a physical water supply work, such as a pump or a regulator. While this system has worked well for the purposes of irrigation and other traditional uses of water, when applied to some newer uses, such as mining or environmental uses, the language of the Act is unclear and confusing in many cases.

The new amendments clarify that a licence may nominate an extraction point rather than a particular water supply work. These reforms to the provisions of the Act allow more flexibility to new water-dependent businesses entering the water market and demonstrate the Government's commitment to continuing to ensure that rules for water trading licences are adapted to changing circumstances. The Government has reaffirmed its commitment to vibrant and growing regional communities with these important reforms. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [6.11 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to debate on the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014. Perhaps the biggest challenge facing regional communities and the growth of regional communities is water security and securing water supplies. The Water Management Amendment Bill 2014 makes an important contribution to the management of water resources in New South Wales. I take this opportunity to inform the House of some exciting developments that have occurred with water security in the Orange electorate.

A few short years ago, during the last drought, Orange was in real danger of running out of water. The situation was dire. There were talks of trucking in water to make sure the city could continue to function. During the last State election the New South Wales Government promised \$18.2 million for water security for the Orange electorate in some form. All the options were considered, including a pipe to Burrendong Dam from Orange, but that would have meant tens of millions of extra dollars that New South Wales did not have at that time, thanks to the mismanagement of those opposite. I raised the prospect with Central Tablelands Water of a pipeline between Orange and Lake Rowlands near Blayney, but it was not interested. In the end we were left with the Macquarie River pipeline, which is just under 40 kilometres long. The pipe is now in the ground and, even though the pipeline had a controversial and somewhat stormy beginning, I think many of those doubters—some from surrounding towns—have mellowed. We look forward to the opening of the pipeline in the near future.

Of course, there is no point getting more water into the dam unless the capacity of the dam can be increased. Once again, the New South Wales Government has stepped up and is funding 20 per cent of the cost of raising and strengthening the Suma Park Dam wall at Orange—all up, an investment of \$3.8 million. These are great examples of the New South Wales Government's commitment to water security in New South Wales. On top of that, we have had the very interesting news of a possible dam on the Belubula River. Preliminary investigation work is being undertaken at the moment. Minister Humphries was in Orange recently to consult with landholders because they are the people, first and foremost, affected by this. A scoping study is underway that will examine the most suitable sites and weigh up all the options.

Of course, one can never satisfy The Greens, who basically oppose everything. It is very disappointing that they have not been more productive in this process. The New South Wales Government is making a serious commitment to water security and securing our water supply in the Central West. As I said at the outset, if we are not able to secure the supply, our regional communities cannot grow. Previous speakers in this debate referred to stormwater harvesting. I doff my hat to Orange City Council in this regard, which has been a pioneer of stormwater harvesting in New South Wales. Orange leads the way in water efficiency. When the city was running out of water, everyone worked together to cut back on their consumption; everyone pulled together. Thanks to the New South Wales Government, hopefully those days of fretting about our water security and future water supply are behind us. We look forward to the opening of the Macquarie River to Orange Suma Park Dam pipeline in the near future. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon—Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western NSW) [6.16 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contributions to debate on the Water Management Amendment Bill 2014, including Government members representing the electorates of Londonderry, Rockdale, Hawkesbury, Baulkham Hills, Kiama, Tweed, Heathcote, Parramatta, Coogee, Smithfield, Gosford and Orange; and Opposition members representing the electorates of Liverpool and Mount Druitt. I also thank the member for Sydney and the member for Balmain. Water management plans are in place for a reason: They are called water sharing plans. The plans, which were developed pre-2004 but enacted mostly in 2004, had a 10-year water sharing lifespan for the first generation.

At the end of 10 years one would like to think we had learned a significant amount about how those water sharing plans operated around the State. In some cases, the time and effort put into those plans by community members, industry stakeholders and government back in 2004 resulted in an extremely painful and challenging process; in other cases, it was innovative. If we were to bring security to the industry, communities and the environment it was necessary that the Government oversight the plans. Water sharing plans are an

important aspect of the evolving water industry in New South Wales. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission—now the authority—has evolved out of that process. The bill is a comprehensive package of reform measures designed to ease the regulatory burden on water users and support economic growth in rural communities that depend on our State's water resources.

The bill will ensure that the New South Wales framework for water management supports a sustainable balance of economic, social and environmental interests. As I stated earlier, if we have not learned enough in the past 10 years to make the amendments in the bill, then we are not really acknowledging the good work being done in the community by some of our industry organisations such as the New South Wales Irrigators' Council or the action groups that were seeking a fairer share of water in some of the valleys. The bill promotes business certainty by providing compensation rights and perpetual tenure for both supplementary and floodplain harvesting licences. Although the former Labor Government sought to provide compensation rights for general security water and high security water, the two remaining access rights—or what we call supplementary floodplain harvesting—were not dealt with at the time. The bill deals with an issue that has been on the cards for at least 10 years.

Secondly, the amendments reduce red tape by streamlining licensing and approval processes, simplifying announcements of supplementary water access and introducing new, more flexible ways for landholders to take advantage of their harvestable rights. I will elaborate on that point shortly. Thirdly, the bill increases flexibility in the water market by introducing a new type of dealing and the term "water allocation transfer". The dealing will allow licence holders to trade their right to future allocations for a term of up to 10 years.

Finally, the amendments optimise the setting of storage reserves in dams to provide equitable, economically efficient sharing of water between high security licences and general security licences. With this bill the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government reaffirms its commitment to ensure that water management activities in this State achieve triple bottom line outcomes, driving economic growth, creating strong communities and providing environmental benefits across New South Wales. As the Deputy Premier articulated today, in the next iteration of support for the Murray-Darling communities there will be a \$32.5 million compensation package. That is in addition to the \$700 million in Commonwealth funding that has been negotiated largely for modernisation projects within the water industry and the water sector.

I will respond to some of the points raised by members during the debate. The member for Londonderry highlighted the role of farmers in embracing new technology—particularly irrigators—and the increasing efficiency and effectiveness of their water use. Over the past 10 years in the valley where I live irrigators have doubled production outcomes using half the amount of water. The amendments in this bill are a means of increasing business certainty for users, especially supplementary licence holders. We know that the Murray-Darling Basin is the largest agricultural production area in the country, and this dominant provider is driven by the irrigation industry.

The member for Rockdale raised the specific amendment that clarifies what will be deemed to determine the "worst period of inflows". While new knowledge will always be considered in the remake of plans, if the definition of "worst period of inflows" had been amended to reflect the millennium drought it would have locked up water unnecessarily, and in some cases the State general security allocations would have been reduced by up to 20 per cent. We are getting better at water management and how water is allocated. A key aspect of water sharing plans over the years is how irrigators and environmental users—and particularly that part of each of the plans—have worked hand-in-hand to deliver both those outcomes.

I enjoyed and appreciated the comments of the member for Hawkesbury and his interest in all water-related issues. To confirm, the overflow from the member's rainwater tank sourced from the roof belongs to the State. If it is surplus to his requirements, we are happy to take it or trade it for him. The member for Kiama eloquently articulated how supplementary licences will now be perpetual and compensable. In addition to providing the business certainty mentioned by the member for Londonderry, this will facilitate and, over time, increase the trading of supplementary water.

The member for Tweed raised the issue of unnecessary delays in enabling a water trade to occur. The time frame is currently 28 days, which is an unnecessary provision standing in the way of water trading and the charging of water to its highest value, usually via trading. The member for Heathcote highlighted the desire and determination of the Liberal-Nationals to ensure that our water resources are utilised effectively and efficiently. This position was echoed by the member for Parramatta and, as the Minister with responsibility for all water matters, I assure both members that this commitment applies equally to urban and rural areas.

The member for Coogee reiterated the above comments. The member for Orange made some pertinent comments. He is correct: The city of Orange is a growth area. It is a diverse area with a mixture of agricultural industries. It is also a key health precinct and has a growing mining industry. One issue that has challenged the Orange district for the past generation is access to water security. The member for Orange has worked tirelessly in support of the Orange pipeline, the upgraded Suma Park Dam and the impending study that will lead to the first dam of consequence being built in New South Wales in 30 years.

In terms of driving security for our communities, it is not just about business; it is about maintaining equitable access to water for all people in this State. I am reminded of the town of Cobar in my electorate. Only 40 or 50 years ago people used to line up for the water train. The water train arrived on a daily basis and most of that water came from the main street of Warren. A large number of our water towns were built on the trade of water to western districts such as Cobar.

I appreciate the Opposition's support for the bill. However, the member for Sydney made some comments that were totally off the mark and incorrect. He referred incorrectly to the grandfathering of illegal works into the floodplain harvesting framework. Those works are not illegal; they did not require licensing under the Water Act 1912. Contrary to the claims made by the member for Sydney, the Water Management Act amendments relating to floodplain harvesting will bring these works under a legislative framework: Floodplain harvesting will be regulated, accounted for and limited by enforceable licensing limits.

I will also clarify the comments by the member for Sydney regarding supplementary licences. The bill addresses a longstanding need to improve the security of supplementary water licences that take water from regulated rivers. Supplementary water licences, contrary to their name, are a vital source of water that is central to the business activities and planning of many irrigators, especially in the State's northern valleys. To take one example, in the Border River catchment—the Macintyre, which is the head of the Barwon-Darling river system—extraction under supplementary licence has constituted more than one-third of overall water availability in recent years. Clearly, this water cannot be seen as merely supplementary to water taken under other licences.

In fact, in the Gwydir Valley, where Moree is the largest community, the supplementary take is nearly equivalent to half the licence take for irrigators, and that is off the back of the fact that the Government and community did not build those water storages. Half the water storages in the Gwydir Valley and in most of the northern valleys were paid for, and continue to be paid for, by irrigators, not the Government. Whilst the member for Sydney might enjoy the community's input into funding his water availability in the middle of Sydney, for most of the northern part of the State at least half the water storage has been paid for over time by the irrigation industry.

I note the naiveté and general ignorance of the member for Sydney in opposing the Water Industry Competition Act. Later this week I will be at Green Square in the electorate of the member for Sydney. The member opposes the Act that allowed Sydney Water to partner with private providers to develop one of the largest homegrown, self-contained water recycling and reticulation sites in this country, let alone this State. I ask the member for Sydney to be better informed about why we are making these amendments so that he is cognisant of what is going on in his own backyard.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** Further reading required.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** As the member for Orange says, further reading is required. Among the categories of water licences for commercial purposes, supplementary licences are currently not granted in perpetuity and they are not covered by the Act's compensation provisions. Supplementary licences currently exist only as long as the water sharing plan provides and they may be cancelled without any recompense to the licence holder. This means that any licence holder who relies on supplementary licences and undertakes business planning or attempts to obtain finance conducts their operation in the knowledge that it is possible for this vital source of water to be taken away. It is simply not acceptable. The member for Mount Druitt raised the issue of the State's water rights. I agree with him that it is important to clarify who owns the water—and, in some cases, it is water that falls from the sky. That is what this legislation will do. I agree wholeheartedly with the member for Mount Druitt that the Government must control water run-off, particularly through the licence provisions that we have outlined in the Act, and the amendments make this much clearer.

The member for Balmain raised several questions. Specifically, he asked whether we are ignoring the millennium drought. I lived through the millennium drought and a number of other droughts. Hopefully, if the

Bureau of Meteorology forecast is correct the north-west of the State will receive beneficial rain later this week. It could be the largest rainfall we have had for more than two and a half years—about 40 millimetres to 60 millimetres. That is not a great amount, but anything will be more than welcome. I assure the member for Balmain that we are not ignoring the millennium drought. We are aggregating the data, which then must be considered. We will adopt and adapt amendments to our plans over generations as that data comes to the fore.

The member for Balmain also expressed concerns about potential variables created as a result of issuing supplementary licences in perpetuity. "Supplementary" is probably not the best word to use to describe these licensing arrangements. They are not issued at the expense of environmental water allocations, and indeed irrigators in just about all valleys have given up water over time as part of their commitment to water sharing plans. When we combine that effort with, say, that of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder—who is now the largest water holder in New South Wales—I assure the member for Balmain and all other members that environmental rights are being protected on behalf of the community. But our irrigators and water licence users also need protection through compensation. The amendments to this Act deal with that issue.

The member for Balmain also referred to the supposedly "illegal" works that will benefit from floodplain harvesting licences. As I discussed previously in responding to comments made by the member for Sydney, these works are not illegal; they will be licensed. I can honestly say that in the discipline and discussion generated within the irrigation industry we are working through the methodology to define this licensing regime with the Office of Water. That is refreshing to see. I am pleased to support the bill and its amendments, through which the Government reaffirms its commitment to balanced water management outcomes. The bill introduces significant reforms in all important areas of water management, from planning processes to licensing and trade through to compliance. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

### **Third Reading**

**Motion by Mr Kevin Humphries agreed to:**

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Government business having concluded, private members' statements will now be proceeded with.

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

#### **BANKSTOWN CITY CHOIR**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [6.34 p.m.]: Tonight I am delighted to have the opportunity to recognise the Bankstown City Choir, which is celebrating its fortieth anniversary this August. The Bankstown City Choir is an institution that is closely linked to the fabric of the wider Bankstown community. The choir has truly touched the lives of thousands in the Bankstown community with its inspiring performances over the past 40 years. It was a true honour when the Bankstown City Choir recently installed me as its patron earlier this year—a position that I proudly accepted. Since its formation, the choir has ensured its longevity due to the superior organisation and skills of a group of hardworking and dedicated volunteers. The Bankstown City Choir has a long history that, with the indulgence of members, I will gladly share with the House.

When the choir was formed in 1974 it was known initially as the Bankstown Town Hall Choir. The first musical director was Betty Fitzgerald and the first choir consisted of 27 members. Appropriately, the first performance of the choir was at the Bankstown Town Hall on 10 April 1974—a mere six weeks after the choir's formation. Since that initial performance the choir has gone from strength to strength, giving several performances of note over the past 40 years. On 28 May 1983 the choir performed a selection of folk songs at

the opening of Bankstown central library. Fittingly, at the opening of the new Bankstown Library and Knowledge Centre on 6 April 2014 the Bankstown City Choir came full circle: It was once again on the entertainment list at the grand opening of the new library on the site of the old Bankstown Town Hall.

Undoubtedly one of the most memorable occasions for the choir was its tour to Wales in July 1987 to perform at the International Musical Eisteddfod in Llangollen, Wales. Performing at the International Musical Eisteddfod was a dream and an aspiration of the initial founders of the choir—and the dream came true, with the Bankstown City Choir sending a delegation of 40 members to showcase their fine talents and place Bankstown on the world stage in Wales. The tour of course remains a highlight for long-term members of the choir, including the current choir secretary, Mrs Judy Learmonth, and her husband, vice president Gordon Learmonth. Of the tour, Mrs Learmonth fondly recalls how at the conclusion of the concert all participants stood, held hands and sang together in a show of unity and peace. Mrs Learmonth described the occasion as a most exhilarating and uplifting experience for choir tour members.

Over the past 40 years the choir volunteers have cheerfully performed and entertained Bankstown and the broader community for countless hours—whether it be showcasing their talents at mayoral functions, appearing at charitable fundraising events, churches or shopping centres and Carols by Candlelight events, or brightening the day of residents in aged care facilities and nursing homes. The Bankstown City Choir is widely respected and its commitment to community service is highly cherished and appreciated by the entire Bankstown community. At present the Bankstown City Choir rehearses every Tuesday night at the Georges Hall Community Centre. The choir is open to any member of the public who wishes to sing—there is no requirement for prior musical experience. There is also a youth choir, which is open to children and young people between the ages of five and 21 years.

The Bankstown City Choir also performs regularly with members of the Bankstown Talent Advancement Program (TAP) with the aim of developing their stage and vocal abilities. The Bankstown City Choir hosts two major concerts each year at which choir members are given the opportunity to showcase their talent to the wider community on a grand stage. I am delighted to inform the House that the next major concert is the fortieth anniversary celebration concert to be held at the Bryan Brown Theatre at 2.00 p.m. on Sunday 24 August. In a spirit typical of the choir, all proceeds from the event will be donated to the Australian Cancer Research Foundation. Mrs Learmonth has assured me that the anniversary concert will be an extravaganza not to be missed, with a fantastic line-up that will include "everything" from Broadway to opera, to showstoppers from *The Phantom of the Opera* and *My Fair Lady*.

I look forward to celebrating the occasion with the choir and I am delighted to take this opportunity to recognise the efforts of the choir executive volunteers, in particular Judy Learmonth, president Dot Hemming, vice president Gordon Learmonth, treasurer Kathy Mealing, Shirley Freestone, Barbara Willis, Amanda Buggy and Rita Harys. I wish the Bankstown City Choir a happy fortieth anniversary and continued success well into the future.

### CAMDEN HAVEN COMMUNITY PROJECTS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.38 p.m.]: As most members in this place will know, governments like to help communities that help themselves. In the case of the Camden Haven community that is exactly what is happening, with two significant projects in the local area already attracting State government funding. An ambitious plan to link shared cycleway/pathways in the Camden Haven has been developed by two local committees whose members share both a vision for the future and a determination to achieve a positive outcome.

The Schools to Schools and Beach to Beach projects have seen an idea to improve the safety of residents germinate and mature into two ventures that have captured the interest of hundreds of locals at several community meetings. I attended one of the meetings, held at the Kendall services club, where the audience saw firsthand the details of the planned link between local schools in the Camden Haven. One of my staff members attended a similar meeting focusing on the Beach to Beach project, which was held at the Laurieton United Services Club and which was overwhelmingly supported by some 300 local residents. Not surprisingly, the ideas and presentations put forward by both organising committees inspired others, and through those meetings many volunteers have come forward with a range of skills and interests to help design the pathways and to start working collaboratively with the local council towards implementation.

As a result both projects have progressed significantly, with impressive concept plans professionally presented and detailing the preferred routes for the cycleways and pathways. It has been acknowledged that, like

most projects, there are a number of variables to be considered and obstacles to be overcome but the can-do attitude of the Camden Haven community leaves me in no doubt that none of these are insurmountable. Specifically, the Schools to Schools project aspires to the establishment of shared cycleway/pathways linking the Kendall Public School and the Laurieton Public School, which is a distance of 13 kilometres. The Beach to Beach proposal aims to complete 11 kilometres of cycleway/pathways from Pilot Beach in Dunbogan along the river's edge to North Haven beach. The project will also incorporate a range of community-built installations that will activate, educate, communicate with and inspire locals and visitors alike. These installations include exercise stations, historical narratives and public artworks.

On the route there will be an opportunity for a connection to local schools, shops and medical facilities by establishing a much safer pathway along what are already very busy roads. The Schools to Schools project is primarily about improving safety for pedestrians, including schoolchildren, along Ocean Drive to Camden Haven High School. At present, such paths and linkages are virtually non-existent, and the walk along the verges of busy Ocean Drive is fraught with danger. In June this year I arranged for the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, to meet with both committees so that he could see first-hand the vision of these hardworking groups and the very reason I was so supportive of these initiatives. He was very impressed with what he heard and saw, and was overwhelmed by the professionalism of the presentations by the two project committees. Minister Gay was particularly pleased that the individual members, on behalf of the community, were prepared to take ownership of their ideas and to work in partnership to see them come to fruition.

Rather than just expect the various levels of government to fund and implement the projects, they demonstrated their commitment to be integrally involved from the outset. Their diligence and the thorough preparation of their ideas certainly paid off, and I was pleased to join the community and the local committees in welcoming funding allocations of \$220,000 for the Beach to Beach project and \$200,000, courtesy of the State Government's cycleway program, for the Schools to Schools project. This is a fantastic outcome for the community and demonstrates the benefits of a determined and collaborative approach. I look forward to the commencement of works and the opportunity to continue supporting both projects as they materialise. I acknowledge that there are many people working behind the scenes on both projects and I would like to make mention of several individuals who have been instrumental in the attainment of milestones to date.

In the case of the Schools to Schools initiative, I recognise John Cooke, Jason Koenig, Steve Martin, Peter Alley, Warwick Ayling, Thomas Fajks and Peter Nash. Andrew McCoubrie has played a lead role in the Beach to Beach initiative and has been supported enthusiastically by Scott Martin, Phil Higgins, Mary Laing, Jillian Wells, Lucilla Marshall and Penny Small. This is just the start of two sensible and significant projects that will vastly improve pedestrian safety in the Camden Haven and provide long-term benefits to the broader community. I am confident that, while the completion dates for the pathways may be years away, the determination and momentum of the local committees and the community will not diminish, and for that they are well deserving of my congratulations and commendation.

## CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [6.42 p.m.]: I raise the importance of recycling and the need for a container deposit scheme [CDS] in New South Wales. This is an issue about which I am particularly passionate and one that is important to my constituents in the coastal electorate of Coogee. It is simply unacceptable that each year in Australia more than eight billion recyclable beverage containers end up on beaches, in our waterways or in landfill. Urgent action is needed to clean up our beautiful beaches and communities and, quite frankly, our current waste and pollution of the environment are unsustainable. It has been estimated that our iconic Bondi Beach—a beach that is recognised around the world—is the rubbish dump for about 30,000 bottles and cans every single year. Around the country, 15,000 cans or bottles are littered or stuck in landfill every minute.

Forget about the shock figures that the soft drink industry throws around—no-one expects them to be true. The suggestion in the so-called "secret COAG report" is that a national container deposit scheme would cost up to \$8 billion. This is nothing short of laughable. As reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, the cost could be anywhere from \$88 million to \$8 billion. If that is not an each-way bet, I do not know what is. Consider instead the following figures: the proportion of people in favour of a CDS. In New South Wales it is 84 per cent; in Victoria, 85 per cent; in Western Australia, 86 per cent; and in Queensland, 90 per cent. In New South Wales, one in three pieces of litter is a drink container, while in South Australia it is only one in 12. Charities in New South Wales could make up to \$19 million a year if just 20 per cent of the CDS was serviced by those charities.

Our local councils could save \$78 million a year—just in New South Wales. A CDS could create an estimated 1,029 jobs directly and an additional 687 jobs indirectly in New South Wales, and an extra 2,029 direct and indirect jobs in Victoria and in Western Australia. In April this year Shelly Beach, in the Premier's electorate of Manly, was named by the CSIRO as the dirtiest beach in Australia, with the highest rate of marine debris. The CSIRO, the premier research organisation in this country, has suggested that a container deposit scheme is a clear way to help fix this situation—this mess. I cannot help but note my disappointment that an organisation like Keep Australia Beautiful is so willing to accept funding through a trust set up by Coca-Cola, as well as direct funding from Coca-Cola Amatil. Rob Thomas, the national chair for Keep Australia Beautiful, commented in a 7.30 interview that:

... there is a Coke trust where it's a general trust to be used in a number of different ways. So we get income through there and we get income through Coca-Cola Amatil ...

Mr Thomas went on to comment that approximately a third of the organisation's income comes from these sources. I am sorry to say that I believe this funding does nothing but tarnish the aims of great organisations such as Keep Australia Beautiful. For reasons unknown to all and sundry, Coca-Cola has been leading the charge against a container deposit scheme. While I am pleased to see that Keep Australia Beautiful offers beverage container recycling grants with money provided by the Coca-Cola Foundation, it truly baffles me that Coke is so against a CDS. The figures for South Australia speak for themselves: Almost 80 per cent of beverage containers are returned for recycling. In 2013-14 nearly 583 million containers were returned to collection depots. Around 45,000 tonnes of containers were diverted from landfill or litter. Public approval of the South Australian scheme is around 95 per cent. Like other forms of recycling in the rest of Australia, in South Australia the container deposit scheme is an accepted way of life.

When pressed on the issue in media interviews, Coca-Cola has been unable to substantiate its claims that its sales have suffered due to the South Australian scheme. It does not matter which way you look at it, a container deposit scheme just makes sense. It leads to less pollution. It means that the iconic Bondi Beach, not to mention every other beach in New South Wales and Australia, could be spared from the 30,000 bottles and cans left behind every year. It can lead to more money for local charities. It can lead to more direct and indirect jobs. It can lead to a direct cost saving for our local councils. I assure all participants in this debate—the environmental organisations, the political parties, the business lobby and, most importantly, the very sensible people of this State who support this policy—that I am working hard to ensure that New South Wales will indeed have a container deposit scheme.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.47 p.m.]: I commend the member for Coogee for raising once again the container deposit scheme—a scheme to which I have given my support. Our Government is trying to come to terms with the logistics of this worthwhile scheme. Last week I awarded Les Dollin—a constituent whom I have spoken about before in this place—a Government community recognition award for the work he does when wandering around the beautiful streets of Kurrajong and the Hawkesbury picking up other people's rubbish. I think it is appalling and a blight on our society that there are people who discard rubbish. We should not need a container deposit scheme because people should take responsibility for their rubbish and dispose of it appropriately.

#### TRIBUTE TO LES MURRAY

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [6.48 p.m.]: This year the world was gripped by World Cup fever when the single biggest sporting event in the world took place in Brazil. This year's football World Cup had, as always, all the excitement and surprises that we have come to expect from the FIFA World Cup. The World Cup witnessed outstanding games, quality goals and ultimately the crowning of Germany as champion—for the fourth time. Our Socceroos raised some eyebrows with their gallant performances against the Netherlands, Spain and Chile. I congratulate our Socceroos on their commitment and passion when playing against formidable opposition.

The World Cup has been broadcast into Australian homes for well over 30 years. What has been a constant in the broadcast of the World Cup on Australian television screens has been the presence of Mr Les Murray. For the past 34 years the football family in Australia has been listening to and watching Les Murray on SBS television. Les is the most recognised voice and face in sports commentary in this country. Les began commentating whilst sitting in the stands watching local football—much to the annoyance of those beside him. Following a stint at the *Sun* as a reporter, Les landed his first gig commentating at SBS. Since calling his first season in 1980 and the National Soccer League Grand Final, Les has been the authority for lovers of football in Australia.

During his time on SBS, Les will be remembered for his on-screen partnership with Captain Socceroo, the late Johnny Warren. It was their common love of football and wide admiration of all things Brazilian that will be long remembered. Les and John's wonderful partnership will never be replicated by any commentator partnership again. Les has been the face of *World Sports*, *On the Ball* and *The World Game*. He was born László Üрге on the outskirts of Budapest in Hungary. Les is a shining example of the Australian migrant success story. He migrated to Australia after the Second World War from war-torn Hungary.

Apart from football, Les is a passionate advocate for the plight of refugees. Les himself is a refugee and very proud of it. Les is tireless in his campaign and support for migrants and emerging communities. It is no wonder so many multicultural communities claim Les as their own. Les has that certain splendour and refinement that makes him loved by all. It is his charm that has captivated audiences for 34 years on SBS. It is his charm that has put football on the map in this country. I cannot imagine what future World Cup telecasts will be like without Les Murray. For the past eight World Cups we have had the privilege of listening to his in-depth knowledge of players from all around the globe. For eight World Cups we have heard him roll off his tongue the names of players without any fuss or drama.

Over the years Les has been the subject of scrutiny over his nationality, so much so that he was immortalised in the song by TISM, *What Nationality is Les Murray?*, which received an ARIA Award. More recently, Vaudeville Smash honoured Les Murray with a role in their song *Zinedine Zidane* in which Les read out names of football players, past and present, in tune with the beat of the music. Les was made a member of the Order of Australia in 2006 for his services to football. It is widely known that Les will continue to contribute to football long after his retirement from commentating. Les is also passionate about ensuring the success of the Johnny Warren Foundation. There will only ever be one Les Murray on our television screens who can say Ronaldo, Rooney, Veron, Suarez, Van Basten, Buffon, Xavi, Iniesta, Drogba, Hazard, Tevez, Schweinsteiger and Gerard without any difficulty. I congratulate Les Murray on an outstanding career. He will be missed by sports lovers right across this country.

### CROYDON RAILWAY STATION

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI** (Strathfield) [6.53 p.m.]: Croydon commuters have much cause for celebration following the announcement by the Minister for Transport last week that Croydon railway station will finally receive its long-awaited major easy access upgrade. The multimillion-dollar project, which will include the installation of three lifts, a new station concourse and stairs from Hennessy Street and Paisley Road, is largely the result of a concerted local campaign to secure better facilities by the Croydon community. As well as providing easy access to the station for the first time, the upgrade will include a boost to security, with new lighting and closed-circuit television.

I pay tribute to the Croydon community and the important role they played in securing the Croydon railway station upgrade. I was always confident that the New South Wales Government would deliver badly needed station improvements at Croydon once the transport Minister was convinced that there was overwhelming community support for the project. The community of Croydon deserve this upgrade. They have fought long and hard to have their claim for better facilities at the station finally recognised by government. I believe the petition I circulated among Croydon residents and commuters whilst doorknocking the area recently was instrumental in getting the go-ahead for the upgrade.

With so many of the stations requiring upgrades following years of neglect under the former Labor Government, Croydon was competing with a number of other worthy projects on the Sydney network. I am proud to be able to say that I am part of a government that delivers on its promises to rail commuters. The Baird Liberal Government is not wasting time, with registrations of interest now open for a contractor to design and construct the upgrade. The community will be given a chance to view designs and plans for the project and, subject to planning approval, construction of the concourse and lifts will begin next year. The announcement follows news of a fast-tracking of the upgrade at Flemington railway station as part of a \$150 million package recently revealed by the transport Minister. The Baird Liberal Government is serious about improving access and facilities at stations throughout the entire Sydney Trains network.

I cannot let this opportunity pass without taking a small swipe at a succession of local Labor Party luminaries who conveniently ignored Croydon commuters for many years whilst in government. A great deal of work needs to be undertaken by this Government if we are to address the backlog of transport infrastructure neglect under Labor. In 2008 the former member for Strathfield was lobbied by the then Burwood mayor about

the possibility of obtaining lift access at Croydon. In her nearly eight years in office nothing happened. The current mayor of Burwood has recently dusted off an old petition he was circulating at the time of the local government elections in 2012 in an attempt to claim the issue as his own.

One month ago, despite his knowing that I was in discussions with Transport for NSW to improve Croydon railway station, on 8 July the *Inner West Courier* reported that Burwood mayor Councillor Faker had criticised the State Government for excluding Croydon from Sydney 'Trains' \$33 million Station Refresh Program. We did not deliver on that program—we delivered something a whole lot better. I now look forward to the good councillor retracting that statement and replacing it with one commending the Baird Liberal Government for its commitment to the people of Croydon. Sadly for the Labor Party, its record in office speaks for itself. The Baird Liberal Government is delivering the station upgrades that Labor would not. What a great moment for the people of the Strathfield electorate. Public transport continues to be a major focus for our community; our Government has listened and our Government has delivered, dramatically and unambiguously.

I have been able to announce, and work is now underway, not one but two major station upgrades—one at Flemington and one at Croydon. The Concord West major upgrade will soon be completed, a major refurbishment of the underground concourse at Strathfield railway station will soon be completed and Burwood railway station is receiving a makeover. If that is not enough, the best transport Minister this State has ever had recently announced the fast-tracking of a number of station upgrades throughout Sydney. Record levels of transport infrastructure investment, the Opal card, additional bus, rail and light rail services—what more could she possibly offer? Perhaps another Harbour Bridge? Perhaps not, but maybe a harbour tunnel? I cannot wait.

### OATLEY ELECTORATE EVENTS

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [6.58 p.m.]: I inform the House of three significant items of news for my electorate. The first is that nominations have opened for the fourth annual St George Community Awards. I encourage community groups and local residents to nominate outstanding local volunteers and organisations for recognition. These awards are a way of saying thank you to the many volunteers and community organisations that work to make our area a better place in which to live. I am proud to be a member of such an active and service-focused community and I am glad to have the opportunity to honour the commitment of those who work very hard for our community.

I encourage everyone to nominate a community leader, a passionate volunteer or an effective organisation for an award. Nomination forms can be obtained from my office at 8 Ormonde Parade, Hurstville, or from my website at [www.markcoure.com.au](http://www.markcoure.com.au). Nominations will be open until 5.00 p.m. on Friday 12 September. The awards, to be held in October, are open to any individual or community group that lives in the St George area or works for a St George-based community organisation. I am pleased that the Premier has agreed to be the guest of honour at this year's awards.

The New South Wales Government is focused on encouraging community involvement and aims to increase the number of people involved in community organisations who volunteer on a regular basis. I am looking forward to presenting the fourth annual St George Community Awards, along with the Premier and other community leaders, on 9 October. Over the years hundreds of people have attended our local community awards. Last year we were honoured to have the Governor, Marie Bashir; in 2012 we had Andrew Scipione, the Commissioner of Police; in 2011—the first year of the awards—we had the then Premier, the member for Ku-ring-gai. Last year more than 600 people attended our local community awards, which are an outstanding event.

I inform the House that plans for major accessibility improvements at Oatley station are one step closer, with a tender to deliver the work released only recently. The project is being delivered as part of the New South Wales Government's \$770 million Transport Access Program, which is an initiative to deliver modern, safe, accessible transport infrastructure where it is needed most. The improvements planned for Oatley station will ensure that locals, including people with disabilities, the elderly, passengers with prams and strollers—I am one of them, having a son who arrived only five months ago—people with luggage and young people can easily access public transport. The proposed designs include a pedestrian footbridge with lifts to include a link to the new station forecourts on Oatley Parade and Mulga Road and the existing station platforms, as well as footpath upgrades, additional cycle storage facilities and landscaping.

The New South Wales Government is wasting no time in delivering this important upgrade. Last month calls for tenders were delivered, which will ensure that a construction contract can be awarded later this year.

Recently the community was invited to review plans for the project and provide feedback—that was earlier in the year. I thank everyone who has taken an interest in this project so far. All the feedback, which has been most positive, is being reviewed. Some changes to the design are being considered, subject to approvals which are happening soon. This week work started on Douglas Cross Gardens. The work will include removing the existing bus shelter on Oatley Parade and installing a temporary one nearby. We aim to complete the work as quickly as possible. It is great that the Government is getting on with the job of upgrading Oatley station. I have been campaigning for that for more than 10 years.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**Pursuant to sessional order matter of public importance proceeded with.**

**NSW CARERS STRATEGY**

**Matter of Public Importance**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [7.03 p.m.]: Tonight I pay tribute to carers, who are truly the unsung heroes of all our communities, playing a vital role in looking after those most in need. Almost every Australian at some point will have some family member caring responsibilities. There are about 2.6 million carers throughout Australia at the moment. The dollar value that is put on their collective effort is about \$40 billion per annum. Unpaid care is critical to the sustainability of health and community service systems, and it is estimated that it would cost about \$40 billion to replace the hours of care provided by unpaid carers in Australia. That figure is only a fraction of the contribution that carers make in our community. We know that we cannot put a dollar figure on the tremendous work they do.

It is important to recognise that about 300,000 younger carers below the age of 24 have family caring responsibilities. They often have to juggle work, study and their caring responsibilities; inevitably something often gives, and more often than not it will be their study. That is why tonight I want to ensure that the Government hears about the need to provide support to young people in particular as they go through that challenging period of their lives. In New South Wales alone one in 10 people—about 850,000 people—are looking after a family member or a friend who has a disability, mental illness, a chronic health condition or is frail aged. Often carers do not see themselves as carers. They think, "I'm just being a husband", "I'm being a wife", "I'm being a brother", "I'm being a son" or "I'm being a daughter".

But tonight we must recognise them for the enormous contribution they make to our community. We need to do more than simply recognise them; we need to provide them with support so that they can continue their great work. There is research that shows that carers have much worse health and wellbeing than other demographic groups. So improving support for carers should concern the entire community. Indeed, it should concern every member of this Parliament. That is why the New South Wales Government's vision for the more than 857,000 carers in New South Wales is that they are supported to participate fully in their own social and economic life. We want them to be healthy and to live well.

That is why, last week, the New South Wales Government officially launched the New South Wales Carers Strategy, which is set to benefit carers across our State. The strategy is a five-year plan to improve the position of carers in New South Wales. The strategy will be implemented by government and non-government agencies, and private businesses in new partnerships designed to deliver better services and support for carers. The NSW Carers Strategy is a collaboration between the community and government and puts in place initiatives and programs to support our State's carers. When the member for Manly was elected to the role of Premier he said that a hallmark of this Government would be its commitment to protect and support vulnerable members of society and, of course, carers. Throughout the extensive consultation process the Government listened, and the strategy is the result of what the carers said they needed most.

More than 2,500 people contributed to the feedback and participated in workshops to collaborate and deliver on the strategy. The Government wants to ensure that we are hearing the real voices of carers and provide the supports identified by them in the strategy. We did not want the strategy to be a creation of government, of the bureaucracy. We wanted carers to tell us what they needed, not what we considered they needed. They know their needs. As an example, we are supporting our young carers by developing a young carers app, which is being developed by young carers themselves. This shared agenda will be implemented across government in partnership with the community, the private sector and non-government organisations. The Government is focused on delivering a strategy that promotes social inclusion, improves the status of carers and provides opportunities for them to lead fulfilling lives.

I am often humbled by the compassion and commitment shown every day by the people who deliver care and support to those in our society who most need it. Every day in my community I see examples of the outstanding work that carers do, providing the most vulnerable in our community with the support they need, whether it be caring for people living with a disability, those living with a mental illness, those who need respite, or those who are frail aged. Carers do a remarkable job, and it is fitting that this Parliament recognises their work tonight.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [7.08 p.m.]: I support the matter of public importance brought forward by the member for Hornsby regarding carers. I support the member's words, which were heartfelt. There are many different experiences of care, whether individually, personally with families or as a collective of 93 members in this Chamber. One does not need to be a member of Parliament to realise what happens in a carer's household. Personally I have experienced the great things that carers do through the work done by my family to care for my sick grandfather in the mid 1990s. I will never forget the experience because it followed the shocking and sudden death of my grandmother, who was a well lady and cared for my grandfather. So one can imagine that in 1989 it was a massive shock to the system for the entire family.

Suddenly we had to care for my grandfather. The family had to unite and pull together to ensure that my grandfather was okay. During times like that everyone bands together. It is not only families who are caring for the sick, the disabled, the frail aged, a loved one suffering from mental issues, or neighbours who do not have immediate family. We hear instances in our communities and electorates about neighbours and friends chipping in. That is fantastic. The experience taught my family about uniting together and looking after my grandfather. Years later in my married life with my wife, Melissa, we witnessed her paternal and maternal grandparents coming under the care of uncles and aunts.

We know that workers are caring for their partners, children and grandchildren and on top of that looking after individuals who require special care. Carers are amazing people who do wonderful things. Carers are great jugglers. I have witnessed the experiences of my family and now as the elected representative for Fairfield I have seen the wonderful work done by its Spanish community every year during Carers Week. They bring carers to the Barber Street Community Centre to get together and celebrate. Very often carers do not get the accolades that they deserve. They do not seek accolades but they rarely get a pat on the back. They get immersed in their job because they care and love.

I am sure all members of Parliament, particularly on this side of the Chamber, welcome the Carers Strategy, highlighted by the member for Hornsby. Carers need support, as was highlighted this year with a fundraiser by the Co.As.It Italian Gala Dinner, particularly for non-English speaking communities. Co.As.It is developing programs for carers within the Italian community, which is fantastic. I refer also to a great gentleman and champion in my electorate, Mr Brian Attard of Guildford. Last year he was nominated for the New South Wales Carer of the Year Award. Following the death of his wife in 1988 Mr Attard had to retire from work to look after his son, Gary. He not only looked after his son but also other individuals within the community. He used his own vehicle as a shuttle bus for other carers and people who were unwell. Carers in our communities do amazing things and it is great to highlight the great work that Brian Attard of Guildford, a constituent of mine, has been doing since 1988. He is a true gentleman and the accolades for his nomination last year were justly deserved.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [7.13 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the matter of public importance that was introduced by the member for Hornsby. I also acknowledge the contribution of the member for Fairfield. I am proud to be part of a government that last week launched the NSW Carers Strategy, endorsed by the Minister for Ageing, the Hon. John Ajaka, which demonstrated the Government's commitment to ensuring that carers of all ages and backgrounds are supported. The strategy identifies some very practical steps to support carers right across this State, including in my electorate of Port Macquarie.

In early April Minister Ajaka visited the Port Macquarie electorate and his genuine compassion and honesty meant he spent a considerable amount of time during that day talking to local carers. The Minister joined with me to meet the Port Macquarie Carers Group, convened by Dawn Davies who is employed by a local disability service provider, ACES, and who is herself a carer. She and I shared a belief that the Minister should hear firsthand from carers who were facing challenges in their everyday lives. The Port Macquarie Carers Group is made up of people from all walks of life who care for someone and most have family members involved in the programs at ACES. The carers group originated in response to the realisation that carers in our region were isolated, disempowered and had poor quality of life and health expectations. The group started in 2006 and monthly meetings are held at the Port Macquarie Neighbourhood Centre.

One of the recent highlights and real milestones of the group was the launch of the Carer Profile Project which I launched during Carers Week last year. The idea for the project originated from local carer Jan Dennis who could see the benefits of compiling a collection of carer profiles that were honest, concise and heartfelt. She believed the project could be used to raise awareness about the challenges carers face. When I launched the book I spoke of the importance of acknowledging the dedication and commitment of carers. They play an important role not only in the lives of individuals but also throughout the community. Erica Lake coordinated the project, supported by Dawn and Jan. I conclude with an excerpt from the book of Peg's story; she has been a carer for nearly 50 years. Peg is a widow and the sole carer for her daughter, Leigh, who lives with her in a retirement village. When asked of the three things she wished for she said:

- 1 I wish I could have some life of my own. At 83 I wish I could stop, just do what suits me and be relieved of the constant responsibility and worry of caring. I am tired.
- 2 I wish that Leigh had a very special friend—girl or boy. She is friendly and engages at her own level with people. I have found that 'normal' people are not interested in friendships with people with an intellectual disability.
- 3 I wish there was a service that was adequately resourced to support Leigh in a comprehensive way—not only in providing accommodation, but also providing support with assistance in day to day living and monitoring medical, psychological and social health.

I thank all those who contributed to the Carer Profile Project, which was an excellent initiative and one that will be well sourced throughout our community and more broadly. I look forward to presenting a copy of the 2014 version to the Minister.

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [7.16 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Fairfield for their very heartfelt and sincere contributions to acknowledge the important role played by carers in New South Wales. The importance of acknowledging the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Fairfield is that regardless of our politics, which part of New South Wales we come from, our gender, religion or whatever we all agree that carers play a vital role in making this such a great State. Talking about the contributions of carers to our way of life in New South Wales is above politics. I am so pleased that politics can be put aside so that we can put systems, processes, support and structures in place to make sure that carers, who contribute so much that a dollar value cannot be placed on it, have what they need.

The Carers Strategy is just a start and more needs to be done. It puts a plan in place to look after carers. We need to deliver on that plan, and I ask that all members of this House work together to provide the support and recognition that carers so thoroughly deserve. Every day of the week in Hornsby I see examples of carers contributing to our community. For example, Studio Artes cares for people with disabilities. Recently at Hornsby Hospital I saw the work of the Pink Ladies who give up their time to volunteer to look after people in hospital doing it tough. The Pink Ladies wash the hair of patients or take them books and are an example of what is best in my community and communities across New South Wales.

On a Sunday I often see people from the Catholic Care Services bus at mass. Catholic Care Services pick up and take the frail to church not only for them to worship their God but also as a social outlet for them. Carers play a vital role. Mary Perrottet, an aunt of a member of Parliament, is one of my constituents. Mary never had children of her own but she had so many children and friends who looked to her as a mother or a guiding figure. Recently she called me about another constituent who needed to be looked after and whom she is looking out for. She is a carer in my community who does so much and represents so many people who care for others in our community. I acknowledge Mary and all those carers in my community of Hornsby and indeed in communities right across the State who make this such a great State.

**Discussion concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.19 p.m. until  
Wednesday 13 August 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

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