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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 11 September 2014

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the House, currently seated in the Speaker's Gallery, Mr Guido Stock, Consul-General and Trade Commissioner for Austria; accompanied by Dr Karl Hartleb, Head of International Markets; and Dr Christiane Zwettler, Head of Resources, Advantage Austria.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

[During the giving of notices of motions.]

The SPEAKER: Order! I caution the member for Bankstown about the length of her notice of motion. I issued a similar warning yesterday. Whilst we do not have a long line-up of members wanting to give notices of motion today, I caution the member on the length of that motion.

DRUG COURT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

PASSENGER TRANSPORT BILL 2014

WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2014

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

ANIMAL WELFARE (POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAMS) BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Alex Greenwich, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.08 a.m.] I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

At the outset, I welcome the many people who are in the public gallery for the introduction of the Animal Welfare (Population Control Programs) Bill 2014 this morning. I thank councils across New South Wales and a number of other organisations for their help in preparing this legislation. The Animal Welfare (Population Control Programs) Bill will ensure that trap-neuter-return [TNR] and management programs are lawful. During my speech I will refer to these programs as TNR programs, as they are widely known; however, they can also be called trap-desex-return or capture-desex-return programs.

TNR programs primarily involve desexing a large proportion of a specific population of un-owned, stray, feral or pest animals and returning them to the place where they were found. The animals can no longer produce new offspring. This helps to stabilise the population and potentially reduces it through natural attrition. Animals are also given veterinary treatment before being returned—such as vaccination, deworming and flea treatment—and those animals that can be are rehomed. For the program to work, new animals that join the group need to be desexed. Generally TNR programs are carried out on urban cat colonies.

Cats are provided with food and water, monitored for any need for veterinary care and can be provided with shelter. TNR programs are also increasingly being used to control rabbit populations and there is interest in trialling programs on other introduced species. TNR programs exist around the world, particularly in the United States, as a humane alternative to euthanasia, which often involves cruel methods, such as baiting, that cause slow and painful deaths and can kill other non-target animals. A number of TNR programs are being run in Australia by volunteers.

In Sydney the volunteer non-profit organisation the Campus Cat Coalition manages a population of homeless cats and kittens living on University of New South Wales property. The coalition comprises staff, students, residents and community volunteers. Cats and kittens are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, vaccinated and either rehomed or returned back onto campus territory, where they are fed and monitored. Before the coalition began I understand the colony was rapidly expanding, but since implementing the program the population has stabilised. TNR programs are also run at Callan Park, in Marrickville and across the metropolitan area. The University of Victoria has entered into a pilot project agreement for a long-term management plan for a feral rabbit population on campus.

While the Campus Cat Coalition has been able to avoid potential breaches of the law by registering the university as the cats' owner, other programs are in legal limbo because releasing an animal could constitute abandoning that animal under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979. It could also breach the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, which makes it an offence to liberate a non-native animal anywhere in New South Wales without a licence. The Animal Welfare (Population Control Programs) Bill 2014 would make the release of animals under a TNR program lawful if the program is sponsored by the Animal Welfare League, RSPCA New South Wales, the council, or the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in the case of a national park. If the program is for a declared pest—such as a rabbit, feral pig or fox—the sponsor organisation must notify the Local Land Services. If the program is being undertaken outside the Sydney metropolitan area the Minister will have to approve the program and allow for it in a pest control order.

Under the bill a program must provide primarily for the capturing, desexing and returning of the animals but the bill also recognises the other management activities that programs provide, including veterinary care, food and microchipping. A number of international studies have demonstrated success with TNR in reducing the size of cat and rabbit colonies, and TNR has gained official approval from the RSPCA UK. The International Society of Feline Medicine Guidelines on Population Management and Welfare of Unowned Domestic Cats published in the *Journal of Feline Medicine* on 21 August 2013 confirms that TNR programs are a well-documented, researched and effective method of population management. It states:

A stable group of neutered cats may help limit others from entering the area, and can be managed successfully to avoid reproduction and nuisance behaviour.

By contrast, the International Society of Feline Medicine says culling is effective only in isolated environments, such as small islands, but in most situations the void attracts other cats that will potentially be more problematic and less tolerant of humans. I have consulted with councils on my bill and many welcome it, particularly those councils that work with community groups running TNR programs. Some councils have stated that they do not intend to sponsor a TNR program because they believe baiting animals is a more cost-effective or efficient way to manage introduced species. Those councils will continue to be able to do this under my bill because it does not force any council or organisation to sponsor a TNR program; it only empowers them to do so if they choose. Councils will continue to be able to use whatever form of feral, stray or pest reduction program they currently use under existing laws. The bill in no way proposes to replace current pest management programs with TNR.

There is some concern that TNR promotes the release of introduced species into the wild. It does not. Undesexed animals are merely returned to their home environment after being desexed. The animal was already there but under a TNR program it will be prevented from breeding. TNR programs occur now and this bill merely provides them with a legal framework and clarity. It is not groundbreaking and will not replace or interfere with any existing species controls. TNR programs are humane and therefore volunteers who would never engage in animal destruction programs willingly run TNR programs that assist with stabilising and reducing the populations of introduced species. TNR does not increase the number of introduced species in an area but it increases the proportion of those that are desexed. I repeat that the unowned, feral, stray and pest animals released under a TNR program would have been in the wild anyway. The only difference is that under a TNR program they will be desexed and not produce further offspring. It is important to remind members that an undesexed female cat and her offspring can produce 420,000 cats in seven years. TNR programs can help break this cycle.

TNR is likely to decrease population sizes and therefore have a beneficial effect on the ecosystem. But even if it is incorrect to say that TNR is effective in decreasing population sizes, it certainly cannot increase them and so the ecosystem would be no worse off than it otherwise would have been. Because TNR is likely to be carried out by animal welfarists who would not otherwise use lethal methods of population control TNR would only occur in addition to, not as substitution for, those other methods. The bill includes safeguards that prevent TNR programs in national parks without sponsorship from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. If the State Government has declared that an introduced species is a pest a TNR program for that pest could only occur outside the metropolitan Sydney area with the approval of the Minister.

The bill introduces annual reporting requirements for TNR programs that will be publicly available. Annual reports will need to identify the number of animals desexed and released, rehomed, treated, euthanased and microchipped and, where it is reasonably practicable, population estimates at the beginning and end of the financial year. This will enable us to gather data on programs and compare TNR with other population control methods. TNR programs have strong community support because they are humane and do not involve cruel destruction methods. TNR programs could help stabilise populations through a reduction in breeding. This bill facilitates population control particularly in metropolitan areas and will complement existing measures taken by councils. TNR programs should be able to operate lawfully. I thank everyone in the gallery today for attending. I look forward to working with members to pass this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

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

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

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 29 May 2014.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [10.17 a.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Cabramatta, North Shore, Mount Druitt, Macquarie Fields, Shellharbour, Cessnock, Wallsend, Fairfield, Keira, Heffron and Bankstown for their contributions to debate on this important legislation that seeks to ensure free access to emergency rooms in New South Wales public hospitals. It is extremely disappointing that the Government has indicated that it will vote against the Health Services Amendment (Guaranteeing Free Public Hospital Services) Bill 2014 today, although it is hardly surprising given its track record on this issue.

Labor is the party of Medicare. We pride ourselves on delivering policies that help all Australians, regardless of their income or background. Medicare was established on the principle that all Australians should have equal access to health care but Tony Abbott is destroying Medicare. Visits to the general practitioner [GP] that were previously bulk-billed and therefore free will now cost \$7. This tax will also be charged to out-of-hospital pathology and imaging services. With one fell swoop, our universal system of health care is gone. The \$7 tax will not only be felt at GP clinics. It will increase the pressure on our already overburdened public hospitals as people seek treatment in free emergency departments instead of paying the co-payment. Not only is Tony Abbott introducing a GP tax, he is also allowing States and Territories to charge patients for GP-equivalent visits to emergency departments. This will end the possibility of free health care throughout our healthcare system.

Suddenly, cash-strapped families might be forced to stay home instead of going to the emergency department. A parent whose child gets sick in the middle of the night should not have to think twice about whether they can afford to go to the emergency department. If a person is experiencing chest pains, they should not have to think twice about whether they can afford to go to the emergency department. If a person is worried about an elderly relative, they should not have to think twice about whether they can afford to go to the emergency department. This concept is completely unacceptable to the Labor Party—the party of Medicare. How has the Premier responded to the end of free health care in this State? For starters, he has refused to condemn the Abbott Government's GP tax. In Parliament he initially ruled out introducing any charges for patients who attend hospital emergency departments. Just days later he said:

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

The fact is that the Premier simply has not stood up to Tony Abbott on this issue in the same way as he has not stood up to Tony Abbott's \$25 billion worth of cuts to health and education in New South Wales. As a result, \$1.2 billion will be cut from New South Wales hospitals over the next four years alone. This comes on top of the \$3 billion that has already been ripped out of our health system by this Government. Since I introduced this bill in May the Government has delivered a budget that fails to reverse three years of Liberal neglect of our public hospitals. The budget falls more than \$500 million short of what the Australian Medical Association has warned is necessary to keep the New South Wales health system going. The Government cannot make up for the shortfall by introducing fees in hospital emergency rooms.

If the Premier is serious about keeping free emergency room treatment in New South Wales hospitals, the Government will support this bill. If the Premier is serious about standing up to Tony Abbott and his \$1.2 billion in cuts over the next four years, the Government will support this bill. Today the Government has the chance to do the right thing: to show the people of New South Wales that free access to hospital rooms in this State is guaranteed and to show the people of New South Wales that no matter who they are—young, old, wealthy, poor—the hospital emergency room is open to them at any time of day, free of charge. This is a chance for the Premier to stand up to Tony Abbott. Equal access to health care is a fundamental right that must be protected. Today the Government has the opportunity to protect it. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Division called for and, pursuant to sessional order, deferred.

TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT (FEES) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 14 August 2014.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.24 a.m.]: The Government opposes the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014. It is a clear indication of Labor's failed position on vocational education and training [VET]. New South Wales Labor wants a TAFE and training system that is inflexible and stuck in the past. Labor has shown that it does not want our training system to continue to evolve to meet industry and community needs. New South Wales Labor wants to undermine TAFE NSW's future financial viability and is willing to put at risk hundreds of millions of dollars from the Commonwealth. The New South Wales Government opposes this bill because, if it were passed, it would reverse the growth of skills in New South Wales to support the ongoing strength of the State's economy. The Government strongly opposes this bill because, to put it simply, it takes TAFE backwards whereas Smart and Skilled supports TAFE moving forward.

We support TAFE continuing to evolve as a modern organisation with a clear focus on industry, students and the community as well as a focus on flexibility, responsiveness and competitiveness. The New South Wales Government supports TAFE moving ahead. We back the new TAFE. Our VET reforms, Smart and Skilled, have been carefully designed to support the Government's goal of making New South Wales the number one State, and to increase employment and productivity. Those reforms have been clearly and comprehensively explained to industry and the community. They are well advanced and widely accepted and anticipated. Critically, the reforms are being progressively staged and carefully reviewed as they are implemented. Smart and Skilled does not undermine our training system; instead, it provides new flexibility and choice within the system. Specifically, it changes the way in which we allocate public funding. From 1 January, eligible students will be provided with an entitlement for approved training. Students will be able to access training across a broad range of approved quality training providers for training programs that lead to employment. Having an entitlement puts students in the driving seat. Labor does not want students to have a say in their future.

In direct contrast with that, the New South Wales Government wants to give students advice—advice that has been backed by consultation with industry and business—through the release of our Skills List, which is a list of courses that would have higher chances of leading students to a job. There will be strict controls to ensure that public funding is not wasted on low-quality training or on training that does not lead to jobs. Students without prior qualifications are a priority for entitlement so that we can increase participation in education and training. Last year the TAFE Commission's board undertook a statewide consultation about TAFE NSW, Let's Talk About TAFE, to find out what people think about TAFE and what they expect of it. The

survey was conducted by Newspoll and found that 97 per cent of people recognised TAFE and that 94 per cent of people say that TAFE NSW makes a valuable contribution to training people for business and industry. But it also found that TAFE needs to change to stay relevant and responsive in an ever-changing world and in the international market for education and training of which New South Wales is part.

The New South Wales Government is giving TAFE institutes more autonomy to manage their finances, assets and workforces and to respond to business opportunities so that they can strengthen their commercial capability and be less dependent on government funding. Those reforms will allow every institute to be more nimble and to meet the challenges of the changing economy and contemporary workplaces by tailoring their training delivery to meet the needs of students, industry and the community. This flexibility has been embraced by students, with approximately 42 per cent of TAFE training now being delivered outside the traditional classroom setting.

Labor's bill does not support the new TAFE. That means Labor does not support the new TAFE. The New South Wales Government does support the new TAFE and wants TAFE to continue to be a flexible, nimble, responsive, more autonomous business that is less dependent on government funding. TAFE has shown its ability to be competitive in numerous ways, including on the international stage. In early September Premier Mike Baird attended the signing of two historic agreements between TAFE NSW and China. This Government believes in enabling TAFE to be competitive on a national and international stage as well as locally.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Wollongong will come to order.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: The bill would also undermine TAFE NSW's financial viability. TAFE NSW has received a separate budget for 2014-15 which includes a component based on the introduction of entitlements under Smart and Skilled. TAFE institutes have submitted their tenders, as have other registered training organisations, based on their analysis of Smart and Skilled prices. TAFE institutes are also making decisions about where they offer programs, and how they offer them, and are looking at new ways of delivering such as online and workplace delivery. We support our TAFE institutes in making these responsible decisions. TAFE simply cannot afford to run every program in every location in the same way, just because that is what has happened in the past. Our students expect more customer-focused options in how programs are delivered.

This bill would force institutes to cross-subsidise to compensate for reduced revenue, or seek significant additional funding from the New South Wales Government. Let us talk about the additional government money that TAFE would have to find if this bill were enacted. Of course, those on the Opposition benches have not publicly stated from where they will get the additional money. They have not nominated where across government they would cut funding, they have not told us what taxes they will increase, and they have not told us what jobs are at risk. That is a classic Labor Opposition tactic—full of grandiose statements that do not require one iota of responsibility. If they want to keep TAFE fees lower than they otherwise would have been, this lot opposite have to tell us where the money will come from. What TAFE courses will they cut? By how many will they reduce the number of students to pay for their unfunded proposal? Those opposite are determined to lock TAFE in the past. Thankfully, they are no longer on the government benches. Our Government will slowly, carefully and cautiously introduce our vocational education and training reforms backing the new TAFE.

New South Wales Labor is putting hundreds of millions of dollars for that training in jeopardy. This bill puts at risk significant Commonwealth National Partnership payments—more than \$400 million over the next three years. These Commonwealth payments flow from the National Partnership on Skills Reform which this State signed, and which unequivocally requires the introduction of a student entitlement and for the Government to ensure that key targets are met. With whom did the New South Wales Government sign this national partnership? Was it with that nasty Mr Abbott, or that nasty Mr Pyne? No, it was with the Gillard Labor Government. The member for Wollongong and others opposite now want to endanger that funding and endanger our national partnership with the former Gillard Labor Government. They want New South Wales to welsh on that deal and sidestep the requirement to introduce a proper entitlement and consequently fail to meet the Commonwealth set training targets. No wonder this State was in a financial mess when we came to government. I remind members that this Government is committed to national competition policy, which requires governments to promote competition.

This bill, if passed, proposes differential student pricing for government subsidised vocational education and training in New South Wales. It is contrary to the fairness and choice proposal under Smart and

Skilled and would put national partnership funding at risk. The bill would add additional and unnecessary complexity to the pricing system for 2015 and add more uncertainty and confusion for training providers and students. By freezing TAFE fees at the 2014 level, the bill would negate the benefit under Smart and Skilled of charging a fee for the whole qualification, under which standard students pay the same fee regardless of the time taken to complete it. The bill would lead to the loss of millions in TAFE fee income over the forward estimates. It would reverse the direction of reforms, lock in our dependence on State government revenue and undermine the development of a competitive training market.

In conclusion, Labor is determined for TAFE to be inflexible, unresponsive, inefficient and stuck in the past. Government members are committed to TAFE evolving positively into the future. Labor wants TAFE to keep putting on courses for stenographers and switchboard operators. Labor fails to understand that TAFE needs to train people for current skill needs in contemporary ways. This Labor bill inhibits growth of essential skills in New South Wales. Labor wants to lock TAFE in the past, and it wants to subject it to training paralysis. We oppose this short-sighted, politically motivated bill.

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

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

Second Reading

[Deferred division.]

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The House will now proceed with the deferred division on the question: That this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided.

Ayes, 23

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

Noes, 47

Mr Anderson	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Roberts
Mr Aplin	Mr Hartcher	Mr Rohan
Mr Ayres	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Sage
Mr Baird	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bassett	Mr Holstein	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mr Issa	Mr Souris
Ms Berejikian	Mr Kean	Mr Speakman
Mr Bromhead	Dr Lee	Mr Spence
Mr Brookes	Mr Maguire	Mr Stokes
Mr Dominello	Mr Marshall	Mr Stoner
Mr Doyle	Mr O'Dea	Mr Ward
Mr Edwards	Mr O'Farrell	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Evans	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Gee	Ms Parker	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Gibbons	Mr Perrottet	Mr Patterson
Ms Goward	Mr Provost	Mr J. D. Williams

Pair

Mr Rees

Mrs Skinner

Question resolved in the negative.**Motion negatived.****TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT (FEES) BILL 2014****Second Reading****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [10.43 a.m.]: On behalf of the Government, I oppose the Opposition's Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014—the non-government bill introduced by the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson. We need to ensure that TAFE stays competitive and at the forefront of vocational education and training for apprenticeships and traineeships and providing pathways for those looking to upskill, gain employment or change direction. In this modern day of registered training organisations offering so much more than they did five, 10 and 15 years ago, we need to ensure that our TAFEs meet those needs, market demands and the expectations not only for people looking to upskill or change career, but also for employers to ensure their needs are met in current times.

The New England Institute has achieved much over the last couple of years. Those opposite are saying TAFE is being decimated and that by not making sure TAFE is relevant ensures it remains behind the eight ball. That is where TAFE was for so long. Under Labor, TAFEs were going broke because they were not meeting the needs of the community or keeping up with demand. In recent years Tamworth has received significant investment in the vicinity of \$6.6 million in the 2014-15 State budget for the TAFE campus upgrade. I value the vital role of TAFE in providing vocational education and training. Our world-class training system delivers critical skills to our community. The \$6.6 million is part of the continuing upgrade of the campus, with the second instalment seeing the upgrade of community services, health, plumbing and disability services.

This continued investment will ensure that TAFE continues to provide the very best training through excellent professional teachers and high-quality facilities. That is the edge our TAFEs have across New South Wales. We have the facilities already in hospitality, heavy machinery, hair and beauty, and many other courses for which people are looking. We have also the professional teachers to deliver those services. With Smart and Skilled I am confident in the ability of TAFE to thrive in a competitive environment and to continue to deliver high-quality services. The Tamworth campus has been at the forefront of planning for the Smart and Skilled reforms and its preparedness no doubt will set it up for the future.

Smart and Skilled will give people the chance to gain the skills they need to get a job and advance their careers. It will deliver quality training to meet the needs of students, employers and communities in our regions. The Tamworth campus and the New England Institute are making sure they are leading the way in providing high-quality responsive training that meets the unique demands across our region and campuses. Other investments in the New England north-west region, in particular the New England Institute, in the 2014-15 budget include the delivery of an extra \$2.1 million for the new Indigenous learning centre located in Tamworth.

The Aboriginal Education and Training Unit [AETU] develops courses that are culturally, vocationally and educationally appropriate for Aboriginal people. Where possible, the courses are taught by Aboriginal teachers, especially the cultural modules. The AETU develops courses to improve educational outcomes and employment opportunities for Aboriginal communities. It offers flexible learning options with some courses being delivered off-campus in our local communities. The key to being flexible is in delivering courses our community wants when it wants—full time, part time, on campus and online for certificates I, II, III or IV, diploma, advanced diploma or graduate diploma.

We are delivering services through Smart and Skilled reform at 11 of the New England Institute campuses including Armidale, Boggabilla, Coonabarabran, Glen Innes, Gunnedah, Inverell, Moree, Narrabri, Quirindi, Tamworth and Tenterfield. This Government is working with communities and employers to provide the best opportunities for those who want to advance themselves. We have the best teachers available across the 11 campuses that comprise the New England Institute. We welcome the capable Lyn Rickard as director of the

New England Institute. Lyn, who has worked at the institute for some time, brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience from working with teachers, directorates and administration and will position the institute at the forefront as a competitive and registered training organisation.

I fully support the TAFEs in the New England Institute and across New South Wales. Not everybody wants to go to university and not everybody has an opportunity to do so. I did not go to university but I would have appreciated an opportunity to go to TAFE, given the wide variety of courses that are offered. Some of the courses include hair and beauty, Food Handling, Working in Confined Spaces, Working Safely at Heights, such as on elevated platforms, Hospitality, Responsible Service of Alcohol and heavy vehicle driver training. TAFE is starting to explore another area, in particular, at the New England Institute, and is delivering the Drought Reach program. The drought is biting hard where I live and farmers are suffering from the continuing drought conditions they are experiencing.

The Drought Reach program will provide training in drought supportive practices and resource management techniques to the people of the New England region. The program is jointly supported by State Training Services and Rural Skills Australia. Greg Paskey, regional manager of State Training Services, is in tune with what is happening in and around our communities. He is pushing the boundaries to ensure that our apprentices and trainees are offered the best possible opportunities. He is connecting them with the appropriate employers to get them into the workforce so they can eventually make a valuable contribution to our economy. I commend Greg Paskey for the great work that he does.

Participants in the program complete a diploma in agriculture and explore farm diversification, financial management and business skills. They graduate with a diploma in agriculture with a potential pathway into the Bachelor of Agrifood Systems at the University of New England. Currently 59 students are enrolled in the Drought Reach program, which shows the value of and the need for a program that is being delivered by TAFE NSW through the New England Institute. This outdated Opposition bill does not represent what our communities want or need. It does not match what our communities expect in the current vocational education and training environment. I encourage Labor to stop bagging TAFE, to get behind our educational institutions and teachers, to get behind this Government and to value TAFE for delivering real services to those who need it most.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [10.53 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak in debate on the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014. I cannot believe that Government members seem to believe students are happy with what they are studying at TAFE. According to Government members, not one person is whinging about what the Government is doing to TAFE, which is phenomenal. We are told that students are cheering on the streets and they are saying, "We love Smart and Skilled", which is phenomenal. In what world are Government members living? They do not have a clue. I love it when Government members get their scripts from Treasury. I assure members they are not getting them from the Minister for Education. With their Treasury notes in their hands they are saying, "We cannot afford this, we cannot afford that and we cannot do this", which is phenomenal and I love it.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members will cease interjecting. I am having trouble hearing the member for Keira.

Mr RYAN PARK: When I visit TAFEs around New South Wales the first thing they say to me is, "Ryan, we love Smart and Skilled. We think it is absolutely fantastic. What are you doing here?" I am surprised and shocked at how passionate they are about TAFE fees increasing from \$800 to \$8,000.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Mr Deputy-Speaker—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order!

Mr RYAN PARK: It is phenomenal to see how pleased they are that 1,100 TAFE teachers have lost their jobs. They are marching in the streets.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Does the member for Tamworth wish to take a point of order?

Mr Kevin Anderson: Yes, I do Mr Deputy-Speaker. The member for Keira said we went to Treasury for our notes when we did not. The notes to which I referred were from the New England Institute, which I can table.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: That is a fair criticism. What the member for Tamworth said about TAFE might have come from the institute but that does not reflect the concerns of communities in regional and rural New South Wales. As I said earlier, they are ecstatic as TAFE fees have quadrupled. They are happy that 1,100 teachers have lost their jobs, which is fantastic. Surprisingly, they are extremely pleased about a disability loading of 15 per cent, which everyone says will not be enough to support people with a disability. They are also happy that the Government's figures reflect massive drops in TAFE enrolments for people with a disability and able-bodied people. I was also surprised to hear that they are extremely happy with support services. Anyone involved in education would understand that and I am sure Government members also understand that.

Mr Guy Zangari: No, they don't.

Mr RYAN PARK: Government members spent three weeks debating one issue so they understand a bit about libraries.

Mr Guy Zangari: The Library Amendment Bill.

Mr RYAN PARK: The Library Amendment Bill was debated for three weeks. Opposition members see them at the odd educational institution but libraries are no longer part of the education equation; they are extras.

Ms Noreen Hay: A bonus.

Mr RYAN PARK: That is right, library is a bonus.

Mr Guy Zangari: It is like value-adding.

Mr RYAN PARK: It is like a mechanic with a toolset. It is an added extra; you get it or you do not. They are ecstatic about losing that. They are also very ecstatic about losing counsellors, surprisingly so.

Mr John Williams: Point of order: I am well aware of the constant confusion of the member for Keira.

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

Mr John Williams: The leader of the member's party introduced this bill. The member is now talking about libraries, which is not relevant to the debate. The member should be directed to return to the leave of the bill. He needs to declare whether or not he supports the bill, because he is speaking to the wrong people. No-one likes this.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Murray-Darling will resume his seat.

Mr RYAN PARK: The Colgate representative is out the front. One thing that people such as the member for Wollongong, the member for Fairfield, the member for Cabramatta and I understand is access to quality vocational education. It is the men and women on this side of the Chamber and the communities we represent who understand more than most that not everyone can go to university, not everyone wants to go to university and not everyone needs to go to university, but Labor knows the importance of providing a quality, second-chance vocational education system. I am very proud of a bill that will ensure that fees for people right across New South Wales, regardless of their postcode, are affordable and will make TAFE accessible for all.

During the recent budget estimates hearing my colleagues from the other place asked the Minister for Education some questions on my behalf about Smart and Skilled. One of the key questions was: What educational research informs Smart and Skilled? That reasonable question could not be answered other than that it was economically driven by the men and women in Treasury, and the men and women who want to make sure that affordable, accessible education is not available to everyone in this State. The men and women of the New South Wales Labor Party, under the leadership of John Robertson, will stand beside the thousands of teachers whose jobs are threatened and the thousands of TAFE students who will no longer be able to afford or have access to training. Importantly, the New South Wales Labor Party will stand up for the next generation of students who want to be educated in world-class facilities.

We want them to have the same opportunities as we and our community members had. We want to make sure, particularly in regional areas like the Illawarra and areas of high unemployment like Western Sydney, that the students, and men and women in those areas who fall out of employment have a safety net. We want them to be able to retrain and return to the workforce. It is ironic that a Government that signed a TAFE pledge three years ago to ensure that TAFE colleges would be funded and stated that every dollar invested in TAFE would yield a \$6.40 return, is now taking an axe to TAFE colleges. New South Wales Labor will not sit by and let this happen. Between now and the end of March New South Wales Labor, our colleagues and our candidates will fight every day for TAFE. Just as Medicare is worth fighting for, TAFE is worth fighting for and Labor will continue the fight.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [11.03 p.m.]: I oppose the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014, which will put at risk up to \$408 million in National Partnership Commonwealth payments for New South Wales over the next three years. The bill, if passed, will be contrary to the New South Wales Government's response to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's advice for implementing efficient prices through government subsidies for approved training and regulated student fees and concessions. Under Smart and Skilled there is a deliberate shift away from annual fees to qualification fees. The proposed legislation would create differential student pricing for government-subsidised vocational education and training in New South Wales, with TAFE NSW institutes charging students a different, usually lower, fee than approved Smart and Skilled private registered training organisations. This Labor bill will further extend the already complicated pricing system of 2014 and add additional and unnecessary complexity.

I, like many other members in this place, was once a TAFE student, and for a number of years I taught at Liverpool TAFE. I well understand the value of TAFE colleges to empower students and give them the skills and competency required to get a job, improve their job standing and perhaps even to change careers—learners are changing their needs. As I said, this bill, if passed, will put at risk up to \$408 million in National Partnership Commonwealth payments over the next three years. This is about reform to meet the changing needs of not only students but also the workforce. Several principles guide the vocational education and training sector, and the important role of TAFE. All members in this place, including the Minister seated at the table, value the role of TAFE colleges and TAFE teachers. Having come from a non-teaching background to teaching at TAFE, I describe my teaching at Liverpool TAFE for two years as a baptism of fire.

Minister Hodgkinson taught at Goulburn, Yass and Queanbeyan TAFEs. That teaching experience is probably why she is such a wonderful Minister. There are at least two former TAFE teachers in this place. We understand TAFE colleges. This is not about filibustering, rhetoric or scaremongering; it is about delivering reform to meet the changing needs not only of learners but also of industry and industry requirements. TAFE not only is a sensational brand name; it also has 130 campuses throughout New South Wales. One of those campuses is located in my electorate of Parramatta and we are very proud of it. The Parramatta campus was opened in November in 2011. Parramatta City Council welcomed Minister Piccoli to its opening, at which Councillor Andrew Wilson said:

[That] Parramatta was chosen as the preferred location for this exciting facility recognises our City's status as a major employment hub with strong tertiary and education connections.

Parramatta is close to being, if it is not, the sixth largest economy in Australia—just overtaking Adelaide—with some 50,000 workers in its central business district. It is predicted that number will increase by another 50,000. Smart and Skilled is all about increasing accessibility and helping those in need. VET FEE-HELP offers an opportunity for those who typically may not be able to afford the upfront TAFE fees, those with not an unlimited source of money. It is about loans for subsidised diplomas and advanced diplomas, and a trial of Certificate IV qualifications from 1 July 2014.

VET FEE-HELP is a Commonwealth Government loans scheme that helps vocational education and training [VET] students to cover the cost of tuition fees. Students only need to repay the loan when they reach a defined income level. In New South Wales VET FEE-HELP has been available to eligible students in full fee paying or fee for service diplomas and above, which is particularly important. It is similar to and as important as HECS for university students—I used to be a university lecturer. It is important to give everyone the opportunity to engage in training, whether it is at university, TAFE or a non-government institution. I am an advocate of developing a strong VET sector, no matter whether institutions are government or non-government, to allow students the flexibility and choice to choose which institutions they want to attend.

Giving students a choice puts them at the heart of the decision-making process, and lets them take control of their learning and investing in the future. We on this side of the House are looking at allowing people

to reach their full potential—not limiting their potential, but giving them every opportunity to deliver, to excel and to be rewarded for their hard work. In an ideal world we could fund every student every time. But obviously in this world we have only limited funding. It is about allocating funding to where it does best—that is, to where it best delivers future skills. We have created a list of skills—the NSW Skills List—that are in demand.

Mr John Williams: The member for Wollongong failed plasticine.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I think the member for Murray-Darling is very ungracious in suggesting that the member for Wollongong failed plasticine.

Mr John Williams: Twice.

Dr GEOFF LEE: It is terrible that the member for Murray-Darling would say that. The member for Wollongong got a conceded pass on that course, as I understand it!

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Parramatta will return to the leave of the bill. I have been through the bill twice and I cannot see plasticine mentioned once.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Obviously in an ideal world we could fund everything. It is about allocating vital taxpayers' funds—these are not government funds, they are taxpayers' funds—to those skillsets that are in demand and that enable students to get jobs. We have limited resources so we have to allocate them to where they are needed most and where they will be used best. It is about allowing students to choose the institution that suits their needs. It is about allowing students who are thinking of changing career to embark on a new career.

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

Dr GEOFF LEE: Opposition members hate TAFE, for some reason. I do not know why they hate TAFE. They are full of rhetoric. I wish they had some substance. They are scaremongering. As a former TAFE teacher I know the value of TAFE teachers and I appreciate their role. The value of a VET sector education is that it is not just about getting a job; it is also about enhancing people's individual competencies. That can lead them to different pathways. I am certainly a supporter of lifelong learning, as is the member for Fairfield. It is good to see him agreeing that we need to encourage different pathways for students, whether it is to higher education or from higher education to the VET sector. This is targeted at people who want a job or those who are changing careers.

Through Smart and Skilled we are developing a student-centred approach through a flexible learning environment—whether it is in a classroom, online or in the workplace. We have to target learning for the students' needs, rather than the needs of the educational organisation. This Government is looking at how we can reform the system. We need strong principles to guide the reform of the VET sector and the role of TAFE, and that is what Smart and Skilled provides. This private member's bill from the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Blacktown will throw a spanner in the works; and that is why I object to it. In conclusion, I commend TAFE teachers for their dedication and their responsiveness in embracing change, and utilising limited resources to deliver the best skills outcomes for students.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I did not realise earlier the significance of the interjection by the member for Ku-ring-gai when he asked the member for Keira, "Are you okay?" Today is R U OK? Day. A morning tea is being hosted by the Minister for Mental Health, the Hon. Jai Rowell, in the Speaker's Garden, which members are invited to attend.

Mr Nick Lalich: Is he okay?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Cabramatta might be able to check that if he attends. I trust that all members are okay. It is a very important day.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [11.13 a.m.]: Yet again I am extremely proud to be a member of the New South Wales Labor Party and to make a contribution in this debate in support of TAFE. Being a product of Wollongong TAFE, I am very proud to stand in this place and speak about the wonderful job TAFE teachers do and the opportunities that TAFE provides. TAFE provides a fairer, more accessible and higher-quality vocational education. The member for Murray-Darling seems to think that everything to do with

TAFE is a joke. I am disappointed by the comments made by the member for Parramatta. He talked about Parramatta as if it were an entity on its own. In my area we actually contribute to supporting vocational training such as TAFE.

Many in my electorate rely on TAFE. Many are from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and I am thinking of mature age women in particular. They rely on access to TAFE for education. The Government would deny those people, who need it most, the opportunity to access education. The Government would deny those people the opportunity to access education, and they are the ones who need it the most. The Government looks after those who have and takes away more from those who have not. Government members should hang their heads in shame, including the member for Parramatta.

Dr Geoff Lee: Point of order—

Ms NOREEN HAY: Government members may seek to use up my time by taking points of order, but the community recognises what this Government is doing.

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

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

CABRAMATTA FREE SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [11.19 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Condemns the Minister for Transport and the Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney for cancelling the free Cabramatta shuttle bus service.
- (2) Condemns the Government for removing this transport option for the elderly and the less mobile to get to appointments, access support services and stay connected to the community.

In my electorate of Cabramatta the people are warm, hardworking and down-to-earth. But because many of them came to this country with nothing but the clothes on their backs, and with little education, they do not have a lot of money. That is why in 2010 the former Labor Government established a free shuttle bus service that connected Cabramatta, Canley Vale, Canley Heights and Cabramatta West. This service was hard fought for and championed by my community. It was a very important service for those on fixed incomes and those who are often isolated from society—pensioners, people with disabilities, the unemployed and mums with children.

The free bus made it easier for people who did not have cars to attend medical appointments, shop for groceries, access support services, and catch up with friends and family. In addition, the service was taking cars off our heavily congested roads and freeing up parking spaces in Cabramatta, which are in very short supply. The bus ran every 15 minutes from 9.00 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. each day from Cabramatta station to Canley Vale, up Canley Vale Road to Canley Heights and then back down and over to Cabramatta East. It was hugely popular. Every time I saw the bus go by it was at least three-quarters full. According to Fairfield City Council, about 20,000 people per month used the bus.

That is why my community was shocked and gutted when the New South Wales Liberal Government took an axe to the service in the 2013 State budget. The Government made the excuse that not enough people were using the free shuttle bus service at Cabramatta and said that only 4.5 people were boarding the bus per kilometre travelled. I do not know how the Government came up with that figure because I always saw the bus at least three-quarters full. The Government says that a service needs at least eight to nine people per kilometre travelled for the service to continue. If that really is the case, many other bus routes around Sydney and New South Wales should be abolished. A lot of public buses run with nobody on them, but the Government has not axed those services. My community is angry about the loss of the free shuttle bus service. I have received letters, emails and calls to my office from local people who are angered by the Government's decision. One resident wrote:

For me, as a non-driver and one dependent on public transport, especially the buses, I have greatly appreciated the free Cabramatta bus service since its inception.

These services are absolutely necessary and a vital feature for residents living in Cabramatta. It is imperative that the Cabramatta service stays in operation.

But the voice of the community did not matter to the Liberal Government. It axed the Cabramatta bus service anyway, along with six other free bus services in Bankstown, Blacktown, Campbelltown, Liverpool, Newcastle and Penrith. Three services remain, but Gosford and Kogarah are full fee-paying services. The cost to run the 12 shuttles was just \$7 million, which is a small amount to pay to help tens of thousands of people. The Government said that the money would be better spent elsewhere, so let us see where the money has gone. The Government recently wasted a staggering \$7 million on Opal card marketing developments, including the cheesy Opal Card Man advertising campaign. Just two months after cancelling the free shuttle bus service, the Government wasted \$17 million on the rebranding of Sydney Trains. This Government clearly has its priorities wrong. Marketing is more important to it than making life easier for families and the vulnerable in this State.

As I said, if the Government believes that eight to nine passengers are needed per kilometre travelled so that these buses can run, we should use the same ratio for all bus services throughout New South Wales. We could guarantee that about 75 per cent of current bus services would have to be closed. It cost only \$7 million to run the 12 free shuttle buses—a paltry amount in the State budget when the service helps so many underprivileged people. It is especially important in Cabramatta, where unemployment is nearly triple the national and State averages. The people of Cabramatta cannot afford to have free services ripped away from them. I do not know what the Government will do with the money, but it will probably use it to build the Northern rail line. This Government is out of touch with the poor people of this State who need help.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [11.23 a.m.]: I oppose the motion moved by the member for Cabramatta. Shuttle buses are important, no more so than in the wonderful city of Parramatta.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: You don't even have a shuttle bus.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I remind the member for Bankstown that Parramatta does have a shuttle bus. In 2010 when we were in opposition the then shadow Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, said that if we won government we would take the \$2.4 million burden off Parramatta council and fund the shuttle bus over the next four years. In March 2011 the Liberal Coalition Government was elected and the bus has been running very successfully for the past three and a bit years. I am proud of the shuttle bus.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: Who's funding it?

Dr GEOFF LEE: The New South Wales Government is funding the bus, which makes total sense because the Parramatta bus has a high rate of boarding with 12.1 passengers per kilometre travelled. It shows that this Government is focused on delivering services to the people who need them, to where there is a demand, and to redirecting funds from unsuccessful routes to areas where they will be more successful. We have only a limited amount of money, so we must use it where it can be most successful. It is sad to hear Opposition members complaining. I hate to bring up Labor's record of wasted money because we are trying to move forward. I do not want to harp on about the \$500 million that Labor lost on the central business district [CBD] to Rozelle metro or the services it cancelled. This is all about the best way to use our dollars.

While I have the opportunity I would like to talk about Parramatta, which has been known to be the transport capital of New South Wales. We have the busiest bus rail interchange outside of the CBD, with approximately 36,000 people travelling through the Parramatta interchange each morning. The fantastic interchange is not only the centrepiece of the Western line but also the cornerstone of eight arterial bus routes into Parramatta. Close to a year ago the Minister made a brilliant announcement about the introduction of an extra 430 services a week at Parramatta station. We are very proud of that because it will mean that from 6.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. good, hardworking commuters will be able to catch a train into the city every 10 minutes.

It is particularly important that 270 of the new services will be express services into the CBD. The member for Fairfield is congratulating the people of Parramatta because he is a big supporter of not only the Wanderers but also Parramatta in general. I like to see his support. It is great that our interchange is working well and that our Parramatta Loop Bus is saving the council \$2.4 million. That saving will allow the council to redirect its funds into providing more services on the ground such as collecting rubbish; maintaining its roads, parks and gardens; or staging wonderful festivals. There are many wonderful festivals in Parramatta, but I will not go there now because I must talk about the other great things that the Minister for Transport is delivering.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76. The member for Parramatta is straying from the leave of the motion, which is about shuttle bus services in Cabramatta. The motion has nothing to do with services in Parramatta or the interchange. I ask you to draw the member for Parramatta back to the leave of the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Parramatta is comparing services in Parramatta to Cabramatta. The member for Parramatta will continue to be relevant to the motion.

Dr GEOFF LEE: That was a wise decision, Mr Deputy-Speaker, because the Parramatta interchange is one of the Parramatta Loop Bus stops, which contributes to the Parramatta interchange being so busy because more than one million people per year use the Parramatta Loop Bus. That service will only be complemented by the 2014-15 State budget in which \$400 million has been allocated for light rail from Parramatta along a route that will be determined following investigation. We are proud of the \$400 million funding for light rail. I am an advocate for the Parramatta to Carlingford through North Parramatta route. North Parramatta is also a stop on the Parramatta Loop Bus, which, together with the light rail, is part of the 20-year transport plan for New South Wales.

The Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, has done a wonderful job on transport, not only for Parramatta but also for surrounding areas. I also commend the New South Wales Government. It is not just about transport; it is about bringing jobs to Western Sydney as well. I commend the Baird Government for moving 1,300 jobs to Western Sydney. I am very proud of that. I conclude by reiterating that we are proud of our loop bus. We are proud that people use it. We are proud that the Baird Government continues to support Parramatta—the transport capital of Western Sydney.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.30 a.m.]: In 2010 the former New South Wales Labor Government introduced free bus services in a number of areas throughout the State. Obviously the member for Parramatta had his head in the sand at the time and was not aware of that because for the past seven minutes all he could talk about was Parramatta, while neglecting the very essence of the motion and the fact that this vital bus service, which was introduced by the former Labor Government, was ripped away by this Government in crisis. Like many other communities who received the free bus service, our local residents welcomed the new service as it took the financial burden off many of them. The member for Parramatta referred to struggling families but he neglected to mention that fact.

The Cabramatta shuttle bus service was utilised by a large number of local residents and helped to free up congestion on our local roads. Those of us who live in the area understand Cabramatta, Cabramatta West, Canley Heights and Canley Vale and know that traffic congestion and parking are issues that local residents are forced to deal with every single day. It comes as no surprise that, given the huge success and popularity of the free shuttle bus service in our local area, this Government in crisis concluded in 2013 it was time to put our beloved bus on the chopping block: "Chopped. There you go. See you later. It's gone." Our beloved bus service, which gave so many people a means of transport to and from wherever they needed to go and encouraged residents to visit our local town centres to shop et cetera, was removed by the current New South Wales Government.

But I have received correspondence saying, "The bus is back". That is so, but it is not the bus to Canley Vale. The free bus is not for residents; the free bus runs from Macquarie Street all the way to Castlereagh Street. A letter I have received states, "Dear Guy, we are writing to advise you that the free shuttle bus service, which was once scrapped, is now back in operation. That's right. We have acknowledged that there is a rising need for a free shuttle bus service in the area and we firmly believe this new service will be utilised to its full potential."

Dr Geoff Lee: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 76. I ask that the member for Fairfield be directed to return to the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Parramatta will resume his seat.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The letter goes on to state, "The new service will be running from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday between Macquarie Street and Castlereagh Street. It's back! Yours sincerely, Government Minister—Minister for Fluffy Dice."

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: When Labor was in government they had to move the Cabinet office to Castlereagh Street to make it easier for its members to meet there.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: It hurts.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Kiama will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: But do you know what, Mr Acting-Speaker? The bus is already full. It is full because Barry O'Farrell is on the bus and so are Chris Hartcher, Chris Spence, Darren Webber, Marie Ficarra, Mike Gallacher, Tim Owen, Andrew Cornwell, Garry Edwards and Bart Bassett. Who is next on the bus? Is it perhaps the member for Kiama?

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 76. What the member for Fairfield is saying has absolutely no relevance whatsoever to the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Kiama will resume his seat.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The people of Canley Vale and Cabramatta suffer as a result of this Government in crisis.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Fairfield will confine his remarks to the leave of the motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I return to the leave of the motion, which is that the free shuttle bus service introduced by the former Labor Government has been taken away by this Government in crisis.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [11.34 a.m.]: I oppose the motion. It is funny that the worse off Labor members are, the louder they get. It is said that empty vessels make the most noise, and people know that when the Labor mob opposite start yelling and screaming, they do not have much in the tank.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: It is obvious that there are some leadership tensions. The member for Fairfield and the member for Bankstown are jockeying for position. If we consider Labor's record on public transport members opposite will be too embarrassed to sit in this House. When it was in office Labor cut hundreds of daily rail services and changed the definition of on-time running to make its figures look better. Labor fiddled the rules to make things look better. Labor slowed down Western Sydney trains to make the service slower and in 2006 axed—chopped and got rid of—1,500 weekly bus services.

Ms Melanie Gibbons: Shame!

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: They did. In 2010, not being happy with what it had done already, Labor slashed ferry services. Under Labor's reign—

Mr John Sidoti: Reign of terror.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: Under Labor's reign of terror only 72 per cent of trains were air-conditioned and only half of the inner west and Bankstown services were air-conditioned, as I am sure the member for Bankstown knows. Under Labor no Cumberland or Carlingford line trains were air-conditioned, but now 100 per cent of trains on the Cumberland line are air-conditioned. Labor members should be thanking this Government.

Dr Geoff Lee: On the western line?

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: One hundred per cent of all trains. I heard Labor members refer to their great 2010 free bus giveaway, which was a last-minute grubby election grab. Labor gave away taxpayers' money in an attempt to sandbag its most vulnerable seats. It is no wonder Labor lost Campbelltown.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! Members will cease arguing across the Chamber.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: We should compare the great improvements achieved by this Government, such as the Opal card, with Labor's ticketing system—something that Labor promised before the Olympics but was not even in the race when it came to delivery. Everyone who catches a train knows how well the improved timetables are working, all the way from Campbelltown through to the T5 lines. The service is excellent. There are 220 extra direct services between those two great cities of the south-west, Campbelltown and Parramatta. An air-conditioned service runs every half an hour. The members representing the electorates of Cabramatta,

Bankstown and Fairfield must be happy with that. I can see them smiling. They really want to say, "Yes, Doyley—we're with you!" When it comes to easy access to stations, Ingleburn railway station—which the Labor mob neglected—is now having lifts installed. During the 2011 State election campaign the local Labor candidate said, "I will have a petition." We are still waiting for Labor's petition. Where is it?

Mr Guy Zangari: Take another selfie.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: The louder Labor members get, the emptier they are. I oppose Labor's horrible motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.38 a.m.]: I am delighted to support the motion moved by the member for Cabramatta. I am also delighted that the member for Campbelltown contributed to the debate. I follow the blog of the member for Campbelltown on Twitter and I have noticed that he has decided to turn up to a couple of train stations in the mornings. He must be concerned—and I think I know why. The Labor candidate for Campbelltown, Greg Warren, is doing a very good job. What is cute about the member for Campbelltown is that he has taken a large number of selfies and has been begging people to join him in the photographs. But if you look up his Twitter account you will note that in most of the photos he is on his own, which is a bit of a worry. Greg Warren is doing a fantastic job as the Labor candidate in Campbelltown, and I think we will see him on the floor here shortly.

Dr Geoff Lee: Point of order: I take a point under Standing Order 76. I ask that the member for Bankstown be directed to return to the leave of the motion, which is not about the opal of the west.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Bankstown will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I will speak to the motion, which is about shuttle buses. I note that the member for Campbelltown did not once mention the fact that he oversaw the cutting of the shuttle bus at Campbelltown. At no stage did he raise that matter with the Minister for Transport and ask to have that shuttle bus service reinstated in Campbelltown. Shame on him. He knew that that was a vital service for the frail, the elderly and people with disabilities. I again commend the member for Cabramatta for moving this motion because the people of Cabramatta have certainly suffered as a result of not being able to access a shuttle bus. In Cabramatta, like in Bankstown, a large number of people rely on that service. We rely on moving people about our central business districts as quickly as possible, but we also want to give them the opportunity to access free public transport.

I note that the service cost \$7 million. But think about the money this Government has wasted on consultancy fees. Think about the "Opal Man"—the \$500,000 "Opal Man" advertisement was an absolute waste of money. The Opal is the only train ticketing system in the world that does not allow people to buy an actual train ticket at a train station. Government backbenchers should visit train stations with their mobile offices and try to talk to as many people as they possibly can, because residents and commuters are angry. There is no doubt that Gladys has failed when it comes to transport. We know that; Government members know that. Services such as those on the Liverpool via Regents Park train line have been cut. That has resulted in people having to catch three trains from Chester Hill and Sefton just to travel to the inner west.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Point of order: The member for Bankstown is misleading the House. Commuters love the Opal card, they love the train timetables and they love their Minister.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Campbelltown will resume his seat.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: People cannot even access the Opal system. In some areas, such as Birrong and Sefton, commuters cannot purchase the Opal card from local retailers; they have to drive somewhere else to purchase the Opal card. Do not tell me that that is a successful system. I reiterate that the free shuttle buses should be reinstated in Cabramatta, Bankstown and Campbelltown. Let us hope the member for Campbelltown will say something about that. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [11.42 a.m.]: I am delighted that the member for Cabramatta has moved this motion because he knows a little bit about vehicles—particularly in relation to drive-through car washes, one of which of course he opened. They said, "Look, we'll give you a free one—but not for the next

four years, Nick!" But that is how long he kept on turning up, and of course ripping off small business by getting a free car wash. Why did they give it to him? It is because they were worried what might happen if they stopped. That is the sort of thuggishness that we see from the Labor Party—intimidating small business. We would certainly commend a good wash to the member for Cabramatta—no doubt about that. We heard a bit of a discussion about transport costs from my friend the member for Bankstown.

Mr Paul Lynch: She's not your friend.

Mr GARETH WARD: I ignore the authentic voice of socialism—he is in fine form—coming from the backbench opposite. Let us have a look at the \$500 million—

Mr Paul Lynch: In much finer form than you.

Mr GARETH WARD: Off he goes. He is in fine form this morning.

Mr Paul Lynch: You certainly are.

Mr GARETH WARD: Nice to see that you are awake this morning, shadow Minister. It is good to see you up so early. But \$500 million—

Mr Paul Lynch: Mr Acting-Speaker—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! Does the member for Liverpool wish to take a point of order?

Mr Paul Lynch: I have two points of order, Mr Acting-Speaker. The first is that the volume being generated by the member for Kiama is in inverse proportion to his intellectual capacity.

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

Mr Paul Lynch: Secondly, I congratulate him on his valedictory speech.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Liverpool will resume his seat. The member for Kiama has the call.

Mr GARETH WARD: The member should talk to the member for Shellharbour about valedictory speeches; she has had to be N40'd into her seat because they are worried about preselection. But in relation to valedictory speeches, I say: Please come to my electorate, Paul. I would love to see you down there. You would be a great endorsement for me. Please come down. In relation to—

[Interruption]

Just come down, son. Come down and see me. I know you. Please come down.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: It is an act of gross disorder for the member for Kiama to ingest so many of Jamie Parker's cookies.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! There is no point of order. Members will come to order. I know it is Thursday, but I suggest that members remember it is R U OK? Day and relax.

Mr GARETH WARD: I understand that The Greens got the recipe for hash cookies from the Left caucus. But I digress. Some \$500 million was wasted on the metro project. Labor promised 12 rail lines when it was in government, but delivered not one of them. It spent \$100 million on the T-card, but did not sell a single ticket. When it comes to public transport, we talk about doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people. But those opposite want a quick election fix. That is what happened in the run-up to the last election: "We will provide all this stuff for free." Labor did not care about doing the most it could with the dollars it had. It continued a culture of waste, including projects like the Chatswood to Parramatta rail link and the 10 transport plans. How many of the 10 transport plans did those opposite deliver? None—not one. So how dare Labor members come into this Chamber and lecture us about transport.

The member for Cabramatta—the tallest midget in the circus—comes into this place and lectures us on public transport. I commend any member who comes to this place and tries to do what they can for their electorate, and I commend him in that regard. But the member for Cabramatta needs to look at the facts and the figures in relation to other passenger services, and of course the boardings per kilometre. They were higher and more significant in other areas. I commend to the member for Cabramatta the 1,000 extra train services and the 1,700 extra bus services delivered by this Minister for Transport. The member should get on board with our policy and reject Labor's disreputable policy of waste, mismanagement and corruption.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [11.46 a.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Parramatta, Fairfield, Campbelltown, Bankstown and Kiama for their contributions to the debate. The member for Kiama spoke on every subject except the shuttle bus service. But we know his situation and we know how he operates. He is the head kicker on the Government side, and we accept any kicks he gives us and take his comments in good faith. The member for Parramatta spoke about Parramatta having a shuttle bus. He has no complaints; he has a shuttle bus. He is happy—and I am happy—that he has a shuttle bus because Parramatta has one of the biggest central business districts in the area. I am happy that he is happy, and I am happy that Parramatta has retained its shuttle bus. I am not complaining that his electorate has that service. I am not saying that his electorate should not have it and mine should; or that his should have it and mine should not. Parramatta is entitled to that service. It has a big central business district and I support it having that service. I am not complaining about it. But I think it is a bit much for the member to attack Labor members and say that their areas should not have similar services.

The member for Fairfield spoke about the shuttle bus. He understands Cabramatta and he understands Fairfield because he has lived in the area all his life—indeed, he has taught in the area. He knows the socioeconomics of the area. He is there to help and he supports the shuttle bus service. We should have that service. The speech by the member for Campbelltown was just another nail in his coffin—it is the end of the line for him. The local press will hear about his speech today on the shuttle bus service—a service that this Coalition Government took from his constituents—and hear that he supports the Government taking the service away from the people of Campbelltown. No wonder nobody wants to do any selfies with him at train stations. Nobody will do selfies with him at bus stops, that is for sure; I guarantee it.

The member for Bankstown is in the same situation as I am: She lost her shuttle bus service. She understands our circumstances and she knows what the people of Bankstown need. She knows they need a shuttle bus, as Cabramatta does. I agree wholeheartedly with what the member for Bankstown said about the member for Campbelltown and his selfies. I think a lot more of our State members should do selfies—that seems to be the new way to go. I am just starting to learn about selfies, but when I take a selfie I do not like what I see too much. I do not come out looking too good. Some members in this place love their selfies and put them on their Facebook and Twitter pages.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! Government members will come to order.

Mr NICK LALICH: Thank you, Mr Acting-Speaker. Those opposite are a rabble, but what else would one expect? We expect such behaviour from those opposite. We know that half of them will not be here after next March; it will be the end of the line for them. Those who spoke today against the free shuttle bus service especially will not be here. I was most surprised that the free shuttle service at Kogarah was not removed because the statistics show that its patronage is only 0.7 people per kilometre. Why was that service kept? It is because the 2013 Miranda by-election was approaching.

The Liberals are not stupid; they were not going to remove it when the Miranda by-election was imminent. But they still got done by 27 per cent. There was a proposal to remove that service, but it did not happen. What happens now in Kogarah? Customers have to pay to use the free shuttle. It is not free anymore. It is free to hop on, but then customers have to pay. The Liberal Party has no idea what is happening in the socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of the western suburbs. It is disgusting for members opposite, especially the member for Campbelltown, to attack the free shuttle bus service. [*Time expired*].

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 23

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

Noes, 51

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Rohan
Mr Aplin	Ms Gibbons	Mrs Sage
Mr Ayres	Ms Goward	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bassett	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baumann	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Souris
Ms Berejikian	Mr Holstein	Mr Speakman
Mr Bromhead	Mr Issa	Mr Stokes
Mr Brookes	Mr Kean	Mr Stoner
Mr Casuscelli	Dr Lee	Mr Toole
Mr Conolly	Mr Maguire	Ms Upton
Mr Constance	Mr Marshall	Mr Ward
Mr Coure	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Farrell	Mrs Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	
Mr Edwards	Ms Parker	
Mr Elliott	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Evans	Mr Provest	Mr Patterson
Mr Flowers	Mr Roberts	Mr J. D. Williams

Pair

Mr Rees

Mr Baird

Question resolved in the negative.**Motion negatived.****DISTINGUISHED VISITOR**

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of the United States Consul General, Hugo Llorens. Welcome to the New South Wales Parliament. I hope you enjoy your visit.

SENIORS WEEK

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.01 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sinfonia Mid North Coast on its outstanding "Salute to our Seniors" concert held at the Glasshouse as a part of the Seniors Week festivities in the Port Macquarie electorate.
- (2) Commends the Government for its support of Seniors Week by funding activities, including the \$5,500 allocated to events in the Port Macquarie electorate.
- (3) Acknowledges the ongoing success of the Seniors Week Expo held in Port Macquarie and congratulates the organising committee, especially Julie Priest of Port Macquarie-Hastings Council's Community Development Office for Ageing and Disability.

In March this year Port Macquarie celebrated its seniors with a number of events held across the electorate, in particular, the Sensational Seniors Expo. A seniors working group comprising representatives from U3A, National Seniors, the Department of Veteran Affairs and Heart Support worked alongside Julie Priest from the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council's Community Development Office for Ageing and Disability to create and deliver an outstanding expo. To open Seniors Week, Sinfonia Mid North Coast was at the Glasshouse Arts Centre for another of its signature concerts, with programs combining popular music from favourite classical works to familiar show melodies, some boppy jazz, instrumental solos and songs. The community orchestra, conducted by locals James Hannah and Iain Pole, delighted the audience with another sellout concert.

The main event was the Sensational Seniors Expo at Port Panthers, which aimed to help seniors discover an extensive range of services and information under one roof. I had a wonderful time at the expo and talked to many seniors from my local community. With more than 70 stalls to choose from, the expo included live entertainment, free practical workshops, free one-act plays, and original artworks created by painter Maureen Hales. Other events during the week included the Young at Heart Seniors Film Festival at the Glasshouse, which ran a free 75-minute program of the best Australian short films, featuring an actor over 60 years of age in the lead role.

The audience laughed and cried at the diverse selection of short films, featuring some of Australia's finest senior actors. From humble beginnings in 2006 the festival has grown to become the only film festival in the world catering specifically to film lovers over 60 years of age. This year Port Macquarie was selected as a regional host. The Yarning Our Country knitted landscape project showcased the work of more than 200 New South Wales knitters from the age of five to 101. Animals and waterfalls were just a few of the myriad images in 3D to create a landscape displayed at the Port Macquarie Library.

Seniors Week is about recognising the valuable contributions older people make in our community. It provides the chance to highlight the range of interests and achievements of people over the age of 55. Judging by the attendance and feedback, the Sensational Seniors Expo was a huge success, highlighting the invaluable input by seniors to our community. Port Macquarie electorate has the second highest number of seniors in New South Wales and I am encouraging seniors groups to apply for the 2015 Seniors Week grants program. Local organisations, councils and community groups can apply for part of the \$200,000 allocated for Seniors Week events next year.

Seniors Week is an important celebration with more than 250,000 seniors participating across the State, but it would not be possible without the help of organisations that planned the myriad events. The Port Macquarie electorate has 22,105 seniors living in the area. It is second only to the Myall Lakes electorate, which has 22,690 seniors so there is great interest in Seniors Week activities on the mid North Coast. Events, of course, can be cultural, musical, food-driven or educational. Whatever the event, it is a celebration of our seniors and our commitment to our community.

This year, in order to leverage the reach and participation of seniors in our community, the Government has increased funding from a maximum of \$1,000 to up to \$5,000 per applicant. This is our opportunity to thank our seniors for the great contribution they have made and continue to make to our local communities. I highlight again the contribution that seniors make to our communities, not only in the Port Macquarie electorate but also in many electorates across New South Wales.

Over the weekend I visited a village called Hannam Vale, which was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Rural Fire Brigade. At that event I was able to present a number of long service medals to volunteers who have completed 12 to 16 years of service with the Hannam Vale Rural Fire Brigade. Mr Colin Sheather, who contributed 50 years of service to the Hannam Vale Rural Fire Brigade, was one of its founding members. His contribution reflects how our communities rely on seniors to perform roles and provide services in a number of different areas.

Seniors play an important role in many volunteer services such as the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service. Many organisations provide services and opportunities for seniors but they are also organised and run by seniors. Another organisation that comes to mind is U3A which is popular in my electorate. That outstanding organisation has moved to a new facility in Port Macquarie, has more than 500 members and has opened a new branch in Laurieton—an outstanding effort by seniors helping other seniors who are making the most of their lives to continue to be active and remain healthy. On behalf of our communities I congratulate and thank them.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.08 p.m.]: The Opposition has no objection to the motion moved by the member for Port Macquarie which congratulates mid North Coast seniors groups on their activities. The second paragraph of the motion commends the Government for its support for Seniors Week by funding activities and acknowledges the ongoing success of the Seniors Week Expo which is held in Port Macquarie. Paragraphs (1) and (3) of the motion are specific to the Port Macquarie electorate. I have no comment to make about them other than to recognise that Port Macquarie has a higher than average proportion of persons regarded as senior citizens, as opposed to my electorate which has a very high proportion of young people.

Members from both sides of politics, no matter who occupies the Treasury benches, greatly support Seniors Week. I acknowledge in particular the Mount Druitt Senior Citizens Club and the Older Women's Network at Rooty Hill. The Mount Druitt Senior Citizens Club is well supported. My wife and I are always invited to its community lunches throughout the year and Christmas end-of-year events for its members. It also recognises Mother's Day and Father's Day, et cetera. The organisation is involved in charity and fundraising events and officials will often seek donations and support from many of the businesses in the area—the Cancer Council comes to mind.

I also urge the Government to continue to support the Premier's Seniors Week Gala Concerts. Every year my office runs out of its allocation of tickets such is the level of support for this event in my electorate. I thank members from both sides of the House and their staff who have responded to calls for extra tickets. Regional areas in particular have been supportive. For many in rural and regional areas the Premier's concert is too far away and regional members have always been generous in supplying excess tickets to ensure that as many seats as possible are filled. Many seniors returning from those concerts often comment that while they recognise the concerts are well supported and some years they have to queue up and miss out, often they are disappointed to see a high number of empty seats at those concerts.

We should endeavour to ensure that all seats are filled. I again thank all members, not only Labor members, for supporting my office by helping with the great demand for tickets. As I said earlier, the electorate of Port Macquarie has a higher than average population of seniors, which means activities for seniors and retired persons are given more prominence than they are in some other electorates. For example, Mount Druitt has the highest number of young people under the age of 14 in this State, but like all electorates our aged population is growing. I will be retiring at the next election so I will soon have firsthand experience of life after working, which I have been doing since I was 14.

Mrs Leslie Williams: I will send you some tickets.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: There are many things I would like to do as a senior citizen but perhaps I should spend more time expanding my knowledge of information technology. I confess at this late stage in my time in this place I am probably more advanced in the use of computers than I have led people to believe. However, if they had known it might have ruined a couple of good jibes and stories. I assure the House that I will expand my knowledge of information technology. In particular I will tackle a device that I see all around Sydney and in my electorate—the ATM. I have to stop my time-wasting practice of going to a teller at a bank and speaking to a fellow human being. That has to stop. I must learn to use a device that is cemented into a brick wall somewhere, press some buttons, put in my plastic card, get some cash out and I then have the right to be mugged like everyone else.

Finally, I commend the member for Port Macquarie for her motion which recognises the great work that is done by our senior citizens. She spoke about people who have done voluntary work for up to 50 years—a wonderful achievement. Anzac Day and the centenary of the First World War recognise what people have done in the past. But the member for Port Macquarie said we should also recognise the current role of many senior citizens in volunteer organisations, including those who support hospitals, schools, charities and the like. For those reasons the Opposition wholeheartedly supports this motion.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.15 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Port Macquarie. Seniors Week is an annual celebration of all seniors throughout New South Wales. Many Seniors Week activities are held in the Tamworth electorate and many have received awards in recognition of their efforts across a wide variety of organisations. Wendy Smith was the 2014 Tamworth Seniors Week Award winner. The member for Port Macquarie touched on the University of the Third Age. Wendy Smith was the regional coordinator of the Tamworth Regional University of the Third Age. Wendy was a teacher and librarian for 20 years and she is still imparting her knowledge to others. I congratulate Wendy Smith on receiving the top

individual award for Tamworth in Seniors Week. The Tamworth Stroke Support Group won the 2014 group award. Its Cornerstone Kitchen provides meals to the Coaldale community and others. This group helps the vulnerable in our community who may not have the opportunity to partake of a healthy meal when they need it.

Right across my electorate seniors do so much for our community—whether it be in Nundle, Barraba, Manilla, Tamworth, Gunnedah, Attunga, Somerton and Werris Creek—and the list goes on. Younger people are finding it increasingly difficult to volunteer. They have busy lives and young families, and some are working in two or three jobs. We continue to rely on our seniors to fill the volunteering gap. But they are getting on and quite often all they need is a strong young back to help them. Recently I had the pleasure, together with Marj Penrose, of opening the Howard Penrose Pavilion at the Tamworth and District Model Engines Miniature Railway—the Victoria Park railway station. This fantastic facility is open every third Sunday of the month. Some 40-odd volunteers keep it going and what a great thrill it is to ride on these miniature trains. A price cannot be put on the volunteering work performed by seniors in our communities. We applaud, recognise and support every step of the way all those seniors who do so much for our communities.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.19 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Port Macquarie relating to seniors. I take this opportunity to place on the record my support for seniors in my electorate. I was pleased and proud—and I know this had the support of both sides of the House—when the Government decided to stand up in relation to changes to seniors concessions that were made at a Federal level. Previously the New South Wales Government provided approximately 90 per cent of the funds for these concessions, which related to things like transport concessions and rates for our seniors. I passionately believe that this scheme must remain, because these people have worked hard their entire lives. To be told by the Federal Government that the \$107 million they had previously contributed would be removed was in my view absolutely nonsensical. I am pleased that the Liberals and Nationals in New South Wales, the Baird Liberal-Nationals team, has made sure those concessions will remain.

I wrote to residents of my electorate advising them that those seniors concessions will remain. This Government will stand up for seniors. They deserve those concessions, and they will remain. I know how much seniors appreciate catching the train for \$2.50 and being able to come to Sydney via public transport. I know how much they appreciate us driving down the cost of living pressures relating to rates and other factors for which the Government provides funding relating to seniors concessions. I take this opportunity to commend Minister Ajaka, the Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services. He, along with our Treasurer, Andrew Constance, was completely committed to ensuring that this \$107 million would be found in our budget. This Government—and I believe this Parliament—is concerned for the welfare of older Australians.

I appreciate the enormous contribution that seniors make in my electorate. When it comes to dealing with volunteer groups, everywhere I go—and I am sure it is the same for all members of the House—I see senior volunteers in action. They look after older Australians through Meals on Wheels. We recently had a day to celebrate the work done by Meals on Wheels volunteers. We also recently saw volunteers in action across our electorates selling pins for Legacy to support the thousands of families who require the assistance of Legacy as a result of injuries sustained and lives lost in war. A lot of people who were selling Legacy pins were seniors. Seniors also help out with community transport. Right across our community we see seniors volunteering and showing leadership in how best to use their time.

My dad, who is a retiree, frequently tells me that he did not realise how much time he had when he was working. He is so much busier now that he has retired. He drives a bus assisting cancer patients in their recovery. He is but one of the hundreds of thousands of volunteers investing in many volunteer hours. I think it is appropriate that the Parliament takes this opportunity to stand up for our seniors and to commend older Australians. They have made this country what it is. They have worked hard all their lives to ensure that we can have the traditions, the benefits and the generosity of spirit that exist in this nation today.

I sincerely hope that volunteerism continues to thrive in our community. I have noticed, and I am sure many other members can say the same, that in some organisations there has been a drop in the number of volunteers. The older generation, which is passionately committed to community, is giving of their valuable time to support many different interests and events. It is important for that to continue. I commend all the members who have spoken in debate on this motion. I commend in particular the member for Port Macquarie. I support the outstanding work of seniors in communities across this great State.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.23 p.m.], in reply: I thank all those members who spoke in debate on this motion. The member for Kiama talked about the retention of

seniors concessions. I think everyone in this House, no matter which side they are on, would agree that they need to be kept. I congratulate the Liberal-Nationals Government for making sure that that happened. Clearly it is an important concession for our seniors as it provides them with an opportunity to continue to access services and activities. I thank the member for Tamworth for his contribution to debate on this motion. He noted the efforts of Mrs Wendy Smith, the recipient of an award for her work in the community. He also acknowledged the Tamworth Stroke Support Group. I congratulate them both on their contributions and the difference that they make in their local community.

The member for Mount Druitt also made a contribution to debate on this motion and I thank him for it. He made some interesting comment about a bipartisan approach to seniors. We all agree that the New South Wales Seniors Week Grants should remain in place because, as I and other members have said, we should be supporting our seniors in whatever activities they choose to pursue. He also talked about the Premier's Gala Concerts, which I know seniors in my electorate enjoyed. I think it is wonderful that he acknowledged the fact that many members—whether Labor, Liberal or National—take the opportunity to share their allocation of concert tickets whenever they can. It is important that as many people as possible have an opportunity to participate in events.

With a smirk on his face, the member for Mount Druitt talked about his lack of technological expertise. I do not think anyone in this House will argue with him at this point. He has been the butt of many jokes. He acknowledged that he perhaps knows a bit more than we give him credit for. On a serious note, information technology is an important issue for seniors. Seniors often approach me about this. On a whole range of issues they are often directed to a website or told that they have to make an application online which can create issues for them. I am pleased to say that in March this year Camden Haven Community College offered a basic computer skills for seniors workshop thanks to a Seniors Week Grant from this Government. Well done to that college for working to address that issue.

I acknowledge other groups in my electorate that received Seniors Week grants in the last round. They include Camden Haven Dragon Boat Club, which held a "come and try dragon boating day"; Hastings District Respite Care, which had a showcase of creative works for people with dementia; Kendall Community Centre, which had a safety for seniors initiative; and the Port Macquarie Vintage Ports Golden Oldies Rugby Club, which held a gala day. I previously mentioned the Sensational Seniors Expo and the Sinfonia Mid North Coast "Salute to our Seniors" concert. Both those events were supported with a \$1,000 grant through the Seniors Week Grants program.

In closing, as has been mentioned by other members in this debate, I acknowledge that across all our electorates seniors play an important role in volunteering. The list of organisations includes Legacy, the Salvation Army, the pink ladies, hospital auxiliaries, the Country Women's Association, Meals on Wheels groups and a whole range of other support groups. Once again I thank all our seniors. It is wonderful that we can support them through the Seniors Week Grants program.

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

Motion agreed to.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS SAFETY

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [12.27 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Public Service Association of New South Wales has warned that proposed mandatory sentencing laws will increase inmate numbers and put more pressure on prison staff, especially the employees of Hunter prisons.
- (2) Notes the union claim that, owing to funding cuts, the prison officer to inmate ratio places prison officers at increased risk.
- (3) Urges the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice to promptly address the serious safety concerns of prison officers by increasing funding for a new recruitment drive for prison officers.

Cessnock Correctional Centre, like all correctional centres in New South Wales, is currently in crisis as a result of having too few prison officers struggling to look after too many prisoners, with a glaring lack of acknowledgment from this Government. The Government's political ploy of trying to introduce mandatory sentencing for drunken

assaults, a move opposed almost unanimously by the judiciary, will only make the situation worse. As shadow Minister for the Hunter, which includes Cessnock, and as the member for Wallsend with many Cessnock Correctional Centre staff living in my electorate, I am gravely concerned about this situation.

Director of the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research Don Weatherburn released a report in April this year showing that there was a decrease in the New South Wales prison population of 8 per cent during Labor's last term in government from 2009 to 2011. However, during this Liberal Government's term the prison population reversed course and rose by 13 per cent from September 2012 until March 2014 when it reached a record high of 10,917 inmates. The report states that this rapid growth is a matter of "significant concern". It also states:

Rapid prison population growth also carries risks. If the number of prisoners expands faster than prison capacity, the resulting overcrowding can disrupt the provision of rehabilitation programs and services. In extreme cases it can also spark prison unrest.

That report provides expert research backing facts that front-line workers already know too well. My office has been in contact with a senior prison officer who wishes to remain anonymous, but who said the following about the situation:

This overcrowding puts a strain on all the resources in the centres: programs, facilities, welfare and psychology services, any of the recreational areas such as sports ovals, and any other exercise equipment such as gym equipment. It puts a strain on the plumbing in general, whether the facilities are designed with a certain capacity in mind, whether there's enough showers, it all puts a strain on it, and the end result is often violence. Too many people in the yard and not enough resources.

The assault rates go up. Inmate-on-inmate assaults go up and inmate-on-staff assaults go up. Every time there's an inmate-on-inmate assault it affects staff because we're the first responders, we have to get involved. One of the things we've seen anecdotally is there has been an increase in fires in cells in recent times. And we have to sort it out until the fire brigade get there.

Our very real concern is that these proposed mandatory sentencing changes will have an impact on inmate numbers and upward pressure [on prisons and prison staff]. The underlying concern there for us is the government doesn't seem to have made any substantial plans around the increasing inmate numbers. The worst-case scenario they're talking about is 15,000 inmates for the NSW system. At the moment they don't seem to have indicated what they're going to do to provide the resources to house that number of inmates. The other part of it is the current response is to increase the numbers in each of the jails. Which adds to the risk to both the inmates and the staff. Staff should have a right to a safe workspace.

I agree. He continued:

And inmates should have a right to humane accommodation while they're in jail.

Cessnock's quite a sizeable jail. But even being as big as it is, at the time that these mandatory sentencing changes were foreshadowed it was already right on capacity. What's going to happen if that law passes and there's even more people in the Hunter incarcerated because of them?

I am sure we could speak to any prison officer across the State and hear the same concerns. What I have related is just one worker's experience and it is one that this Government should listen to. The problem is that the Government has not listened. Rather than listening and acting the Government has created a crisis by closing three jails and sacking 600 staff. Not only has this left State prison officers working in unsafe conditions, but it has also cost the taxpayer dearly. The closure of Berrima jail cost taxpayers more than \$1.7 million plus another \$1 million for security guards to patrol the closed jail. The closure of Parramatta jail cost \$2.2 million and the Kirkconnell closure cost \$1.5 million, not including the further bill of almost \$1 million for security guards to oversee the empty centre.

The downsizing of Grafton jail cost more than \$2.9 million with the combined closures cutting the available beds in New South Wales jails by 900 and forcing some jails to put three inmates in cells designed for two. We know how well that works. That is almost \$10 million that this Government has spent to reduce services, and it has put New South Wales workers at risk. In July this year the Public Service Association voted unanimously to refuse entry to new prisoners at jails where the Government is trying to increase prison numbers because of the association's dire concern about the safety risk posed by that tactic. This just is not good enough. I urge the Liberal Government to take action now to protect the safety of correctional centre staff in Cessnock and across the State.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.35 p.m.]: I lead for the Government in debate on Private Member's Business item No. 2925 concerning prison staff safety. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (3) with a view to inserting instead:

- (3) Notes that the Government has allocated additional funding to recruit new officers and commends the difficult and potentially dangerous work of corrections staff.

We commend the professionalism and humanity of custodial officers. As the Inspector of Custodial Services has said:

There is an unfortunate absence of political and public understanding and acknowledgment of their work. An Australian Corrections Medal recognising distinguished service would go some way to righting this wrong.

Ensuring correctional officer and inmate safety is a key concern and commitment of this Government. Recent initiatives include working to secure agreement on safe staffing levels in consultation with peak union bodies and local union representatives, undertaking risk assessments of the sites where prison numbers have fluctuated to identify infrastructure enhancements that will ensure officer and prisoner safety and maintain security, and allocating additional funding to recruit new officers. The previous speaker mentioned the mandatory sentencing Act. Like many members on this side of the House, I support mandatory sentencing. I think the community has the right to be kept safe and I also think public service workers and in this case correctional services workers have the right to work in a safe environment.

I am always reassured by the commitment of this Government in that regard. It is easy to throw around numbers to validate one's side of the argument, but this Government consults with the key agencies involved to get the best outcome for not only workers but also inmates. Sadly, in years gone by the onus of spending taxpayers' money responsibly went out the window. That is no longer the case. Members on this side of the House take the task of delivering the best value for taxpayers' dollars very seriously. We do not waste money on metros and rail and things like that. The Government is focused on getting the best result for taxpayers' money. In this case the best result will be achieved by talking to all key stakeholders.

I am pleased to inform the House that on 30 August 2014 some 153 new employees graduated from Brush Farm. A further four classes of up to 160 employees are expected to graduate before 2015. The additional funding has been provided to ensure that additional staff assist in providing a safe working environment. As inmate numbers have fluctuated, additional funding has been provided to ensure that the bed increase strategies provide additional staff and ensure a safe working environment for that staff. The New South Wales Government has allocated additional funding to Corrective Services to cater for fluctuating prisoner numbers. In 2013-14 the Government allocated \$7.3 million. In 2014-15, \$24.3 million has been provided for recruitment and training of additional officers.

After much consultation with key agencies, including the union peak body and local union representatives, allocations were made on the basis of need and indicators of the best use of the funding. The New South Wales Government is investing in the security of the New South Wales community. I am very proud to inform the House that New South Wales runs the most efficient prison system in Australia. The Government is constantly adjusting investment and costs in response to fluctuating inmate numbers. In the 2013-14 financial year this Government spent \$775 million on running prisons and \$138 million on offender programs. The New South Wales Government spent \$25 million on prison maintenance from June 2013 to May 2014 and an additional \$14 million on strategic infrastructure projects.

I call on the House to acknowledge and commend the excellent work of Corrective Services staff in ensuring community safety both inside and outside our prisons. The men and women in Corrective Services do a very difficult job. I agree with the staff's peak body representatives, who said that sometimes prison staff do not receive proper recognition. I, for one, recognise their difficult role. I commend them and assure them that this Government will stand behind them.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.42 p.m.]: It will come as no surprise to this House that as the member for Cessnock whose electorate has one of the State's largest regional prison facilities, I know a number of people who work inside that facility and who have seen some significant changes in recent times. Not the least of those changes has been withdrawal of funding in a variety of categories, including education, welfare, psychology and social work. Those programs have been taken away from prison centres. I also am informed that currently prisoners receive fewer hours on release from their cells as a result of the budget cuts and staff shortages. The member for Tweed said that more prison staff are being trained. The reality is that we need to train them because over the past three years approximately 400 of them were sacked when prisons in various parts of the State were closed down. From memory, the member for Tweed referred to 160 graduands, but that still leaves us with a net loss of almost 200 prison staff.

The reality for people who I call my friends and who work in the prison system is that the nature of people kept inside prisons is such that they are easily provoked into violence. Violence can break out very easily

and very quickly if prisoners are not given the space they require in their cells relative to people with whom they share their cells and enough time away from their cells to do some exercise or follow some educational or other pursuits and activities to take their minds off being locked up in a tiny cell. I support the member for Wallsend in urging the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice to promptly address this serious safety concern of prison officers, which is referred to in the third paragraph of the motion to which an amendment has been moved. I support the original motion moved by the member for Wallsend.

According to information published in April this year by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, the New South Wales prison population is indeed growing. Government members thought that they could save the budget hundreds of millions of dollars by getting everybody out of jail and releasing them into the community, but found out that the media and the community will not tolerate that. I think we have had our third or fourth go at the bail laws and mandatory sentencing. There is a propensity to lock people up, despite having closed down three jails in the State. It is a conundrum for the Government to figure out what it wants to do about community safety and prisons in the State. There are so many triggers in today's society that can result in an increase in the prison population that we need to be proactive.

Recent changes by the Federal Government whereby people no longer will be able to access unemployment benefits until six months has elapsed no doubt will lead to increased youth crime. I dare Government members to disagree with my contention that that change will lead to increases in crime rates. If young people do not have access to money, they will take it from somewhere so that they have the resources they need to do what they want to do. That will lead to more arrests, which in turn will lead to more young people being sent to prison: It becomes a cost-shifting exercise. If any Government member wants to argue against what I am saying, I invite them to do so as quickly as possible.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Orange will come to order.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: If there are more prisoners, we will need more beds in spaces that actually enable prisoners to have some personal space so that volatile situations do not develop that put at risk the safety of prison staff. I entirely support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. I welcome her bringing this matter to the attention of the House. The motion deserves the attention and support of this Chamber. [*Time expired.*]

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.46 p.m.]: I call on the New South Wales Opposition to get behind prison officers—the men and women who don the prison officer's uniform every day to make our community a better place. They do a fantastic job. They have a job that has the potential to be dangerous. They work in an environment that poses a number of risks. We need to support them and this Government is supporting them. I am pleased to inform the House that as at 30 August 2014, 153 new employees had graduated from the Corrective Services Academy at Brush Farm. A further four classes with 160 employees are expected to graduate before next year. Additional funding has been provided to ensure that additional staff will assist in providing a safe working environment. As inmate numbers have fluctuated, additional funding has been provided to ensure that bed increase strategies provide additional staff and ensure a safe working environment for staff. We are investing in Corrective Services NSW. We are investing in facilities.

Recently I had the pleasure of officially opening a brand-new visitors processing centre at the Tamworth correctional facility, which provides a safe working environment and a secure area where assessments of visitors can be made. Visitors are screened separately outside the facility where, just like airport security screening, contraband and weapons that visitors may or may not be trying to get to a loved one or workmate in the facility are detected. The Government is investing in correctional services, and the Tamworth medium and minimum facility is proof of that. It is a remand centre where there are 500 movements a month. The facility is clustered with St Heliers. It is a very efficient facility with a dedicated workforce of approximately 53, excluding contractors who come and go. Some of the programs delivered at the Tamworth Correctional Facility include Alcoholics Anonymous, Hey Dad, health survival, TAFE courses, workplace hygiene, welding, forklift operations and vocational education and training.

All those programs are designed to ensure that when inmates are released back into the community, they will be better able to cope than when they were sentenced to imprisonment and will be worthwhile citizens in our community. We can thank Corrective Services for that. We also can thank the staff of Corrective Services who turn up, day in and day out, to ensure that they make a difference to people who are in prison. We know that the New South Wales Government runs the most efficient prisons system in Australia. We constantly adjust investment and costs in response to fluctuating inmate numbers. I know that the Tamworth Correctional Centre

is a sustainable, efficient and viable facility. It will continue to have my full support. It operates in a community setting with a school on one side, a hospital on the other, and residences at the front of it. We need to get behind our Corrective Services. We need to get behind Corrective Services officers, who do a great job. I implore the New South Wales Labor Opposition to do the same.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [12.50 p.m.]: I urge members of this House to get behind the motion as amended by the hardworking member for Tweed. As the member pointed out, we need to support our hardworking correctional officers in New South Wales. I have listened to the interjections from those on the other side. Some of the hypocrisy I heard today is absolutely breathtaking. For example, those opposite cast aspersions on the record of this Government, yet it was their very own leader, when he was in charge of Corrective Services, who privatised Parklea prison. Why did Robbo do that? The big champion of anti-privatisation, when he had the reins of power, suddenly decided to privatise Parklea prison.

When we get out into our electorates—as we heard from the member for Tamworth today, for example—we see that the hardworking men and women in our jails and correctional facilities are putting in every day. My electorate has the Wellington Correctional Centre. I have been through that centre on a couple of occasions. The way that prison is run is a real revelation. Many years ago, when I was a hardworking law student, I took a tour of Long Bay jail. I think it is fair to say it was pretty wild and woolly in those days. When I was invited to have a look at the Wellington facility I was a little bit concerned at what I might find there. But that facility is run like a Swiss clock, and I have nothing but admiration and respect for the hardworking officers in that centre.

I also pay tribute to some of the programs that our correctional centres have underway. One of those programs involves getting prisoners out of the jails and doing community service work. A great example of that is at Burrendong Dam, where a new ski club was revitalised and revamped by the prisoners. I know members opposite are getting very excited because they suddenly think Eddie Obeid's ski lodge must be open for business again. But it is not. This is waterskiing on Burrendong Dam, folks. It was revamped by prisoners on release from Wellington. They have undertaken projects all around Wellington and the Central West, and that program continues to this day. We should support our correctional officers in New South Wales. I take this opportunity to urge members to get behind this amended motion and also to spare a thought for the men and women working in correctional centres. Their work is often unseen by the broader community, and I think their work is underappreciated because it can be a very difficult, dangerous and stressful job. All of the men and women who work so hard to keep our communities safe deserve our support and respect.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.53 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for Tweed, Cessnock, Tamworth and Orange for their contributions to this debate. We do not support the omission of the third paragraph of the motion. While we acknowledge and support the statement commending the difficult and potentially dangerous work of corrections staff, we do not support the amendment to omit paragraph (3). I ask the member for Tweed not to get backroom bureaucrats to write his speeches. He gives much better speeches himself. However, he talked about this mythical extra money being spent on New South Wales prisons.

I mentioned in my speech that the \$10 million it cost to close prisons had been wasted. He spoke about additional staff. I would love to know where those additional staff are going. And why is the Conservative Baird Government not listening to expert advice that cramming extra beds into existing infrastructure is dangerous? Does anybody in this House disagree with me when I say that putting three people in a room with two beds is a dangerous situation in New South Wales prisons? The member for Tweed also mentioned 153 new graduates. I would love to know where they are being sent.

The member for Cessnock talked about the fact of less release time from cell hours for inmates in the Cessnock Correctional Centre. That is a result of job cuts. That is of concern because that puts extra stress and strain on not only the inmates but also the prison staff. The member also spoke about the fact that his Government had closed down three jails in New South Wales during its term. We need more beds, not fewer beds. There is no question about that. The member for Tamworth called on the Labor Opposition to get behind prison staff. Well, we do. That is why I am happy to bring on this motion today, to talk about their real needs and the pressures that they are under. The member needs to acknowledge those facts by urging his Government to give more money and provide extra beds for correctional centres as well as build new jails.

When the member for Tamworth had morning tea at the special Tamworth facility launch I wonder whether he talked to prison officers about bed shortage there. I wonder whether he talked to the prison officers about the effect of 600 job cuts across the New South Wales prison system, and the strain that that is putting on

prison staff and inmates right now. The member for Orange made an extemporaneous speech. I wonder whether he cares so much about prison staff. Why is it that he has not condemned the sacking of 600 prison staff in New South Wales?

Mr Andrew Gee: I condemn you.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Thank you. That is very helpful to the prison staff, is it not? Finally, for me this is a very important social motion for us in New South Wales. When \$10 million is cut by closing jails and that \$10 million is wasted on security for closed jails, we have a problem. We should be ensuring we have extra beds. We should be supporting our prison staff by not putting extra strain and stress on them through overcrowding in New South Wales jails. When you cut 600 staff from this State's jails, what you will get is more stress and strain, and we in the Opposition do not condone that. I urge members to support the original motion.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 48

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

Noes, 21

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

Pairs

Ms Berejiklian	Mr Daley
Mr Humphries	Mr Hoenig
Mr Stoner	Mr Rees

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 58/55****Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 59/55****Debate resumed from 14 August 2014.**

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.10 p.m.]: Before the adjournment of the take-note debate, I was speaking about the Electoral Commission and the lobbyists register. The Legislation Review Committee noted the ill- and widely defined powers conferred on the Electoral Commission in being able to make decisions. In the Passenger Transport Bill 2014, the committee identified a number of issues worthy of comment. First, it will be a condition of accreditation for bus and ferry service operators to prepare and implement a drug and alcohol program and to ensure that all transport safety employees are not under the influence of alcohol or any other drugs when they are about to carry out, or are carrying out, transport safety work. The committee noted that random drug and alcohol testing could impact on an individual's right to personal physical integrity. However, it also noted the safety objectives of this provision and made no further comment.

Secondly, the committee noted that a transport safety investigator may enter a property in certain circumstances without a warrant, which may potentially be an infringement against the right to property without interference. The committee again noted the safety objectives of the provision, and made no further comment. Thirdly, the committee identified that a person is not excused from a requirement under the bill to provide documents or information or to answer a question on the ground that the document, information or answer might incriminate the person or make them liable to a penalty. The committee cautioned against provisions that remove the right against self-incrimination. Lastly, the committee noted that the bill enables the regulations to create certain offences relating to drug and alcohol testing, and to set maximum penalties of imprisonment for up to nine months. The committee is generally of the view that the making of offences and penalties should more properly be done by Parliament. However, it also acknowledged that any regulation prepared will need to be tabled in Parliament and is subject to disallowance.

In the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014, the committee noted a few issues of concern. Specifically, the bill provides that a court that convicts a person of an eligible alcohol-related driving offence must disqualify him or her from driving for a specified minimum amount of time and must further require him or her to have an alcohol interlock device fitted to any car that he or she drives for a specified minimum amount of time, following the disqualification period. The committee voiced its concern about the inclusion of mandatory minimum sentences, noting that, unlike courts, the Parliament cannot consider the individual circumstances of each case before deciding upon an appropriate penalty. Mandatory minimum sentences may lead to an unjust penalty disproportionate to the seriousness of the offence committed.

The committee also noted that interlock licence holders are subject to a zero blood alcohol requirement under the bill. There is no level of tolerance, such as a 0.02 concentration, to account for false positives. Despite this, the committee recognised that the bill aims to completely separate drinking and driving in people who have been convicted of drink-driving offences. A small tolerance such as 0.02 may undermine this goal. Lastly, the committee noted that a person who cannot afford the cost of installing or maintaining an approved interlock device may be disadvantaged by the bill and disqualified from driving for five years whereas more affluent people convicted of the same offence would be disqualified from driving for a much shorter period because they can afford an interlock device. However, the committee had regard to the fact that financial assistance may be provided under the program.

The Water Industry Corporation Amendment (Review) Bill 2014 makes a series of amendments to the Water Industry Competition Act to implement the recommendations of the Urban Water Regulation Review. The committee identified a couple of minor issues in this bill. First, it noted that the bill provides that a regulatory authority may impose administrative penalties for statutory defaults. A statutory default occurs when either the holder of an approval or a licensee contravenes the Act or regulations. The committee noted that the bill seeks to provide partial exemptions to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act with respect to the disclosure of customer information. A number of issues were raised, and I commend the digests to members of the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.13 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition, I report on Legislation Review Digests Nos 58 and 59 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. As always, I take the opportunity to

commend the staff of the Legislation Review Committee for preparing the digests. I acknowledge my fellow committee members, including the chair, the member for Myall Lakes; the member for Swansea; the member for Rockdale; the member for Parramatta; and our colleagues from the other place, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and Mr David Shoebridge. The committee considered seven bills in digest No. 58, including the Water Industry Corporation Amendment (Review) Bill 2014.

The Water Industry Competition Act was introduced by the Labor Government in 2006 to promote and encourage the development and management of alternative water supplies through activities such as recycling and stormwater harvesting schemes. The object of this bill is to amend that Act. One amendment is to remove section 10 (4) (d) of the Water Industry Competition Act, which requires new applicants for a licence to supply water to obtain sufficient quantities of water from a source other than a public utility. This provision was explicitly included to ensure that private for-profit operators do not simply purchase drinking water from public utilities and onsell it to retail customers at a high price. The committee made the following comment of significance in relation to potential double punishment:

The Committee notes that the Bill provides that a regulatory authority may impose administrative penalties for statutory defaults, notwithstanding that a penalty may have already been imposed for the same default as a result of criminal proceedings. The Committee notes that this could amount to a double punishment for fundamentally the same statutory default. The Committee makes no further comment.

That particular digest reviewed a number of bills, including the Road Transport Amendment (Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Program) Bill 2014, which the member for Myall Lakes has spoken about. Digest No. 59 of the Legislation Review Committee considered only two bills. One was the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2014, which will make various amendments to the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000 as a result of a statutory review. The former Labor Government created the current child protection offenders registration scheme, making New South Wales the first State to introduce a child sex offenders register. The Act provides for two classes of offences. Class 1 offences include the murder of a child and sexual intercourse with a child.

Class 2 offences include acts of indecency, possession of child pornography, kidnapping of a child, filming a child for indecent purposes, and grooming offences. This bill adds to these offences by expanding the classes of registrable offences to include the manslaughter of a child, except as a result of a motor vehicle accident, to ensure consistency with the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012; wounding or grievous bodily harm of a child under 10 years of age, except when the person committing the offence is a child; and abduction of a child when the person committing the offence has never had parental responsibility for the child. The amendments in the bill are consistent with the current scope of the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000. The final bill was the Mining Amendment (Small-Scale Title Compensation) Bill 2014. The committee made a minor comment with respect to compensation and levies set by ministerial order published in the *Government Gazette*. I commend both digests to the House.

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

Reports noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report: Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports September 2012-March 2013

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

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.18 p.m.]: It is my privilege to speak in debate on the report entitled "Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports September 2012-March 2013". This is the seventeenth report of the Public Accounts Committee in this Fifty-fifth Parliament as it continues its vital role of following up performance audits tabled in Parliament and matters that have been raised by the Auditor-General. The purpose of the committee's performance audit reviews is to follow up on actions taken by agencies in response to recommendations made by the Auditor-General. As part of the follow-up, the committee questions agencies about their responses to recommendations and, if required, conducts public hearings to examine witnesses.

The Auditor-General also provided comments on submissions made by the agencies. The committee's examination was designed to test action taken on all performance audits in order to maintain a high level of

scrutiny of the agencies under review. Concrete outcomes of this process have demonstrated the value of following up the Auditor-General's report recommendations. This report follows up on four of the Auditor-General's reports: "Monitoring Local Government", "Managing Drug Exhibits and Other High Profile Goods", "The Impact of the Raised School Leaving Age" and "Managing Gifts and Benefits". The committee conducted a more detailed examination of two of those audits via a public hearing on 23 June to seek further information about "Monitoring Local Government" and "Managing Drug Exhibits and Other High Profile Goods".

Overall, the committee was reasonably satisfied with the response of agencies to all the performance audits. It was clear to the committee that agencies have taken the Auditor-General's finding seriously, with most recommendations being accepted. The report of the Public Accounts Committee makes nine recommendations designed to improve the performance of government agencies. Most of the recommendations go to matters already highlighted by the New South Wales Auditor-General. However, the committee would like to see agencies take more timely action in some areas. For example, the Auditor-General recommended that the NSW Police Force identify appropriate destruction facilities across the State for the disposal of drug exhibits by June 2013. The NSW Police Force has been working towards this goal—albeit the time frame has well and truly passed—but it has not yet identified any additional facilities. While there may be legitimate reasons for delays, these are important issues that need to be addressed expeditiously.

The committee also recognised that some recommendations need to be addressed in the context of other reforms. For example, the committee is aware of the Government's planned reforms to local government that have affected implementation of the Auditor-General's recommendation in relation to "Monitoring Local Government". Finally, I record my appreciation for the assistance provided by the Auditor-General and the Audit Office staff. I also thank my fellow committee members, including the member for Murray-Darling who does a great job, and the secretariat staff for their assistance during the inquiry process and in the preparation of this report.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [1.22 p.m.]: As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I am proud to reflect back on the four years that I have served on this committee and the type of work it has done under the leadership of the member for Davidson, Jonathan O'Dea. The chair is committed to ensuring the committee does not just shuffle paper. It is obvious from looking at the historical recommendations of the Auditor-General that some were repetitive and that in some cases government agencies did not feel obliged to respond to them. As part of its role the committee decided to review those recommendations to ensure that we are getting value for money. It is pointless for the Auditor-General to carry out audits and make recommendations if departments do not comply. This is in the best interests of good governance. It is a waste of time putting people out in the field to improve governance if government agencies are not committed to the task.

The local government issues referred to by the chair are highlighted by TCorp's assessment of the sector. Having reflected on what has happened in the past—the type of work undertaken by the Auditor-General and probable non-compliance with his recommendations—we need to implement major reforms to try to make local government viable. From my experience with local government, it appears that in many cases financial management is the weakest point. It is clear that departmental recommendations have never been accepted or adhered to. Consequently, as was stated in this House earlier this week, local government is chewing up \$1 million per day. Whilst the Auditor-General does not have a direct role in local government, he has certainly had the opportunity to look at its functionality and has made some clear recommendations in that regard. I will not be here in the future to reflect upon any of these adjustments but the outcomes of these reforms need to be considered. By this time next year we will have a good indication of where we are heading. That will be the time to implement the local government recommendations in the best interests of good governance.

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

Report noted.

COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION AND THE CRIME COMMISSION

Report: 2014 General Meetings

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

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 60/55****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.27 p.m.]: Thank you for the opportunity to update the House on the comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in its most recent digest tabled on 9 September. This was the sixtieth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee in the Fifty-fifth Parliament. Six bills were introduced in the sitting week commencing 12 August, of which the committee made comments on three. I turn now to those comments. The first was the Bail Amendment Bill 2014, which seeks to amend the principal Act by adding a preamble, requiring that bail for certain serious offences be refused unless the accused person shows cause why his or her detention is not justified, and changing the unacceptable risk assessment process.

Schedule 1 item [6] to the bill requires a bail authority making a bail decision for a "show cause" offence to refuse bail unless the accused person shows cause why his or her detention is not justified. Bail must be refused on the basis of whether there is an unacceptable risk. Similarly, schedule 1 item [2] removes a requirement that the bail authority have regard to the presumption of innocence and the general right to be at liberty when making bail decisions. The committee noted that in removing the requirement that the bail authority have regard to the presumption of innocence, as well as the general right of the accused to be at liberty, the provision may impact on these very rights. As such, the committee referred the matter to Parliament for its further consideration.

The committee also noted that some amendments made in the bill extend to offences committed or alleged to have been committed, or that were charged, before the commencement of the amendments. The committee is generally concerned when provisions are drafted to have a retrospective effect. This is because the committee is of the view that such provisions are contrary to the rule of law, which affords people knowledge of what laws they are subject to at any given time. As such, the committee also referred this matter to Parliament for its further consideration. Lastly, schedule 1 item [20] further limits the grounds on which a further release application or detention application can be made to a court that has already heard an application. The amendment will permit a further application to be made when new information relevant to the grant of bail is available only if that information is material information. The committee noted the already limited rights of an accused person under the bill to have a decision to refuse him or her bail to be reviewed by the same court. Nonetheless, accused persons can appeal Local Court or District Court bail decisions in the Supreme Court. Owing to this safeguard, the committee made no further comment.

I turn to the City of Sydney Elections Act. Proposed section 16AA (1) provides that for corporations two natural persons are to be enrolled as electors. Similarly, under proposed section 16B (1) two owners, ratepaying lessees or occupiers, are entitled to be enrolled as electors in respect of any one parcel of rateable land. The committee expressed concern that enabling these entities more than one vote may give electors a disproportionate influence on the election of councillors and the mayor when compared to the voting rights of residential voters. Given that this may impact on the equality of enfranchisement and the principle of one vote, one value, the committee referred this matter to Parliament for its further consideration. The committee also noted that the regulation-making power under proposed section 25 to designate any or all councils in New South Wales to be subject to the same election requirement as will exist for the City of Sydney may be an inappropriate delegation of legislative power.

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

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.31 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery today six young professional engineers, visiting Parliament with former New South Wales Auditor-General Mr Peter Achterstraat. I welcome to the public gallery Mr Robert and Mrs Wendy Hopwood, guests of the Attorney General, Minister for Justice, and member for Wakehurst. I welcome to the public gallery a group from the Shellharbour Garden Club, guests of the member for Kiama.

I welcome to the gallery today 42 year 5 and year 6 students and their teachers from St James' Primary School. Finally, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of 55 year 5 and year 6 students and their teachers from Jindera Public School, guests of the member for Albury. They have travelled a long way. We also have with us students from Wollondilly Anglican College, guests of the member for Wollondilly. In particular I acknowledge the presence of Tom Angel, who is a State rugby league prop forward; Grayce Keen; Tyler Wilson, the senior captain; Dr Stuart Quarmby, headmaster; and Deborah Cook, secretary of the year.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

The SPEAKER: Order! I advise members that:

- (1) In the absence of 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:
 - (a) The Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western New South Wales will answer questions today in relation to Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services, and the North Coast; and
 - (b) The Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events will answer questions today in relation to Tourism and Major Events.
- (2) The Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Veterans Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Education.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

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

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given that the Minister told the *Daily Telegraph* that she did not organise her helicopter flight from Newcastle to Sydney in 2010, can the Minister confirm that Buildev organised the flight for her, and if not then who did?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I can confirm that I took a helicopter flight. It was unsolicited. I do not know who the company was. There was a spare seat. They offered me a lift back to Sydney and I accepted it.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member for Auburn will come to order. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the first time. I have asked for members to come to order and I would appreciate it if they did. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

PREMIER OFFICIAL VISIT TO CHINA

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: My question is addressed to the Premier. How has the Premier's first trip to China created new opportunities for New South Wales?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his work with not only the Chinese community but also the entire community. He is a great advocate for Strathfield and a great member.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As my first international trip as Premier I was pleased to visit China to meet with senior government leaders, business leaders and investors in Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing. The depth of the response I received was surprising to me but it made clear that the Chinese view New South Wales very highly. They see the potential for great opportunities between the two of us, and I was obviously very proud to promote the possibilities.

The trade opportunities are significant, but our focus was more specifically on ensuring that we concentrate our resources on areas of mutual interest and in areas where we have significant competitive advantages including tourism, education and financial services. Prior to departing Sydney I released the New South Wales Government's detailed China Strategy, which addresses how we will work together in the coming years, at a University of Technology Sydney [UTS] Australia-China Relations Institute event hosted by Bob Carr. It would be remiss of me not to note that he thanked me for my speech and gave me a gift only Bob Carr could give—a copy of his book. Needless to say it sits on the shelf. I have not got around to reading it yet.

The strategy formally recognises our relationship with China and our desire to build on the momentum of the past three years. I pay tribute to the work of the Deputy Premier and former Premier Barry O'Farrell in strengthening that relationship. Everywhere I went in China it was clear that the former Premier was highly respected. Our relationship with China is built on many foundations including trade and business, government agreement, cultural links and a shared history. It is 35 years since we proudly signed the first sister State relationship with the Guangdong Province, which was the first such agreement between China and any Australian State and very important. Those 35 years will be reflected upon in the next couple of weeks when the Governor of Guangdong visits Australia.

In Guangdong Province we signed two historic agreements between TAFE NSW and Chinese universities. Under the agreement with Jinan University students who have been accepted for entry or who hold a TAFE NSW diploma will receive one year's credit towards any three- or four-year bachelor degree at that university. That will make a TAFE diploma a global qualification and create the capacity for our students to be Asia-ready as the leaders of the next generation. It is a fantastic opportunity. The second agreement with Ningbo University will allow students who have completed a qualification at that university to be eligible to apply for entry to Sydney's TAFE system to attain an advanced diploma and gain practical experience in their careers. The agreement will focus initially on tourism and hospitality courses.

I also met with Governor Zhu Xiaodan, who will address the Legislative Assembly next week. It is hard to understand the size and scope of his province but it has a population of 106 million. It is a huge province that presents enormous opportunities. On the back of our sister State relationship that province has been central to driving forward the great opportunities between New South Wales as well as Australia. The people of Guangdong Province view our sister State relationship as a pivotal part of their relationship with Australia.

In Shanghai I was received by the party secretary, who I previously met in June in Sydney. In Shanghai we focused on Sydney as a leading financial centre and on ensuring that the next renminbi [RMB] offshore centre is in Sydney. That will provide huge practical opportunities for our businesses because having the RMB offshore centre in Sydney will make it easier and cheaper to do business in China and lead to increased investments and opportunities. The proposal was well received and we are positive about the potential outcome.

We also focused on tourism for the important reason that the size and scope of Chinese tourism is enormous. At the moment we receive less than 2 per cent of Chinese international visitors whereas places such as the United States and the United Kingdom receive 9 per cent. We want to double the amount of tourism we receive from China by 2020. Last year Chinese tourists spent close to \$1.5 billion.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We focused on practical tourism opportunities. Last year the number of Chinese visitors to the Vivid Festival went up by 35 per cent. We have connected with 80 travel agents and outbound operators across China and provided them with an opportunity to visit the Vivid Festival in order to create a tourism push on the back of the festival. Vivid is exactly the sort of event they are looking for and while they are here they will have the opportunity to look across this great State to see and promote our many tourism opportunities. We anticipate there being many positive opportunities as a result of that tourism initiative.

Finally, in Beijing I met with Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang and we progressed the 2013 New South Wales-Beijing Memorandum of Understanding. We made significant progress in trade and investment and also spoke about providing assistance for Beijing's Winter Olympics bid. We see that as a great opportunity. I again stress the significance of our partnership and relationship with China. The expectation is that it will not be long before China represents 25 per cent of global gross domestic product [GDP]. The great thing is that we can bring mutual interest to this relationship. As China grows, we have competitive advantages whereby we can grow as well. I was delighted to be able to lead a group that was very committed to maximising opportunities that will bring jobs and investment to this great State.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In directing my question to the Minister for Health. I refer to the Minister telling the *Daily Telegraph* that in 2010 she accepted a helicopter flight from Newcastle to Sydney to attend a function. Will she inform the House what she was doing in Newcastle and what function she attended in Sydney?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I have already answered this question. I refer the member for Canterbury to my previous answer.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will resume his seat.

Mr Ryan Park: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has completed her answer. There is no point of order.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the Government creating a more prosperous economy in New South Wales?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Earlier I was pleased to hear the Premier mention Bob Carr. I inform anyone who is available next Thursday that a fundraiser has been organised featuring Bob Carr. The cost is \$1,250. It has been organised by Senator Sam Dastyari and the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson. I just thought I would mention that.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members and some Government members will come to order. I call the member for Canterbury to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Davidson for his question. There can be no doubt that State Government investment in key drivers of the State's economy, particularly housing and jobs, is resulting in some fantastic economic outcomes for the State. Earlier today Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] labour force figures were released that show a drop in unemployment in New South Wales from 5.9 per cent to 5.7 per cent over the past month. Last month some 45,000 jobs were generated in New South Wales and 165,000 jobs have been generated since the 2011 election. That is testament to what has been done through the discipline, hard work and commitment of this Government to living within its means across budget categories, maintaining the State's triple-A credit rating, and at the same time ensuring that we invest in programs that deliver positive employment outcomes. Today's figures are very pleasing. They have been published against a backdrop of a softening national economy. In the months ahead we will continue to see volatility in the figures, but it is pleasing that last month 45,000 jobs were created in New South Wales.

Ms Noreen Hay: But 56,000 were lost.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I note that Opposition members have a lot to say, so let me give them some facts and figures. In the last four years of the Labor Government, the unemployment rate was below the national average on six occasions. Since this Government was elected, the unemployment rate has been below the national average on 24 occasions. New South Wales has the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country at a time when we are seeing terrific economic outcomes across New South Wales. New South Wales has the strongest-growing economy of all the States. Last week New South Wales recorded the highest annual growth rate with State final demand of 3.6 per cent throughout the course of the year, which is a significant factor in New South Wales being the number one State. That came off the back of an incredibly strong March quarter when the State's economy grew at three times the rate of Queensland and Victoria.

In the National Australia Bank [NAB] monthly business survey for August, New South Wales recorded 13 positive readings in business confidence. Last month \$7 billion went through the State's cash registers in retail trade, which represents an increase of 9.8 per cent over the past 12 months. Housing approvals are at the highest levels in over a decade and the number of first homebuyers increased by 0.5 per cent over the year ended in July, which was the eighth consecutive month of positive growth over the preceding 12 month period.

The current New South Wales Government has turned around the State's economy, which was in the doldrums at the end of the Labor Government's term in office. This Government has shown that by applying budget discipline, the Government can deliver very strong outcomes. If the Labor Government had continued its ill-disciplined style of government, the State's budget deficit in 2014 would have been \$4.2 billion. In the lead-up to the next election, Labor must outline what savings measures will be maintained to protect the State budget. Under Labor, we know that the labour expense cap and the wages cap will blow out. The very clear picture of government under Labor is a \$4.2 billion deficit and a decline in services.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The budget deficit needs to be explained before Labor even starts to make election commitments. Currently the projected Labor deficit is \$4.2 billion. We know that the record of the member for Maroubra is less than pleasing, especially when we recall that as a Minister he was over budget by \$720 million in the two portfolios he held. When he was finance Minister, workers compensation blew out at the rate of \$7 million a day to become a \$4 billion deficit. The list goes on so I could not help but wonder where the member for Maroubra and the Leader of the Opposition learned economics. I came across the second edition of a book entitled *Introducing Economics* that was written by none other than the member for Miranda, Barry Collier. The book has pictures and cartoons all through it, but one cartoon showing a child and a woman standing at a bus stop is my favourite.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields wishes to take a point of order. I have called for order so I can hear the Treasurer. What is the point of order of the member for Macquarie Fields?

Dr Andrew McDonald: The Treasurer is using that wonderful textbook as a prop.

The SPEAKER: Order! Because the Treasurer cited the author and the title of the book, it is not a prop. There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The textbook written by the member for Miranda is the fundamental instruction in economics that underpins the economic comprehension of the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, and the member for Maroubra. The cartoon shows a woman and a child at a bus stop. The child says to the woman, "I'm going to be rich when I grow up." The woman says, "And how are you going to do that, little boy?" The little boy says, "By joining a strong union." That is in the book.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member for Miranda will resume his seat. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that I am waiting to give his colleague the call. The Attorney General will come to order. I call the member for Miranda to order for the first time.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given her failure today to answer even the most basic questions regarding her helicopter flight, including who organised it and what she was doing in the helicopter in the first place, will she at least release her 2010 diary so that we can find out what she was doing?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I will release my diary when the member for Maroubra releases his diary.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the first time. I will not repeat my warning to frontbench Opposition members about waving around newspaper clippings.

PARRAMATTA NORTH URBAN RENEWAL

Dr GEOFF LEE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning, and Minister for Women. Given Parramatta is unquestionably Sydney's second CBD, how is the Government supporting its continued growth?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for Parramatta for a question which contains considerable passion and which is long overdue. It is a question that those opposite have never asked, and certainly not when they were in government.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: It has taken this Government to see that Parramatta has a destiny as Sydney's second CBD.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would appreciate it if the member for Canterbury at least toned it down. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

Ms PRU GOWARD: It has taken this Government to identify Parramatta as the economic powerhouse that it is and it has taken this Government to plan sensibly for Parramatta's future.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Auburn knows this is not a debate or a discussion. The Minister has the call.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Last month I joined the Premier and the redoubtable member for Parramatta to announce a transformative urban renewal project between the Westmead health precinct and the Parramatta CBD. This precinct, Parramatta North, will be groundbreaking in New South Wales for the way it puts Parramatta's unique and critical heritage at the heart of community life. The Parramatta North Urban Renewal project provides an opportunity to create a wonderful place through adaptive reuse in a way similar to places like Salamanca Place in Hobart, or The Rocks right here in Sydney. Urban Growth NSW, which is leading the strategy, has consulted widely with all stakeholders, including council, heritage groups, environmental groups and Aboriginal groups to get the plans right. The New South Wales Government has declared the site State significant in recognition of its importance. The project will put heritage and homes side by side, and the community will have access to some of Australia's most exciting heritage assets.

These are buildings which in some cases have become rundown and which in some cases are simply hidden away from the public. A massive investment is needed to revitalise the assets that those opposite shamefully let rot away in the shadows. We know that more housing is required in Parramatta to accommodate jobs growth, and we know that we need to generate Sydney's second CBD and broaden Western Sydney. So we are combining these two objectives and embarking on this ambitious Parramatta North Urban Renewal Project—6,000 new homes between two major train stations and two major employment zones; 1,500 permanent jobs; and around a \$2 billion contribution to the State's, and Parramatta's, economic growth over the project's lifespan. The project includes improvements to local parkland and open space, as well as restoration of the Parramatta River bank and the creation of a river walk towards Lake Parramatta and, in addition, the revitalisation of significant heritage assets showcasing them to the community, the country and the world.

Parramatta is an exciting place to be right now. The place is booming, with the equivalent of about 140 Parramatta ovals in commercial office space planned. That means jobs, jobs, jobs close to homes, homes, homes. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is supporting this growth through massive investment in infrastructure, such as the commitment to light rail in Parramatta, which will revolutionise the way people move about the city; the relocation of government departments and the thousands of associated jobs to Parramatta and Western Sydney; and of course the massive \$400 million investment in rebuilding Westmead Hospital, long argued by my good friend the member for Parramatta.

The Parramatta North Urban Renewal Project will showcase the city's heritage and deliver 6,000 wonderful new homes for families close to their jobs and close to transport. It will truly be a transformative project, and I look forward to working closely with council to rebuild this important precinct. Everyone in this Chamber would appreciate the jobs it will generate, the homes it will bring, and the wonderful heritage assets it will secure and showcase. This Government is getting on with the job. This Government is delivering for the good people of Parramatta. And this Government makes no apology for getting Western Sydney going.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. The Premier has repeatedly talked about taking action to improve transparency and clean up politics. Given the failure of his Minister for Health to provide basic answers about her helicopter ride in 2010, will he direct the Minister to give a full and frank explanation to the people of New South Wales about her helicopter joy flight?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Minister made her statement yesterday, she updated her pecuniary interests, and that is where the matter ends.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is answering the question. Members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I find it incredible that the Leader of the Opposition comes into the Chamber and talks about issues of probity, donations and whatever he likes. No wonder the Leader of the Opposition is under threat within his own party. Just look at the stark contrast—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129. The Premier was asked a very specific question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has answered the question.

Mr Michael Daley: He thinks it is a joke. And if he thinks this is the end of it—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier answered the question. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: If he thinks this is the end of it, he's kidding, and the Minister is kidding.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Just stay calm. I say to the member for Maroubra his destiny is in his hands. If he convinces all of them then he has a chance.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I say to the Leader of the Opposition that to raise issues of probity, donations and whatever he likes in this place—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If this is the same point of order, under Standing Order 129, I will rule it out of order.

Ms Linda Burney: Madam Speaker, it is Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! I rule the point of order out of order. There is no point of order.

Ms Linda Burney: Will you direct her or not?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. The member did not have a point of order. She did not remotely address a breach of the standing order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There were two approaches in the upper House, led by Luke Foley. Apparently this week they have been asking questions on matters of policy and on matters of progressing the State. But in this place there is a different strategy, and many on that side are not happy with that strategy.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. A "full and frank" explanation was the question.

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

Dr Andrew McDonald: No, he has not remained relevant.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is the member's opinion.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When I went back to look at the money that was raised—yesterday I raised the issue of Robbo's Christmas lunch and we all heard about that amazing lunch—there was \$1,800 a minute. That is the sort of lunch it was.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the member for Keira raising the same point of order that I have ruled out of order on three occasions?

Mr Ryan Park: Yes, it is Standing Order 129. The Premier's remarks are completely irrelevant.

The SPEAKER: Order! I refer the member to my previous ruling. The Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: On Robbo's Christmas lunch, we raised the question as to why they were against leasing the poles and wires, why they were against a 49 per cent lease. I do note that at Robbo's Christmas lunch the ETU was there and it paid \$30,000.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is remaining relevant to the question he was asked. Does the member for Fairfield have a different point of order?

Mr Guy Zangari: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The Premier should get back to the leave of the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have warned members about waving documents about. I call the member for Fairfield to order for the first time. Did the member not hear me when I warned Opposition frontbenchers about waving documents around? I call the member for Fairfield to order for the second time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I then wondered whether the ETU had donated any more to the campaign in 2011. It was \$214,000 worth, almost a quarter of a million dollars, and it is interesting where it went to.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The Premier has been speaking for 3½ minutes and he has gone nowhere near giving us an answer. The question is quite specific.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier answered the question, and he remains relevant. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Macquarie Fields, \$20,000; the member for Kogarah, \$10,000; the member for Keira, \$10,000; the member for Cabramatta, \$10,000; the member for Wallsend, \$10,000; but—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! I refer the member for Macquarie Fields to my earlier ruling. I have already ruled that the Premier remains relevant to the question he was asked.

Dr Andrew McDonald: The question was about—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is remaining relevant to the question he was asked. The member for Macquarie Fields may not like the answer the Premier gave.

Ms Anna Watson: How is that relevant?

The SPEAKER: Order! Would the member for Shellharbour like to be the Speaker and make that line ball? I will put it to the vote of the House if the member wishes. I have made my ruling.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It will not surprise the House to hear that the ETU's favourite son, the member for Blacktown, received \$30,000. That is what he loves. Those opposite come in here and prosecute cases on probity and donations, but it cannot get any richer from him than that.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I seek additional information from the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the Leader of the Opposition really seek additional information?

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Perhaps he could tell us who paid for the flight?

The SPEAKER: Order! Is that the additional information the Leader of the Opposition seeks?

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: All of my donations are there. Where are his?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: He has none. Who paid for his flight?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition did not want additional information; he wanted an opportunity to argue.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I want an extension.

Mr John Robertson: Good.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: If he wants to understand why all his colleagues want him gone, I will tell him. What he should be focusing on—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He should be focusing on good policy for this State. Over the past two weeks—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: You asked for the information. Over the past two weeks this is what a good Government has done. We have taken an interest. I have visited the far north-west to look at the drought conditions that our farmers face. We had the crime stats released. Every single category is down.

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

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Fairfield left the Chamber at 2.51 p.m.]

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have had health performance. The performance in the health system is up. We have also put the boring machines into the ground for the North West Rail Link.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: I draw attention to the member for Hawkesbury who is trying to improve his looks by having a picture of Luke Foley in front of him.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not agree with the member's assumption. The member for Hawkesbury will remove the prop.

Mr Nick Lalich: Point of order: I prefer the picture of Luke Foley in front of his face.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call. The member for Cabramatta will join his colleague outside shortly if he continues with his disruptive behaviour.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The saddest thing about that is that that is his best contribution in the Parliament.

BIODIVERSITY OFFSETS POLICY FOR MAJOR PROJECTS

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: My question is addressed to the Minister for bats, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Minister for the Central Coast. What is the Government doing to protect biodiversity, help landowners and encourage development in New South Wales?

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: I understand the member referred to the Minister for bats. I ask that Standing Order 75 be applied when addressing another member of the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member was being humorous. The Minister did not take offence. The member for Clarence will repeat the question, and perhaps remove the reference to bats.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Minister for the Central Coast. What is the Government doing to protect biodiversity, help landowners and encourage development in New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. Members are being very disruptive this afternoon. They can be expected to be removed from the Chamber without further warning if they continue with that type of behaviour.

Mr ROB STOKES: I thank the member for Gotham City for his question. I am pleased to advise the House that the Government has now finalised the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Policy for Major Projects. This policy will deliver on the Government's commitments of protecting the natural environment, increasing business competitiveness in the State and improving the performance of the New South Wales economy. Our new offsets policy achieves the triumvirate objective of delivering better environmental protection; faster, more efficient development processes; and a transparent, fair and repeatable methodology. It replaces the inconsistent deal-making that characterised past offset requirements. This policy, for the first time, provides clear, statewide guidance on how to deal with the biodiversity impacts of large projects, such as coalmines, hospitals and major roads. It will reduce red tape in development approvals and provide increased certainty on managing the biodiversity impacts of major projects.

Communities and investors will understand the impacts better and how to manage them properly. The reality is that some major projects will involve biodiversity impacts. Coalmines, new rail lines and new residential areas all can require land clearing and habitat loss. The key to ecologically sustainable development is to encourage development that supports biodiversity and ensure that unavoidable environmental losses are recognised and offset. Our first priority is to avoid or minimise environmental loss. Residual impacts need to be compensated. This policy provides a structured, rational and sustainable way to achieve this. It gives ecological certainty to the community and economic certainty to business. The new policy introduces a consistent, transparent and scientific assessment process, which will put an end to ad hoc offsetting practices.

The policy is clear also on the environmental controls that cannot be compromised, but it is pragmatic also. It recognises that in some circumstances an environmental impact can be offset by an environmental improvement in another location. If we can achieve an ecological gain while stimulating economic development, that is a true win. It is environmental common sense. We want to move away from purchasing offsets from land that already is being used productively and instead provide opportunities for landowners to diversify their income by being paid for land conservation. We believe that opportunities exist for offsets to become a more integrated and valuable part of the landscape. Integrating offsets with other land uses can protect productive land because offsets can reduce risks from threats, such as salinity, soil erosion and weed infestation. For developers, this policy means saving time and money as offset requirements will be known up front, rather than having to negotiate them case by case once a project has been designed. Also, the development of an offsets fund will enable a more strategic approach to offsetting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Mr ROB STOKES: The fund will ease the burden on developers and other proponents by letting them make payments towards their offset, instead of having to second-guess what offset might be required and then finding that offset themselves. These offset funds can then be consolidated so that offset sites can be planned and sourced in a more strategic and considered manner. The policy also provides significant financial opportunities for landowners across the State by allowing them to receive stewardship payments for managing and protecting biodiversity on their land. Importantly, this policy also is part of our commitment to drive

economic growth in regional New South Wales because it provides the opportunity for farmers to derive an on-farm income not just by growing food and fibre on productive parts of their land, but also by conserving part of their landscape for conservation purposes.

We have started work already on an interim fund and will soon engage with interested landowners in regional areas to create opportunities for stewardship contracts to allow these payments to proceed. Importantly, this policy also will underpin the bilateral agreement for environmental approvals that is currently being developed between the New South Wales and Australian governments. This means that developers and proponents no longer have to apply both Commonwealth and New South Wales offsetting policies to meet their biodiversity requirements.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

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

Mr ROB STOKES: This is a significant reduction in red tape. It will provide the certainty that the industry has been pleading for without reducing environmental protections. That is what is really exciting and attractive about having a strategic approach to offsetting arrangements. The policy will commence on 1 October this year for a transitional implementation period of 12 to 18 months. The Government will continue to consult with key stakeholders throughout this period to ensure that the policy is operating as effectively and efficiently as possible.

URANIUM MINING

Mr JAMIE PARKER: My question is directed to the Minister for Energy. Considering the Government's announcement that six companies can now apply for uranium exploration licences, is the Government planning to overturn the 27-year-old ban on uranium mining in this State?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for his serious question, in particular, taking into account his stance or his party's foreign affairs policy on nuclear power and Max Brenner chocolates. As all members in the House would be aware, uranium is a naturally occurring mineral that is found in rocks, soil and water. In early 2012 the Mining Legislation Amendment Act allowing uranium exploration was passed by this House and in the other place. In September 2012 the changes were proclaimed. During that same month the Government called for expressions of interest from parties wishing to explore for uranium in New South Wales. It pleases me to inform the House that this was followed by a rigorous two-year assessment of the applicants' environmental performance, their technical expertise and their financial capacity. These changes occurred after Labor gave its full support for the export of uranium to India in December 2011.

South Australia, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania explore and mine for uranium. I inform members that the New South Wales ban on uranium remains in place. At the same time, it makes perfect sense for us to have a look at what resources we have in this great State. I inform members that six companies have been invited to apply for an exploration licence in New South Wales. Australian Zirconia has been invited to focus on an area outside Dubbo. This is the same footprint as the proposed Dubbo Zirconia project and thus opens up no new land for exploration. Hartz Rare Earths has been invited to apply for one area south of Cobar and another area north of Broken Hill. Callabonna Resources and HNFL Holdings have been invited to apply to explore north of Broken Hill as well, as have EJ Resources and Marmota Energy. Iluka Resources has been invited to apply to explore south of Broken Hill.

This is an important step for New South Wales to fully gauge the extent of resources across the State that could benefit its residents, to help fund hospitals, schools and roads. Australia has the largest deposits of uranium globally, with 33 per cent of the world's reasonably assured resources. Australia is the world's third-largest producer of uranium concentrates behind Kazakhstan and Canada. Australia's exported uranium is used in nuclear power reactors, which provides cheap, clean, efficient fuel in the United States, France, United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, South Korea, China, Belgium, Spain, Canada, Japan and Taiwan.

As I have stated, the finalisation of the expression of interest process is an important step for New South Wales, but not one that is taken lightly by this Government. I can assure the member that any uranium exploration will be regulated by 13 State Acts and three Commonwealth Acts. Any company granted an exploration licence will only be allowed to perform low impact exploration and environmental monitoring. Any other activities will require further approvals. This low impact exploration and environmental

monitoring includes mapping and desktop reviews. Safety systems will be required to address specific circumstances associated with uranium exploration, including the identification, monitoring and management of the material.

Each company that wishes to explore for uranium will need a radiation management plan in place. More than 60 inspectors are available from the Resources and Energy Division to enforce compliance of any exploration activities. Fines of up to \$1.1 million will apply to companies that perform illegal exploration activities in New South Wales. I can assure members that the Liberal-Nationals Government has demonstrated time and again a clear direction to drive investment and create jobs as it rebuilds New South Wales. I have repeatedly stated that any growth in New South Wales resources must be safe and environmentally sustainable. It is important to remember that resources provide for our quality of life and are used to build and help fund hospitals, schools and roads that are used by all.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Mr JOHN FLOWERS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. What has been the response to the Fit for the Future package?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I thank the member for his question and for his interest in local government. As a former mayor he has had 12 years' experience in local government.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: He understands the importance of a strong sector. I remind members that yesterday the most significant announcement was made for local government. An historic package was formed, making it an historic day. For the first time we are standing side by side with the local government sector. This commitment has been given by the Premier and members on this side of the House to ensure that we support local government to modernise for the future. A \$1 billion package was offered to help local government become fit for the future. This record investment is based on three years of research and consultation.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Experts have spoken about what needs to happen in local government. We have listened and now we have delivered. Communities need councils that are smarter, easier to do business with and able to deliver quality services. We can do this together. Today the Premier and I had held a roundtable discussion with mayors, councillors and staff about the Fit for the Future package, which they all welcome. They know that members on this side of the House are serious about their commitment. It is no longer just talk; there is real action.

We spoke about the possible savings and incentives that some of the packages offered. Councils can make savings, which will enable them to deliver more roads and footpaths for their communities, which is about providing additional services to local communities. We spoke about how great it was that members on this side of the House have introduced a cheaper financing authority. We have shown leadership; it is now up to councils to show leadership. As Minister for Local Government I am undertaking a roadshow for the next 50 days.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will be meeting with 50 local councils and talking to them about the Fit for the Future package. The Office of Local Government has created a website. It will take part in the tour to explain to councils what is on the table and how it can help them. Representatives from the Randwick and Waverley councils were present at the roundtable discussion. They said they are pleased that this Government has shown leadership. We cannot continue as we have done in the past. Councils are losing \$1 million a day and it is not the way for the future. The way in which we do business and the way in which we provide leisure activities has dramatically changed.

We need councils to come with us on this journey to provide services. The Premier and I heard from Randwick Mayor Scott Nash, who shared his frustration. He said too many councils are not looking outside their own patch. We also heard from Waverley Mayor Sally Betts, who said that the mergers could be a fantastic opportunity for regional planning. Others at the roundtable discussion said they have spoken to council representatives in Western Australia and they are amazed. Queensland had a package of \$35 million. In Western Australia it was \$15 million in total. Victoria had nothing, but in New South Wales it is \$1 billion.

These are the emails and letters that have already come in. Tweed council said, "I welcome the announcement by the Government, particularly the funds that make councils Fit for the Future. This is an opportunity for councils to look at new regional joint organisations." Warringah Council said, "This is a once in generation opportunity." The Urban Taskforce said, "This will provide reductions in red tape, cheaper finance and reviews of the rating system." Keith Rhodes said, "This is a great opportunity" and he thanked the New South Wales Government for listening to them and putting incentive packages on the table. The Shopping Centre Council of Australia said, "Councils now need to take the opportunities and if they don't it will be their communities that will hold them accountable." Fit for the Future is the way to go for councils.

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

ADDRESS BY THE GOVERNOR OF GUANGDONG PROVINCE

Motion by Mr MIKE BAIRD, by leave, agreed to:

That the Legislative Assembly:

- (1) Appreciates the longstanding and deep significance of the Sister State Relationship between the State of New South Wales and Guangdong Province in the People's Republic of China.
- (2) In acknowledgement of the 35 years of the Sister State Relationship, invites His Excellency Mr Zhu Xiaodan, the Governor of Guangdong Province, to make an address in the Legislative Assembly Chamber at 11.00 a.m. on Friday 19 September 2014.
- (3) Invites members and officers of the Legislative Council to be present in the Legislative Assembly Chamber at 11.00 a.m. on Friday 19 September 2014 to hear the address by His Excellency Mr Zhu Xiaodan, Governor of Guangdong.
- (4) Desires to acquaint the Legislative Council of this resolution.

Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

The SPEAKER: Order! I inform members that I have ascertained it to be the wish of Her Excellency the Governor to receive the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech at 4.15 p.m. on Tuesday 16 September 2014.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Tuesday 16 September 2014 to:

- (1) Not consider motions accorded priority.
- (2) Provide for the following routine of business after the placing and disposal of business:
 - (a) the Speaker to leave the chair for the House to proceed to Government House for the presentation of the Address-in-Reply at 4.15 p.m.;
 - (b) at 6.00 p.m. government business;
 - (c) private members' statements;
 - (d) matter of public importance; and
 - (e) the House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

PETITIONS

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

Port Macquarie Region Road Services

Petition requesting an independent review of the allocation of road services outside Port Macquarie by Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Public Housing Sale

Petition opposing the sale of public housing in Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

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 Alex Greenwich**.

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, 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**.

Commercial Fisheries Reform Program

Petition opposing the New South Wales Commercial Fisheries Reform Program and calling on the Government to consult further with the commercial fishing industry, received from **Mr Chris Holstein**.

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

Macksville District Hospital

Petition requesting funding to maintain and enhance services at Macksville District Hospital, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

The Clerk announced that the following Ministers had lodged responses to petitions signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Duncan Gay—Caravan Registration Costs—lodged 7 August 2014 (Mr Kevin Anderson)

The Hon. Paul Toole—Shellharbour City Hub—lodged 6 August 2014 (Ms Anna Watson)

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Brad Hazzard, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.14 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. The purpose of the bill is to make miscellaneous amendments to criminal legislation as part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program. The bill amends a number of Acts to improve the efficiency and operation of the State's criminal laws. I will now outline each of the amendments in turn. Schedule 1.1 makes three amendments to the Crimes Act 1900. Item [1] amends section 61HA of the Act to extend the statutory definition of consent to attempts to commit the offences specified.

Section 61HA contains a statutory definition of consent for specified sexual assault offences. The definition requires a person to have reasonable grounds for their belief that another person consents to sexual intercourse with them. Section 61HA does not now apply to attempts to commit sexual assault offences. As a result, where attempts to commit those offences appear in the same indictment as the substantive offences, juries are given different directions as to the statutory and common law definitions of consent. This anomaly was identified by the recent statutory review of the consent provisions in the Crimes Act and will be rectified by this amendment.

Item [2] of schedule 1 also implements a recommendation of the statutory review of the consent provisions in the Crimes Act. Replacing the word "medical" with the word "health" in section 61HA (5) (c) ensures that the subsection applies to all health procedures, not just those carried out by medical practitioners. Item [3] of schedule 1 amends section 93FB of the Crimes Act to clarify and extend the existing offence of possessing a dangerous article in a public place to apply to flares or distress signals. This amendment was proposed by New South Wales police to address antisocial behaviour by some fans at sporting matches. The current definition of dangerous article may not capture night-time flares that do not emit smoke, but instead burn with a very bright light capable of burning material and causing eye damage. The amendment will not affect the available defences where the flare is possessed for a lawful purpose or with a reasonable excuse.

Schedule 1.2 amends the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 by introducing a regulation-making power to prescribe a form for applications for apprehended personal violence orders. Proceedings for apprehended domestic violence orders are not affected by this amendment. This amendment implements a recommendation of the interim review of the Act that considered the issue of frivolous and vexatious apprehended personal violence orders [APVO]. The new regulation-making power extends to allowing certain questions to be included on an APVO form to assist a local court registrar in deciding whether or not to issue an APVO. Answers to the questions will help reveal whether or not the APVO is sought for legitimate reasons relating to fears held by the applicant. The APVO form may also contain a warning that penalties may apply for making a false statement and that the maximum penalty is 12 months imprisonment or 10 penalty units under section 49A of the Act. This will be a safeguard for those completing an application, and a deterrent against frivolous or vexatious applications.

Schedule 1.3 to the bill inserts into the Crimes (Forensic Procedures) Act 2000 a retrospective savings provision clarifying that forensic procedures carried out by appropriately trained officers of the NSW Police Force were carried out by "appropriately qualified persons" as defined by the Act. This amendment corrects a technical oversight relating to the written authorisation issued to officers of the NSW Police Force on completion of training in forensic procedures. The retrospective validation is limited to procedures carried out before 24 December 2013—when the technical oversight was corrected—and only applies to procedures carried out after completion of a training course.

Items [1] and [2] of schedule 1.4 amend section 53A of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. That section allows a court to impose an aggregate sentence when sentencing an offender for more than one offence. The section requires that the court indicate and record the sentence that would otherwise have been imposed for each offence. The proposed amendment clarifies that a written record is to be made of the discrete sentences that would have been imposed had the court not set an aggregate sentence. Clearly recording indicative sentences is important for compiling sentencing statistics and allowing victims of crime, the community and any appeal court to understand how the aggregate sentence was arrived at.

Schedule 1.5 amends rule 86 of the Criminal Appeal Rules to update a cross-reference to the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1990, which deals with guideline judgments on the application of the Attorney General. Schedule 1.6 amends the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. Items [1] and [2] of schedule 1.6 clarify that section 190 allows the Local Court to convict an accused in his or her absence, both at the first return date and at any subsequent mention date. This amendment reflects existing Local Court practice, as well as the Supreme Court decision of *Hammond v Director of Public Prosecutions*.

Item [3] of schedule 1.6 requires the court to be satisfied that the accused person had reasonable notice of the first return or mention date before proceeding to conviction. This will safeguard against the conviction of defendants who may be genuinely unaware of the mention date. Annulment applications will still be available where an offender disputes an ex parte conviction. Item [4] of schedule 1.6 removes the requirement in section 282 of the Act that a court must obtain the consent of an accused to the summary disposal of the proceedings if a scientific examination certificate is tendered by the prosecution. This is redundant as the New South Wales table offences scheme provides that questions of how an offence is dealt with are determined by the type of offence and not by the nature of evidence tendered.

Schedule 1.7 amends the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act to provide that section 25B offences are to be dealt with summarily. Section 25B makes it an offence to manufacture, produce, possess or supply a substance listed in schedule 9 of the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966. The level of criminality attaching to offences concerning schedule 9 substances reflects that concerning psychoactive drugs in part 2C of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act—both sets of offences carry a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment. Dealing with schedule 9 substances summarily will be consistent with offences relating to psychoactive substances. The amendment will apply retrospectively to existing offences, including those that have already been committed to the District Court. Where an accused has not yet been arraigned on an indictment containing a section 25B offence, the District Court may remit the matter to the Local Court to be disposed of summarily, if the court considers it is in the interests of justice to do so.

Schedule 1.8 amends the Graffiti Control Act 2008 and extends the time within which a charge under the Act must be brought from six months to two years. The primary objective of the Graffiti Control Act is to have all graffiti offences dealt with under one Act. Increasingly, offenders are recording graffiti offences using technology such as camera-enabled mobile phones. Records of offences may be discovered more than six months after they have been committed. Extending the time limit to two years will allow more of these offences to be charged under the Graffiti Control Act rather than as property damage under the Crimes Act. It will provide more graffiti offenders with an opportunity to participate in council clean-up schemes and graffiti education programs under the Act.

Schedule 1.9 introduces a new offence of unlawful re-entry on enclosed lands. The offence will apply to event venues, defined as that part of enclosed lands used for organised, ticketed events. The offence will apply where a person re-enters a certain venue following a direction (a "re-entry prohibition") to leave and not return. The introduction of this offence responds to New South Wales police concerns about people who repeatedly contravene directions to leave sporting and public entertainment venues. Some Acts and instruments allow higher penalties to be imposed for a repeat offence in respect of larger venues—for example, the Sydney Cricket and Sydney Football Stadium By-law 2009. These amendments are intended to apply an escalating penalty regime for repeat offenders in respect of other, similar, venues that may not have their own banning scheme but who confront similar problems.

To apply, the re-entry prohibition must specify the organised sporting or public exhibition event the prohibition applies to, its duration and the reason for the prohibition. The prohibition can apply to just the organised event at the venue from which the person was directed to leave, or to any other event, venue or organised event for which the authority giving the prohibition is responsible. An example would be where a spectator is directed to leave a sporting event and not return to all matches of that sporting code for the duration of the season. The prohibition, however, can only apply to a ticketed event and only while that event is taking place. It cannot apply to the whole venue. The re-entry prohibition can be in the form of a formal banning notice under existing legislation.

The person must also be warned that it is an offence to contravene the prohibition. These requirements safeguard against the arbitrary or unfair issue of re-entry prohibitions, as does the inclusion of a defence reasonable excuse. The offence will carry a maximum penalty of 10 penalty units. New section 4AA (6) provides that a person cannot be found guilty of this offence as well as another Act or instrument in respect of that re-entry. Schedule 1.10 amends section 3 of the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) (New South Wales) Act 1987 to align the definition of "certifying officer" for the Police Integrity Commission, the Independent Commission against Corruption and the NSW Police Force with the corresponding definition in Commonwealth legislation.

Schedule 1.11 amends section 26ZI of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 to clarify that the obligation not to disclose information obtained while monitoring communications between a detained person and their lawyer, extends to lawyers from whom a monitor seeks advice about the status of the monitored information. It will be an offence for a lawyer to disclose such communication. The proposed maximum penalty of five years imprisonment reflects the penalties applying to disclosure of information by monitors under section 26ZI (6). This amendment implements recommendations of both the New South Wales Ombudsman and the 2012 Statutory Review of the Act completed by the former Department of Attorney General and Justice. 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.

ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING) BILL 2014**Second Reading**

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.28 p.m.], on behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill was introduced in the other place on 28 May 2014 and is in the same form. The second reading speech appears at pages 29180 to 29184 in the *Hansard* for that day. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [3.28 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I speak in debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. On 28 May in the other place the Hon. Walt Secord made clear as the shadow Minister for Roads that Labor will not oppose this bill. That is because Labor has a strong track record on road safety.

As Minister Duncan Gay acknowledged, it was Labor through the fine work of roads Minister George Paciullo that introduced random breath testing in New South Wales in 1982. Mobile random breath testing was introduced five years later. In 2004 zero blood alcohol concentration limits were introduced by a Labor Government. Roadside random drug testing was introduced three years later, again by a Labor Government. In addition, random breath testing and road safety has been significantly progressed through a number of technological applications, including the way in which we monitor drug and alcohol consumption and the devices that our hardworking front-line police officers use every day to ensure safety on our roads.

I commend the Hon. Walt Secord as the shadow Minister for Roads for the hard work he is doing in working proactively and productively with road safety groups. He was recently recognised for his work to ensure that our rest areas and side lanes are safer as part of the Yellow Ribbon campaign. He has been a tireless advocate for road safety and for ensuring that the funds generated through record levels of speed camera fines do not go into consolidated revenue but are put towards into road safety initiatives.

I hope this bill will ensure that our roads are safer. If this bill had been introduced by Labor I am sure it would be supported by a Coalition government. As a former shadow Minister for Roads and a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, I give particular thanks to all roads Ministers who have worked tirelessly in an effort to reduce the number of people killed and injured on our roads. I hope that road safety remains a bipartisan issue in this place. I hope that we will continue to debate road safety in the spirit of recognising our responsibilities as members and possible future roads Ministers to do everything in our power to reduce the road death toll.

Former roads Minister Carl Scully once said to me that the toughest part of his job was each and every night when he was given a list of the number of people who were injured or killed on the road that day. He felt a great deal of personal responsibility. I am sure roads Ministers before and after Carl Scully have a similar view. It is a tough job. The Minister needs to keep on top of road safety developments because things are changing rapidly due to technology as well as the behaviour and expectations of the community. I hope that members of this place will continue to work in a productive manner on this issue. Labor has always said it will work in a productive manner with the Government to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities on our roads. Our stance on this bill is an example of that commitment.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [3.34 p.m.]: The objects of the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014 are to:

- (a) to amend the *Road Transport Act 2013* as follows:
 - (i) to enable a police officer to require a person who has been physically unable to submit to a breath analysis to provide a blood sample instead for alcohol analysis,
 - (ii) to prevent a person who provides a blood sample in the above circumstances from being liable to be convicted for refusing or failing to submit to a breath analysis,
 - (iii) to enable a police officer to require a person who has submitted to oral fluid testing to remain at the place of testing so that testing may be completed,
 - (iv) to make certain procedures relating to the taking of urine samples under the Act consistent with those relating to the taking of blood and oral fluid samples,

- (v) to extend the bases on which a police officer may form a reasonable belief that a person may be under the influence of a drug (as a prerequisite to requiring the person to submit to a sobriety test) to include the person's behaviour, condition or appearance,
 - (vi) to enable sample takers and analysts to perform their duties under the Act through persons acting at their direction,
 - (vii) to reframe the matters in relation to which certificate evidence may be given by analysts to accommodate performance of their duties by persons acting under their authority,
 - (viii) to clarify who may give certificate evidence concerning sample taking or analysis performed in another jurisdiction,
 - (ix) to provide that certain breath analyses carried out by police officers who had undertaken relevant training are taken to have been carried out by police officers duly authorised to do so,
 - (x) to make consequential, minor or ancillary amendments, and
- (b) to amend the *Marine Safety Act 1998* ...

These legislative changes will address emerging road safety issues, support best practice with new technology, assist with the prosecution of drink- or drug-drivers and further deter impaired driving. Since the introduction of random breath testing in New South Wales it is estimated that around 7,000 lives have been saved. Random breath testing last year resulted in more than 20,000 drivers being charged for drink-driving offences. This extensive enforcement is supported by public education and awareness campaigns along with tough penalties including fines, licence disqualification and imprisonment for serious offences. Impairment caused by drugs instead of, or mixed with, alcohol is also detected since roadside random drug testing commenced in 2007 and specific drug-driving charges have been imposed.

There is strong community acceptance for this type of program, with the expectation that high-risk drink-and drug-affected drivers will be caught and penalised. The impact of these alcohol and drug programs on road safety has greatly reduced trauma from road crashes. There is a lack of certainty for police in the current provisions and there is a risk that this situation could be exploited if unresolved. If drug-impaired motorists simply drive off, safety and the integrity of the random drug testing program are comprised. Police need to have clear and unambiguous powers to run the program as intended. To assist successful prosecution of drink- and drug-drivers the key amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 will improve the ability of New South Wales police to obtain necessary evidence for the prosecution of impaired drivers.

The amendments will also create a new power for police to facilitate the collection of blood samples from intoxicated drivers who are physically unable to submit to a breath analysis to determine a blood alcohol concentration. The inability to submit to a breath analysis may be a result of a medical condition but often it is because drivers are too intoxicated to do so. It will apply only to persons who are physically unable, not unwilling. Drivers who are unwilling to provide a sample will continue to be dealt with as having refused to take a breath analysis. The amendments will also reinforce the power for police to direct drivers to remain at or near the place of testing until the random drug-testing process is complete. The bill also makes it an offence for drivers to fail to comply with this direction and includes the creation of a specific penalty.

The bill will permit police to take a driver who has been arrested under the existing provisions following a failed breath test, or who has failed to submit to a breath test, to a hospital or prescribed place for the purpose of obtaining a blood sample instead of a breath sample. The blood sample can then be analysed to determine the person's blood alcohol concentration and whether they should be charged with a prescribed concentration of alcohol offence. The law provides a defence in instances where a driver can satisfy a court that they were willing but unable to submit to the breath analysis on medical grounds. A person who provides a blood sample under this new provision will not be charged with refusing or failing to provide a breath sample as they provided a blood sample instead.

There have been instances where the police have encountered drivers who had fallen asleep or passed out or whose gross motor skills had become so impaired they physically were unable to submit to evidentiary breath analysis at the police station. Other situations have arisen when a person has suffered a panic attack or a medical emergency that prevents them from supplying a breath sample. In those cases the police will ensure that the driver receives the necessary medical treatment. However, in those instances in which a breath sample cannot be provided, collection of evidence for determination of prescribed concentration of alcohol is prevented.

The bill makes it an offence if the driver refuses a blood transfusion after arriving at a hospital. In those circumstances, their refusal is treated the same as a refusal to provide a breath analysis and the same penalties, which include licence suspension and disqualification, will apply. Similar powers exist in relation to roadside random drug testing provisions for drivers who are physically unable to provide an oral fluid sample. Under existing provisions, the police can require a driver who has failed a sobriety assessment to submit to a blood or urine sample for analysis to test for the presence of drugs. In addition to existing criteria, the police may require a driver to submit to a sobriety assessment if the driver's behaviour, condition or appearance causes a police officer to form a reasonable belief that the driver is under the influence of a drug when a random breath test is negative for alcohol. In that way, drivers impaired by drugs can be identified and prosecuted.

However, this amending bill does not create a general power for police to conduct sobriety tests on anyone at any time. The additional power is permitted only when an officer has reasonable cause to believe that the person is, or was, driving a vehicle and after the police have conducted a breath test at the roadside to rule out alcohol as a source of impairment. Advances in technology and modern laboratory processes will be kept up to date. Clarification of the wording in evidence certificates tendered in court will accurately reflect the process in the laboratory. [*Time expired.*]

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [3.44 p.m.]: My contribution to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014 will be brief. I support the bill because Labor members support any measures that will improve road safety in this State. Our support for this bill builds on Labor's proud record on alcohol and drug testing of drivers. After all, it was a State Labor Government Minister, the Hon. George Paciullo, who first introduced random breath testing in New South Wales in 1982. It has been estimated that because Labor introduced random breath testing approximately 7,000 lives have been saved by taking drunk drivers off our roads. Sadly, however, drink-driving remains an issue in our State. Drink-driving is a factor in more than 20 per cent of fatal crashes in New South Wales. Each year nearly 100 people are killed because of drink-driving. It remains a big concern that 73 per cent of drivers who were killed were aged under 40.

Our police are doing a wonderful job of protecting people on our roads. Last year New South Wales police carried out more than five million breath tests and 34,000 roadside drug tests. Since April 2011 police have charged more than 20,000 drivers with drink-driving offences and last year police laid 843 drug-driving charges. The bill seeks to amend the Road Transport Act 2013 and the Marine Safety Act 1998. It aims to make further provisions relating to alcohol and drug testing in New South Wales to address emerging road safety issues and to allow new technology to help with the prosecution of drink- and drug-driving offences. The amendments will also clarify cross-border issues on the handling of drug and alcohol samples. Amendments to the Marine Safety Act 1998 will bring the Act into line with the Road Transport Act 2013.

The major amendment in this bill will allow the police to order a person who is physically unable to undertake a breath analysis test to instead provide a blood sample for alcohol testing. I understand that while some people cannot undertake a breath test because of a medical condition, in most cases they cannot do so because they are so intoxicated from alcohol or drugs that they have fallen asleep, passed out or have so affected their motor skills that they cannot carry out a breath test. This amending bill stipulates that when a driver cannot provide a breathe sample due to a medical emergency or a panic attack, police can take that driver to a hospital or a prescribed place to obtain a blood sample for alcohol or drug analysis. The bill will make it an offence for a driver to refuse to provide a blood sample at the hospital or at a prescribed place. Police will also be given additional powers to direct drivers to remain at or near the place of an oral fluid testing unit until the drug-testing process has been completed. Drivers who refuse to comply may face a fine of \$1,100.

The bill also provides that when police reasonably believe a person may be under the influence of drugs, but has tested negative to a random breath test, they may seek further tests, including a sobriety assessment. The manner in which a person is driving, their behaviour, condition or appearance may constitute a reasonable belief that a person may be under the influence of drugs. The bill also proposes to eliminate the requirement to provide people who undertake the provision of a urine sample for drug testing with a portion of that sample. However, it does not take away the right of people to request that the sample portion be analysed independently within 12 months. Future amendments will keep drug and alcohol testing up to date with technological advances and processes of today's laboratories. The wording of evidence certificates will be clarified to help courts accurately reflect laboratory processes and ensure that evidence certificates from other States can be used in New South Wales courts. As the provisions of this bill will help us to deter or detect and prosecute drivers who are caught drink- and drug-driving, my Labor colleagues and I will support the bill.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [3.48 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I express my support for the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. Earlier today I was pleased to welcome to the House a group of people from the Shellharbour Garden Club, who asked me about the combative nature of Parliament. I told them that the majority of legislation is passed by this House without amendment and with support from both sides of politics.

I am pleased that this is yet another example of legislation that both major parties support, because it is overwhelmingly in the interests of the wider community. In November 2012 we celebrated 30 years of random breath testing [RBT] in New South Wales; and it is estimated that during that time around 7,000 lives were saved as a result. Police conduct millions of random breath tests and thousands of roadside random drug tests each year. I take this opportunity to commend the hardworking men and women of our police force in New South Wales. They do such an extraordinary job. I know that in your electorate, Mr Acting-Speaker, and in all our electorates, they work diligently every single day, along with all other emergency services personnel. Police play a particularly important role in our communities.

This extensive enforcement is supported by public education and awareness campaigns, and reinforced by tough penalties including fines and licence disqualification as well as imprisonment for serious offences. The Road Transport Act 2013 creates the drink- and drug-driving offences. Schedule 3 to the Road Transport Act 2013 creates the relevant alcohol- and drug-testing regime that creates relevant police powers and testing processes to ensure that evidence is sufficiently collected for the prosecution of drink- and drug-driving offences. Random breath testing in New South Wales began in 1982. In 2013 the police conducted over five million breath tests, which resulted in more than 20,000 drivers being charged with drink-driving offences. Police also conduct roadside random drug testing, which commenced in 2007. Last year police conducted nearly 34,000 roadside random drug tests, and as a result 843 drug-driving charges were laid.

The impact of alcohol and drug programs on road safety has been a massive reduction in trauma from road crashes. As a result, we have seen drink-driving related fatalities at unprecedented low levels in the past two years. As someone who has seen his fair share of road trauma and accidents on the Princes Highway, I am pleased that these results speak for themselves. It is a known fact that driving while impaired by alcohol and other drugs poses a significant road safety risk. Research indicates that, in order for road safety programs to be effective, alcohol- and drug-testing regimes need to be robust. They need to facilitate a couple of things. The first is successful enforcement and prosecution of drink-and-drive offences. But what also needs to be facilitated is the community's understanding of the likelihood of being caught and penalised for drink- and drug-driving, ensuring that drivers are deterred from these risky behaviours. Indeed, it does not matter whether you are driving down a country lane or on a major highway, police will be waiting for you if you have done the wrong thing, and they can and will take the appropriate action. These amendments strengthen their powers.

The alcohol- and drug-testing regimes were created at different stages, with a 25-year gap between the introduction of random breath testing and roadside random drug testing. Unfortunately, police are now encountering some situations at the roadside that are not dealt with explicitly by the current provisions. There have also been some instances in New South Wales where an alcohol or a drug evidence certificate has been inadmissible, and a defendant has avoided a drug- or alcohol-related conviction, on the basis of the wording being incomplete or the wording of an interstate certificate not being an exact match to that in New South Wales legislation. First, the bill will amend the Road Transport Act 2013 to improve the ability of New South Wales police to obtain evidence necessary for the prosecution of impaired drivers. It will do this by creating a new power for police to facilitate the collection of blood samples from intoxicated drivers who are physically unable to submit to breath analysis for the purpose of analysis to determine blood alcohol concentration.

Sadly, there are those who have got behind the wheel in such a state that they are unable to complete a normal breath test. That is an absolutely disgraceful situation, I am sure all would agree. This is consistent with clause 9 of schedule 3, "Taking blood sample following arrest", if the person who has attempted to provide an oral fluid sample is unable to provide a sample for drug testing. A person who provides a blood sample under this new provision is not liable to be convicted of offences for refusal or failure to submit to a breath analysis. The bill will amend clause 6 of schedule 3 to reinforce the power for police to direct drivers to remain at or near the place of testing until the random drug testing process is complete. The amendment also includes the creation of a specific penalty for drivers who fail to comply with this direction. An amendment will be made to clause 13 of schedule 3 to provide that, in addition to the existing criteria, police may require a driver to submit to a sobriety assessment if their behaviour, condition or appearance causes a police officer to form a reasonable belief that the driver is under the influence of a drug but a random breath test is negative for alcohol.

Secondly, the bill will make an amendment to streamline the processes for urine sample taking in hospitals for the purpose of drug testing. The bill will amend clause 25 of schedule 3 to remove the requirement to provide the person with a portion of their urine sample, and provide that the person instead be given a certificate relating to the sample that contains sufficient information to enable the sample to be identified. The amendment does not remove the person's right to request the sample portion for independent analysis within 12 months. These amendments are consistent with blood sampling, where the one sample system has been operating successfully for more than 10 years. The laboratory stores the sample correctly and securely and the person can arrange for independent analysis of that sample. Finally, the bill will make amendments to keep up to date with modern laboratory processes for the purpose of evidential veracity to prove drink- and drug-driving offences. This is something that the law frequently has trouble doing. I am pleased that the Minister for Roads and Freight has included this provision in the bill.

Clause 36 (5) of schedule 3 will be amended, along with the evidence certificate for blood testing, to accurately reflect processes in a modern laboratory. It also clarifies that there does not need to be a direct supervisory relationship between the senior analyst signing the certificate and the analyst or technical officer who performed the relevant tasks. Additional amendments to the wording of clause 36 of schedule 3 will be made to ensure that interstate evidence certificates are admissible in New South Wales if the sample taking, handling and analysing processes substantially correspond with the New South Wales provisions. An amendment will confirm that the certification by electronic signature of police officers who previously completed the training to conduct breath analysis is supported by legislation. The bill also provides for changes to schedule 1 to the Marine Safety Act 1998 to bring alcohol- and drug-testing arrangements under this Act in line with these changes to road transport law. As I come from an area where boating is prevalent, it is important that these laws take effect in this area as well.

Extensive consultation in relation to these amendments has occurred with all relevant agencies. This Government has a strong commitment to improving road safety in New South Wales, and this bill reinforces the clear message that drink- and drug-driving is dangerous and unacceptable. The current alcohol- and drug-testing regime is continually strengthened and improved, and this Government is committed to ensuring that it is robust and that drink- and drug-driving offence measures are tough and appropriate. So often we hear of people who are stupid enough to get behind the wheel and take their lives into their hands. Not only do they put their own lives at risk; they also put the lives of others on the road at risk. These foolish people need to be caught, prosecuted and punished. It is appropriate that we give the police the power they need to take appropriate action. It is important that red tape or legal loopholes do not allow people to avoid prosecution when they should face the full extent of the law. This amendment does that, and I am pleased it does.

I take this opportunity to commend the Hon. Duncan Gay, Minister for Roads and Freight. He has a passion not just for the delivery of infrastructure, as he has in my electorate, but also for the safety of motorists on our roads. We need only look at the changes he has made and the investment of funds in road safety, as well as legislative changes that have involved other government agencies, to know that this is a Minister who is certainly serious about the issue. Both sides of the House are certainly committed to it because, either as passengers or road users, we all interact with our road networks. We want to ensure, to the best of our ability, that the police have the powers they need. We need to have a safety regime in place that makes sure those who have done the wrong thing are brought to justice, while ensuring that those who enforce the laws have the tools they require. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.58 p.m.]: I support the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. This Government takes road safety seriously and is committed to improving it, just as each previous Government has done. I accept that this is a bipartisan issue because for a long period governments of both persuasions have attempted to address the scourge on our community of tragic deaths on our roads. Community attitudes to drink-driving have changed enormously over the 32 years since Minister George Paciullo introduced random breath testing, with the support of this House. At the time that decision attracted real risk—it was a Sir Humphrey Appleby courageous decision. Some people in hotels, clubs and the general community resented what they considered to be an intrusion into their lives and an overreaching of the Government's power. Yet today people owe their lives to that decision made 32 years ago. More than 7,000 lives have been saved since the introduction of random breath testing.

Various statistics have been bandied around in this debate and elsewhere. Interestingly, last year more than five million driver breath tests for alcohol were conducted, resulting in more than 20,000 drivers being

charged with drink-driving offences. I compare that with the 34,000 roadside drug tests, resulting in 843 drug-driving charges. The ratio of one in 250 testing positive to drink-driving and being charged compared with one in 40 testing positive in a roadside drug test and being charged reveals an alarming trend. We appear to have made great strides in addressing community attitudes to drink-driving. Clearly, the broader community considers it unacceptable and embraces widespread compliance. Nevertheless, we must maintain vigilance on that front. However, the one in 40 positive result for drug-driving is concerning. An element of the community appears not to accept that that is dangerous, antisocial or opposed to the common good. They seem to believe that someone can take drugs and drive and get away with it. This bill continues to apply pressure to address that issue.

We need to ensure that our families, neighbours and communities are as safe on New South Wales roads as we can make them. It behoves both sides of the House to address that common cause. The particular aspects of this bill, which other speakers have listed, are designed to address that threat to ensure the police have the appropriate powers to test drivers for drugs and prosecute them when evidence is found. The particular steps forward, which are incremental and build on so much work done by governments from both sides over decades, are necessary to ensure we provide that level of safety to the community. We need the power this bill creates for the police to facilitate the collection of blood samples from intoxicated drivers who are physically unable to submit to breath analysis. We need to reinforce the power for police to direct drivers to remain at or near the place of testing until the random drug testing process is complete. Therefore, we need a specific penalty for drivers who fail to comply with such a direction.

In addition to existing criteria, the bill provides that police may require a driver to submit to a sobriety assessment if their behaviour, condition or appearance causes a police officer to form a reasonable belief that the driver is under the influence of a drug when a random breath test is negative for alcohol. Police must be able to follow up on that reasonable suspicion. The urine sampling process for drug testing needs to be streamlined to make it simpler and less costly by removing the requirement to provide the test subject with a portion of their sample. We need also to keep up to date with advances in technology and modern laboratory processes by clarifying the wording of the Act to ensure that evidence certificates tendered in court are accepted and that interstate evidence certificates can also be used in New South Wales courts. The legislation needs to support the additional amendment to confirm the certification by electronic signature of police officers who previously completed the training to conduct breath analysis.

These steps are sensible, targeted and positive measures to try to keep the people of New South Wales safe. They build on the substantial work over decades that has slashed the road toll. It is a most welcome development. We were seeing in excess of 1,200 people being killed on our roads; we are now down to a few hundred. That remains too many, but it is a dramatic reduction on the numbers in the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. That road toll reduction is due largely to such measures being implemented progressively over time by governments of both persuasions. We still face the risk of drivers being distracted through using mobile phones—something the current Government and the NSW Police Force are addressing aggressively through public relations campaigns. We continue to face a variety of other driver behaviours and road condition challenges that will always exist, but we will do everything possible to reduce the road toll further. I conclude by saying that often the population is cynical about politicians and governments.

Mr Geoff Provest: No.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: Sadly, I must admit that it is true: People can be cynical. But the general population can say, quite rightly, that governments over the past 30 years have acted sensibly, consistently, progressively and strongly in the public interest to protect lives on our roads. The fact that the annual road deaths number has reduced from 1,200 to approximately 300 on New South Wales roads is testament to the fact that government is doing its job. The job will never be finished and we will never see the end of this challenge, but at least we can say that politicians have been doing the right thing on this important issue. I must add that our police also have been consistently, thoroughly and effectively doing the right thing for many years. They are on the front line having to deal with the consequences of road crashes. They have to pick up the pieces of broken lives and knock on the doors of families tragically hurt by road deaths. They know more than anyone the value of this work. It is pleasing that governments from both sides have been able to give police the tools they require to reduce the carnage on our roads. I am pleased to be part of that continuing process. I commend the bill to the House.

[Business interrupted.]

ADDRESS BY THE GOVERNOR OF GUANGDONG PROVINCE

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Madam SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

- (1) That this House acknowledges the longstanding and deep significance of the Sister State Relationship between the State of New South Wales and Guangdong Province in the People's Republic of China and welcomes the visit to the Parliament of New South Wales of His Excellency Mr Zhu Xiaodan, Governor of Guangdong Province.
- (2) That this House accepts the invitation of the Legislative Assembly for Members and Officers to attend in the Legislative Assembly chamber at 11.00 am on Friday 19 September 2014 to hear an Address by His Excellency.

Legislative Council
11 September 2014

DON HARWIN
President

ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING) BILL 2014**Second Reading**

[Business resumed.]

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.08 p.m.]: As always, I am 100 per cent for the Tweed.

Mr Ryan Park: Sixty-three per cent for the Tweed.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: No, 100 per cent. The Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014 is an important amending bill. In November 2012 we celebrated 30 years of random breath testing in New South Wales and many members have spoken about its success. It is estimated that during that period around 7,000 lives have been saved as a result. The extensive enforcement of this process is supported by public education awareness campaigns and reinforced by tough penalties, including fines, licence disqualifications and imprisonment for serious offenders.

There is a particular reference to my electorate of Tweed. Perhaps it is more out of shame that I refer to this matter. Unfortunately, over the past seven years my electorate has had more drink-driving charges per head of population than anywhere else in our great State. I am particularly concerned about this. The other startling information associated with that statistic is that the locals say it is caused by the tourists who visit the Tweed. The reality is that the locals are responsible. Nearly 80 per cent of the people who have been charged with drink-driving are locals and almost 70 per cent were in the medium to high-range category. I support the drink-driving campaigns but I think we should do a little more than simply increase the penalties. On a number of occasions I have had the privilege of accompanying police at random breath testing patrols. I have observed the highway patrol units waiting on the side streets as the locals try to avoid them. However, they are still caught.

Our drug testing methods continue to be robust. My electorate is like any other electorate—amphetamines, ice and a raft of synthetic drugs are becoming freely available. The Tweed ranks about fourth or fifth in the State when it comes to the number of individuals who are caught using illicit drugs. This important legislation is designed to save lives. We have to protect the large number of people who continue to drink and drive. We have all visited local courthouses on Monday morning when young men in ill-fitting suits and sporting new haircuts are doing the walk of shame. Their excuse is that they had an argument with their girlfriend. They not only subject themselves to a great deal of harm but also subject innocent victims such as people with children and families and people riding pushbikes to a great deal of harm. We know the devastating effect that that can have on families and on the wider community.

The amendments to the bill are part of an ongoing process to redefine the Act that will create new powers for police to facilitate the collection of blood samples from intoxicated drivers who are physically unable to submit to breath analysis. The bill will amend clause 6 of schedule 3 to reinforce the power for police to direct drivers to remain at or near the place of testing until the random drug-testing process is complete. The amendment also includes the creation of a specific penalty for drivers who fail to comply with that direction.

The amendment to clause 13 of schedule 3 provides that in addition to existing criteria police may require a driver to submit to sobriety assessment if his or her behaviour, condition or appearance causes a police officer to form a reasonable belief that the driver is under the influence of a drug but a random breath test is negative for alcohol.

Other amendments will streamline the processes for a urine sample to be taken in hospital for drug testing. The bill will amend clause 25 of schedule 3 to remove the requirement to provide a person with a portion of his or her urine sample and provides that the person instead be given a certificate relating to the sample that contains sufficient information to enable a sample to be identified. The bill makes these amendments to keep up to date with modern technology and laboratory processes for the purpose of evidential verification to prove drink- and drug-driving.

Drink- and drug-driving has a big impact on my community. I have accompanied police to road accidents and on one occasion stood on the side of the highway with a plasma bag while a young fellow was cut out of a car. That was very sobering. If people continually get behind the wheel of a car while affected by drugs and alcohol they should be subjected to the full force of the law. At times I am at a loss as to why the penalties have increased but the number of offenders has also increased exponentially. There is more work to be done but I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [4.14 p.m.]: I support the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. I was a police officer for 27 years and I know the importance of road safety. This Government takes the issue seriously. It is committed to improving safety on our roads and limiting the risk to the public who are exposed to drivers affected by alcohol and/or drugs. The bill sends a strong message to those who seek to endanger others on the road whilst driving intoxicated. It is clear that driving whilst intoxicated creates a major safety risk and it is unacceptable not only to this Government but also to the people of New South Wales.

As other speakers have noted, New South Wales has a long history of testing road users for alcohol and drugs. In November 2012 random breath testing celebrated 30 years of operation. It has been estimated that in that time approximately 7,000 people have remained alive as a result of the impact of random breath testing. When I was a young fellow learning to drive my father warned me not to drive on certain celebratory days, such as the risk on the roads—they were a killing field. In an effort to make our roads safer, New South Wales police conducted more than five million breath tests last year, which resulted in more than 20,000 drivers being charged with drink-driving offences. In 2012 New South Wales police conducted nearly 34,000 roadside drug tests, which resulted in 843 drug-driving charges being laid.

The extensive enforcement of alcohol- and drug-related drivers is further supported by public education and awareness campaigns and enforced by tough penalties, which hurt not only drivers' hip pockets but also their privilege to drive and thus their personal freedom. At Campbelltown we are fortunate to have the U-Turn the Wheel to Stay Alive program, which is run in conjunction with Rotary and council. It is always a great honour to speak directly with students. I tell them that the licence they are obtaining is a rite of passage that we go through while reaching adulthood; it is a privilege, not a right. If they abuse that privilege, it can and will be taken from them. Even worse than that, I ask them to look at the people sitting to the left and right of them and tell them that the people they are most likely to maim, injure and kill are those closest to them.

It is their friends who suffer the consequences of their bad decisions. That brings home to them the care they need to show not only for their licence but also for themselves and their friends. I also tell them that one of the quickest ways to be sent to jail is to drive a car dangerously while drunk or drug-affected and to be involved in a collision in which someone is hurt or killed. It does not matter who we are or how good we have been; if that happens to any one of us we will lose our personal liberty. Nothing will take away the pain of knowing we have hurt the people we know and love.

This legislation will assist with enforcement and prosecution of alcohol- and drug-affected drivers. This legislative framework provides a number of useful measures. It covers police powers in respect of testing impaired drivers at the roadside; collecting saliva, urine and blood samples; technical and evidentiary requirements for hospital staff regarding the collection of samples, including following a vehicle accident; the requirements for a prescribed laboratory to analyse the samples to provide evidence, for example a driver's blood alcohol concentration; and clear offences with which a driver can be charged. This bill is designed to improve the ability of the NSW Police Force to obtain the necessary evidence for the prosecution of drug- and alcohol-affected drivers. It does that in a number of ways. It creates a new police power to facilitate the

collection of blood samples from intoxicated drivers who are physically unable to submit to breath analysis to determine their blood alcohol content. I have seen people who are so intoxicated that they have lost control of all their bodily functions. This legislation will assist police in dealing with that situation.

This bill reinforces the police power to direct drivers to remain at or near the testing site until the random drug testing process is complete. It also creates a specific penalty for drivers who fail to comply with that direction. Police may also require drivers to submit to a sobriety assessment if their behaviour, condition or appearance causes a police officer to form a reasonable belief that they are under the influence of a drug, notwithstanding the fact that a random breath test has proved negative for alcohol. That is one of the major elements of this legislation in that it addresses a longstanding loophole.

The bill also streamlines and simplifies the urine sampling process, and therefore makes it less costly, by removing the requirement to provide test subjects with a portion of their sample. However, the bill does not remove a person's right to request a sample for independent analysis within a specified time frame. To keep up to date with advances in technology and modern processes, the bill provides for clarification of the wording in the evidence certificates tendered in courts to reflect the laboratory process accurately. It may seem quaint, but when a certificate is tendered in court it must inform the judicial body of what has been certified in the document.

Mr Paul Lynch: It has to mean something.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: Yes, it must mean something. It is done that way to save time and effort, and it will mean that experts and analysts will not need to sit around in courts. As much as those of us who have practised in the legal system love hanging around courts, it is one place that most witnesses, and certainly expert witnesses, do not want to be. This bill will free them up to do the job we need them to do. This legislation ensures that interstate evidence certificates are admissible in New South Wales if the sample-taking, handling and analysis process substantially corresponds with this State's provisions. Given that New South Wales is one of the leaders in this field in the nation, one would expect that to be the case. The bill also provides for certification by electronic signature by police officers who have completed training in conducting breath analysis.

This bill also amends the Marine Safety Act 1988 to bring alcohol- and drug-testing arrangements under that Act in line with the road transport legislation. People who navigate our waterways will be subject to the same drug- and drink-driving laws. This bill improves the current alcohol- and drug-testing regime by reducing red tape and ensuring that drug- and drink-driving continue to be effectively deterred on our roads. The bill remains consistent with this Government's continuing and robust commitment to reducing alcohol- and drug-related road trauma and to improving road safety in New South Wales. This is a good piece of legislation and I commend it to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.24 p.m.]: I support the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. November 2012 was the thirtieth anniversary of the introduction of random breath testing in New South Wales. It is estimated that over those 30 years it has saved about 7,000 lives. I support this bill because it strengthens the alcohol- and drug-testing regime in New South Wales. There was opposition in some quarters when random breath testing was introduced because some saw it as interfering with drivers' civil liberties. However, it has been demonstrated that random breath testing has saved a significant number of lives. The question of drug and alcohol testing calls to mind the general role of the State and whether these tests and regimes represent unnecessary nanny-state interference with the rights of individuals. I do not agree. In my inaugural speech I described myself as a Liberal in the tradition of Sir Robert Menzies.

That tradition stresses freedom of the individual but also takes an evidence-based approach to public policy. If one takes such an approach to many of the public policies that are decried as being "nanny statism", one sees that they have important social benefits in regard to public health and safety. That is the case with random breath testing; it is the case with fluoridation of our water supply, which some people see as an interference with their rights; and it is the case with vaccinations. Although the evidence is still evolving—so far so good—it would appear also to be the case with alcohol lockouts because they have reduced alcohol-fuelled violence. It is also the case with regard to taxes on cigarettes. Restrictions on cigarette advertising have seen a dramatic fall in cigarette consumption in Australia; in fact, Australians are among the lowest consumers of tobacco in the world. It is the case with school speed zones in that the evidence suggests they have had a demonstrable positive impact on safety around schools.

When people describe policies like these as "nanny statism", it is important to bear in mind the great social benefits they have had. It is also important to bear in mind that we are talking not only about the rights of individuals who are subject to these policies but also about the rights of individuals who may be harmed if people do not comply. That is manifestly true in the case of random breath testing. It is not only drunk drivers who are at risk of harming or killing themselves; they are also at risk of harming and killing innocent third parties. This policy now has general community support because of its success in reducing our road toll. This policy is not all about sticks; it also offers the carrot of education. The extensive enforcement of random breath tests, with thousands of roadside random drug tests being conducted every year, is supported by public education and awareness campaigns, which are reinforced by tough penalties.

Drug- and drink-driving offences are covered by the Road Transport Act 2013. As I said, drug and alcohol programs have had a massive impact on road trauma. In the past two years drink-driving fatalities have declined to an unprecedented low. This legislation amends the Road Transport Act to improve the capacity of New South Wales police officers to obtain necessary evidence for the prosecution of impaired drivers. It will do this by creating a new power to allow police to collect blood samples from intoxicated drivers who are physically unable to submit to breath analysis for the purpose of determining their blood-alcohol concentration. That is consistent with clause 9 of schedule 3, which deals with taking a blood sample following arrest if a person has attempted to provide an oral fluid sample but is unable to do so.

Several speakers have addressed various amendments that will improve the ability of police to obtain the necessary evidence for prosecuting impaired drivers. As other members have noted, the bill will make an amendment to streamline the processes for urinary sample taking in hospitals for drug testing. The bill will make amendments to keep up to date with modern laboratory processes for the purpose of evidential veracity to prove drink- and drug-driving offences. The bill will also amend schedule 1 to the Marine Safety Act 1998 to bring alcohol and drug testing procedures under that Act in line with these changes. I commend the bill to the House.

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

PUBLIC LIBRARIES FUNDING

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [4.30 p.m.]: I am pleased to table this petition, which indicates the high regard that the people of New South Wales have for public libraries. The Government shares that high regard and continues to deliver on its election commitment to invest in public libraries. This started with the investment of an additional \$4 million over four years in regional libraries and the delivery of wireless internet hotspots in rural and regional libraries. This year the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals have delivered a record \$27.5 million budget to support these outstanding institutions. Notably, we have created the Public Library Infrastructure Fund, which will deliver an additional \$15 million over four years to help to build key library infrastructure, including library buildings and information technology.

The Public Library Infrastructure Fund will support libraries to position themselves as community hubs, including appropriate co-locations with other community facilities and projects that will increase public space and technology. All public libraries in my electorate are welcoming homes to those in search of information in all areas of life. It is interesting how the nature of libraries has changed. When I was at school and university we hunted through logs and journals; today much of that is done online. Those tools and resources are now being made available online for fast and effective searching. The following infrastructure priority areas have been identified: library buildings and spaces, mobile libraries and major information and communications technology projects. In regional areas such as mine mobile libraries are an important means of giving people access to the knowledge, information and resources they require. As I have mentioned, technology is an important part of that process because many resources are now online.

Cooperative library development activities are also important. During my time as a councillor I was part of the South Coast Cooperative Library Service and was very proud of the staff in all our public libraries, particularly across local government and in educational institutions such as the University of Wollongong. This investment is critical to assisting local councils improve their libraries and deliver quality services to their communities. This Government has done more than any other government to support public libraries and give them the infrastructure they need to improve their services. We have consistently demonstrated a better

understanding of the challenges faced by smaller councils. Indeed, earlier this week the Minister for Local Government launched the Fit for the Future policy for local government. However, I wish to address some claims that are being circulated.

First, that library funding was once split 50:50 between State and local governments. Whilst some country councils with small populations, low expenditure and a low rate base were able to attract matching funding from the State Government between 1945 and 1952, the vast majority of councils have never qualified for 50:50 funding. Secondly, whilst the \$1.85 prescribed amount per capita has not increased since 1997, it is not true to say that library subsidies have not increased since that time. The prescribed amount is just one component of the annual subsidy paid to councils. All councils receive well in excess of this amount per capita, with a New South Wales average of \$2.74 in 2014-15.

Local councils across New South Wales operate 369 public libraries and with impressive growth in recent years libraries are showing that they are more relevant than ever. Visits have grown to more than 35 million per annum, which is an increase of more than 20 per cent since 2001. These figures and the growth in local government expenditure from \$303 million in 2009-10 to \$345 million in 2012-13 are not indicative of a sector in crisis. In fact, it is indicative of a booming sector. Indeed, given those figures, it is the most popular municipal service on offer. It is commendable that councils are continuing to develop library services, which are assets to their local community, and the State Government continues to assist them.

In a number of electorates across the State libraries continue to play an important role not only in the delivery of traditional books but also in the delivery of toy, CD and video libraries. For example, in the member for Camden's electorate, government funding has also enabled public libraries to innovate. Camden's pop-up library takes services outside the library walls to community events, thus addressing the needs of a region that is experiencing tremendous population growth. The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals continue to value our public libraries and the ongoing relationship with local councils. I commend the petition and public libraries to the House.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.35 p.m.]: I share the Government's high regard for public libraries. In fact, I suggest very few citizens in this State would not hold public libraries in high regard. The NSW Public Libraries Association has presented this petition because it needs more funding. The funding of the day-to-day running of our public libraries is a problem. The member for Kiama was correct in saying it was a complicated split from the 1930s but the reality is that in many cases it was a 50:50 split. Now the funding split is 90 per cent local government and 10 per cent State Government. Government funding of 10 per cent is simply not enough to help with the day-to-day running of our precious local libraries. The State Government should give consideration to increasing that funding.

While the \$27.5 million budget is pleasing, funding of \$15 million over four years is good but not good enough. I have been doing a lot of reading about the types of problems libraries are having. For example, if councils cannot afford to give local libraries more funding then staffing levels will decrease. This will mean that children, adults and pensioners will not receive assistance in our libraries in the future. A decreased level of staff qualification is also a problem. We need these people to be professional and learned. I know that Newcastle City Council is looking very carefully at what it can purchase next year. When the amount of money available is down the new twenty-first century equipment cannot be purchased. Shortening of library hours is always a consideration when councils have to cut costs. One particular library in my patch opens only three times a week for very few hours. It is not good enough in the twenty-first century that people who work are unable to access library services.

Less funding means fewer programs and, for those who live in rural and regional areas, reduced community library outreach. For example, councils will give less funding to mobile libraries, which are very popular, so the buses will be less frequently out on the roads. We need to consider whether the \$1.85 per head of population, introduced in the term of a Liberal government, is sufficient. No, I do not think so and I am sure that the NSW Public Libraries Association does not think so or it would not be putting this petition to us. Fundamentally, our words are hollow if we say we share a love for and commitment to libraries but we are not prepared to match that support with dollars for councils. Cost-shifting has become increasingly a problem for councils over the years. We need to address this problem because our popular and beloved libraries bear the brunt of this cost-shifting. We must start looking at increasing the annual budget for the day-to-day running of our beloved libraries.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [4.40 p.m.]: I have just worked out why the member for Wallsend has an interest in the funding of public libraries. Obviously she was a librarian, because she

always says, "Sh!" to me across the Chamber. She learned that at the library. It is interesting to note that the first free libraries in New South Wales were in the city of Sydney and the city of Broken Hill. The great city of Broken Hill led the way in providing a library for its citizens. There is no doubt that funding of public libraries is an issue. I believe that if we had more money we would do more. The rot started well before the Coalition got into government. In the four years that I sat in opposition during the Labor Government term in office, that Government nipped off 5 per cent each year from library funding, primarily under Frank Sartor's regime.

This slide cannot be attributed to the Coalition. The NSW Library Act, which legislated for free libraries, was introduced by a Coalition Government. This process was started more than 70 years ago to ensure that people had access to libraries in their area. There is a little bit of misleading information in this petition in relation to the 50:50 funding. Under the original Act libraries qualified for their share of funding based on the size of the communities they serviced. It was only really small communities that received 50:50 funding. I believe it was far less than that in the bigger centres. Let us not say that 50:50 funding happened across the board, because that certainly was not the case.

Councils are bearing the cost of running public libraries—it is as simple as that. Councils have less money now than they did in the past. We have seen reports demonstrating that governments have shifted costs on to councils, and library funding is an example of that. Ultimately we live in a world where there is less. No doubt this Government would give more if more were available. I think all Coalition members are sympathetic to the cause of libraries in their electorates. I have visited most of the libraries operating in the Murray-Darling electorate and I am well aware of their concerns. I acknowledge the great work done by the State Library of New South Wales that allows Broken Hill to lend books to people in the more remote areas. That service is subsidised by this organisation and it is a great service.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [4.43 p.m.]: I commend the citizens of New South Wales for bringing this petition to this place so we have a chance to debate the very important issue of public library funding. Some of the points in the petition are:

In the run up to the last State election, the current State Government said that they would increase ongoing funding for public libraries. They have not.

Successive NSW State Governments have put in less and less in real terms every year.

I believe everyone in this House has memories of going to their local libraries to escape by reading books such as *Peter Pan and Wendy* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This petition comes at a time when people in low socio-economic electorates, such as Shellharbour, are using their library services more and more. The public libraries with which I have been involved for more than 15 years provide invaluable services to communities. The staff are second to none but I believe their skills and qualifications are not held in high regard. They provide mobile libraries and special needs services, as well as running basic information technology courses.

Students use Higher School Certificate resources at their local libraries, and there are even homework clubs at libraries. I commend the citizens of New South Wales who have signed this petition for bringing it to our attention. I urge the State Government to increase funding for this vital service. With the threat of local council amalgamations by stealth throughout New South Wales, one thing is for sure: we will see the reduction of library services in every electorate. I say to all members, especially the member for Kiama, that we should stand up for our communities and oppose council amalgamations so we can retain such services.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: Why does the member for Shellharbour not stand up in a democratic pre-selection that is being denied by the national executive of the Labor Party?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member's time has expired. The member for Cabramatta and the member for Shellharbour will resume their seats.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

NATIONAL RESCUE OF THE MONTH AWARD

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.46 p.m.]: I inform the House that six members of the Pacific Palms Surf Life Saving Club have received a national award for the rescue of a rock fisherman at Seal Rocks. The members are Lennon Fisher, Kel McCredie, John Gray, Brian Wilcox, Julie Wilcox and Ben Atkinson who received the June 2014 National Rescue of the Month award.

The lifesavers rescued a man who had been fishing with a group of four from a rock platform near Sugarloaf Point Lighthouse when a large wave swept three of the men into the water. After launching a rescue jetski and searching for a long time in strong and treacherous seas, Lennon Fisher saw one man stranded on a rocky outcrop and was able to retrieve him. Two others from the fishing party were rescued, but the fourth person could not be found despite extensive searches by the rescuers.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Hansard will have difficulty hearing the member with the call if everyone is talking at once.

1ST WALLSEND SCOUT TROOP

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.47 p.m.]: We acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the 1st Wallsend Scout Group, who have recently refurbished their hall's bathroom facilities. Community Building Partnership funding, support from Wallsend Bunnings and the hard work of the Scout group team, especially President Clare Tipper and committee members Hugh Sparkes and Fiona Maybury, ensured that the much-needed shower and toilet facilities were completed. Just seeing how much fun the Scouts were having at the launch of the new facilities demonstrates how relevant Scouts are to twenty-first century Australia. We wish 1st Wallsend Scout group all the best in the future.

NICOLE FITZSIMONS FOUNDATION

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.48 p.m.]: Kate Fitzsimons from the Nicole Fitzsimons Foundation recently made a very personal travel safety campaign presentation to shire high schools. I was lucky enough to see Kate present to years 11 and 12 students at Cronulla High School. Kate is no stranger to how tragedy can strike if we let our safety standards drop while travelling overseas. Kate is Nicole's sister. Nicole, a talented dancer on the brink of becoming a Nine Network sports journalist, was only 24 years old when she was killed in a motorbike accident in Thailand in October 2012.

The Nicole Fitzsimons Foundation, found at www.nicolefitzsimons.com and established in Nicole's honour, aims to help gifted performing artists and sportspeople to reach their full potential. It also raises awareness of travel safety overseas among young Australian tourists through presentations at local schools and community clubs. The Fitzsimons family hopes to save other families from suffering the heartache they have suffered. The presentation at Cronulla High School was the eighty-fifth by Kate.

RETIREMENT OF POLICE INSPECTOR JOHN BEHRENDT

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.49 p.m.]: After more than 40 years in the New South Wales Police Force, Shoalhaven Police Inspector John Behrendt has retired. Inspector Behrendt has been based in Nowra for the past eight years. He was involved with Operation Puccini in Cabramatta during the 1990s. Puccini was about making Cabramatta's central business district a safer place for our community and stopping the blatant drug use and drug dealing on Cabramatta's streets. As he was one of the officers working on Operation Puccini, Inspector Behrendt deserves my community's gratitude for his part in turning Cabramatta into the thriving place it is today. Because of him and his fellow officers, Operation Puccini was a great success. It resulted in more than 7,000 arrests and more than 11,000 charges. I thank Inspector Behrendt on behalf of the people of Cabramatta and wish him all the best in his retirement.

HASTINGS AUTO RESTORERS SOCIETY

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.50 p.m.]: I congratulate the Hastings Auto Restorers Society on its inspiring efforts raising funds for cancer patients at the oncology unit of

Port Macquarie Base Hospital. A record crowd at this year's Hastings Auto Restorers Society Swap Meet saw the total donations made to the oncology unit since 2009 surpass \$36,500. A cheque for \$8,000 from the June swap meet was presented to staff at the unit last Thursday, raised from the more than 2,500 visitors to the event at Port Macquarie Racecourse. Swap meet organiser Norm Dunn said good weather, big crowds and generous community support for the club's raffle helped achieve the record gift, which will be used to assist patients with their accommodation and travel expenses during treatment. North Coast Cancer Institute social worker Nicole Edwards said the club's generosity would provide solid support for those patients facing out-of-pocket expenses attached to their treatment and recovery.

"The auto restorers club has some very generous members who spend a lot of their personal time helping us to provide extra support to our patients," Ms Edwards said.

Patients at the North Coast Cancer Institute have an easier time during their treatment thanks to the continued generosity of motoring enthusiasts of the Hastings and beyond.

BATES DRIVE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [4.51 p.m.]: I ask the House to acknowledge the extraordinary ongoing commitment and work of the teachers and staff, the volunteers, the parents and the carers of the students at Bates Drive Public School. The school caters for special needs students with physical and intellectual disabilities as well as challenging behaviours. On 14 August I attended the official opening of the impressive new facilities at Bates Drive with the Minister for Education. The \$4.4 million project, funded primarily under the Building the Education Revolution program, included the replacement of all the demountables with five new classrooms, a multipurpose sensory room, a new administration area, a covered outdoor learning area and covered linkways to all buildings. It is a school I have been privileged to have in my electorate and to have been involved with since I was first elected in 1999.

More recently, I have worked with the school's fabulous principal, Ms Robyn Compton, and Parents and Citizens Association President, Mrs Melissa Severino, to address the health issues facing the school's vulnerable students as a result of the presence, on adjacent land, of a flying fox colony numbering 18,000. All present at the opening of the new facilities welcomed the sight of the 20-metre buffer zone between the school and the colony, cleared thanks to the assistance of the Minister for Environment, to help reduce the risk to the children. I thank both the Minister for Education and the Minister for the Environment. I ask the House to join me in thanking all involved in Bates Drive Public School for their continuing dedication to providing an exceptional and caring learning environment for all their vulnerable students over many years.

SHOALHAVEN BUSINESS CHAMBER

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [4.52 p.m.]: I congratulate Nicole Francis on being recently elected President of the Shoalhaven Business Chamber. Most recently Nicole has been the Business Manager for Telstra Business Centres for more than four years, and in Nowra for two years. In two years the Telstra Business Centre in Nowra has not only become profitable but also just recently achieved the most prestigious award for New South Wales and the ACT. Being both a driven and motivated person with a proven ability to achieve results, Nicole brings years of experience in management and brilliant leadership skills to her new role. Nicole has already devoted 12 months to sitting on the management committee at the Shoalhaven Business Chamber, as well as being active on the Nowra CBD Promotions Committee, the Nowra CBD Action Committee and the CCTV Committee.

I also congratulate Mike Leask on being elected as vice-president of the Shoalhaven Business Chamber. Mike is currently the executive manager of a national accounting firm with expertise in forensics, turnaround, insolvency and specialist advisory services. He was previously chief executive officer [CEO] of the Illawarra Business Chamber and has an intricate knowledge and understanding of the chamber movement, which will be of enormous benefit to the Shoalhaven Business Chamber executive. I also acknowledge the outgoing president, Warren Seccombe, for his dedicated service to the role and my good friends who continue their involvement—John Lamont, Chance Hanlon, Tony Emery and Lynette Kearney.

MOUNT DRUITT TOWN RANGERS LADIES FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.53 p.m.]: I am pleased to report to the House that the Mount Druitt Town Rangers ladies division 5 football team recently won their grand final. The team had suffered some disappointments in previous years. However this year, in a gutsy performance, it won the title. To

play in the grand final, the Mount Druitt Town Rangers had to defeat the defending champions, Parklea. The team did this with a score of 4-1. The team then played Plumpton, also in my electorate, in a nail-biting game. Plumpton were up 1-0 at half time and with just six minutes to go the score was 2-2 until Emily Vessel kicked the winning goal to give the Rangers this year's title. The grand final is another example of the high level of football being played in the Mount Druitt area. Well done to both Plumpton and the Mount Druitt Town Rangers. Congratulations to the Rangers. This is another example of the continued success of the Mount Druitt Town Rangers Football Club in the local district.

CHARLIE MOIR, EMERGENCY SERVICES MEDAL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.54 p.m.]: I commend the chairman of the NSW State Emergency Service [SES] Volunteers Association and Inverell local, Charlie Moir, on reaching a milestone 25 years of valuable service to the SES. Charlie was recognised this year with the prestigious Emergency Services Medal for his continued commitment to the NSW SES and for going above and beyond as a member of the service in helping the Australian community throughout disasters. With an extensive knowledge of flooding issues and their impacts on the Inverell shire and Macintyre Valley, Charlie was appointed as incident controller for numerous flood events in the shire, for the 2009 Boggabilla storm and the 2011 Inverell flood. He was instrumental in the planning, development and funding of the NSW SES Inverell unit headquarters and regional training centre. Charlie's broad and comprehensive range of skills and experiences has made him a valuable and intrinsic part of the success of the SES, both in the past and in its future. I congratulate Charlie Moir on his 25 years of service and wish him the very best for his continuing role serving the community.

KINGS CROSS LOCAL AREA COMMAND

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.55 p.m.]: I congratulate the Kings Cross police on their proactive work in building positive relationships with young people in the electorate of Sydney. The Kings Cross Local Area Command is running a touch football training program at Plunkett Street Public School in Woolloomooloo and will take the team to participate in a touch football competition—a first for the school. Twenty Plunkett Street Public School students joined police officers on a one-day excursion to the Stanwell Tops Conference Centre. They took part in group activities, building skills and confidence in an outdoor environment very different from the inner city they are used to. Police plan an overnight camp for this group later in 2014. Kings Cross Local Area Command is also running an eight-week personal safety workshop series with older students from East Sydney High School at the Woolloomooloo PCYC. I congratulate the Local Area Commander, Michael Fitzgerald, and his team on these initiatives that will build positive relationships between young people and police and support the great work of our local schools.

NARRABEEN LAKES PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [4.56 p.m.]: I recognise the contribution that Narrabeen Lakes Public School has made to the education of countless local children across the Narrabeen district in my community of Pittwater over the past 125 years. Consistent with its motto, Narrabeen Lakes Public School has served our community with honour, courtesy and pride, and has inculcated these virtues into the children it has schooled. I congratulate school principal Andy Rankin and thank school staff past and present, including Jill Dubois, who now serves the public in my Pittwater electorate office, for their dedication, concern and compassion for students and their families. I note that yesterday the school celebrated its 125th anniversary at an open day held on the school grounds. I wish everyone who forms part of the school community every success as they continue to uphold the traditions that make Narrabeen Lakes Public School such an integral part of our local community.

WESTERN SYDNEY URDU LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.56 p.m.]: I recognise the event held by the Western Sydney Urdu Language School on Saturday 16 August. The event was a celebration of Pakistan's 68th Independence Day, which commemorates the establishment of Pakistan as an independent state in 1947. The event was held at Amity College at Prestons, a school I know well. There were presentations on the day from students of the Western Sydney Urdu Language School, from the foundation level class and upwards. The Western Sydney Urdu Language School provides a Saturday morning language class for children who wish to learn Urdu. It is an important part of retaining, remembering and celebrating Pakistani cultural traditions. There are, of course, quite

a few Saturday community language schools around south-west Sydney. They are a concrete manifestation of the cultural diversity of the Liverpool area and the south-west region of Sydney. They are an important part of our multicultural society.

HORT ENTERPRISES

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [4.57 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to Hort Enterprises in Orange which, after 19 years, has recently undergone a series of expansions and renovations. Reflecting on the development, maturity and stewardship of the organisation, Jeff Hort Engineering was rebadged to become Hort Enterprises, and a new factory and office facilities are currently under construction on Clergate Road. From small beginnings with only two staff, the engineering business has developed and diversified into an organisation providing engineering design and drafting services, project management, planning and site installation services, maintenance services, steel fabrication, welding and a number of other services. I pay tribute to the team at Hort Enterprises, which includes Managing Director Jeff Hort, General Manager Craig Hort, Production Manager Chris Kelly, Project Manager Adam Sara, Operations Manager Blake Powell, Wear Resistant Materials Manager Chris Collins, Engineering Manager Chris Hutchinson and Business Development Manager John Anstey. Congratulations to the team and well done to Jeff Hort.

BOTANY BAY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [4.58 p.m.]: On the second Friday of each month, the Botany Bay Business Enterprise Centre hosts Pub Biz Networking evenings to give local business owners the opportunity to network with each other and promote their businesses. I have attended a number of these evenings as well as early morning breakfasts and been given the opportunity to discuss the local issues that affect local businesses and their staff with business owners and employees. As the year progresses I have noticed a significant increase in the number of attendees at the networking evenings, which is a reflection of the quality of the events that are organised by the Botany Bay Business Enterprise Centre.

In an era when people get caught up in their own worlds, either professionally or personally, these networking events provide the opportunity for locals to share ideas and build relationships with like-minded individuals. At the events I have attended I have met bankers, computer technicians, statisticians and people from many other industries. These events present a great opportunity to build the local economy in different industries. I congratulate Botany Bay Business Enterprise Centre, in particular the Executive Officer Marcus Dwyer, on its continued interest in our community. I look forward to attending more of its events in the future.

KATE JOHNSON, NSW HEALTH EXCELLENCE IN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY AWARDS RECIPIENT

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.59 p.m.]: This afternoon I congratulate local nurse Kate Johnson, who was acknowledged as a finalist in the NSW Health Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards at Parliament House today. Kate is an Assistant in Nursing at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital and was one of 22 finalists in the Excellence in Nursing/Midwifery—Assistant in Nursing/Assistant in Midwifery category. Ms Johnson has displayed excellence in patient care to many mothers and expectant mothers across the region. The second annual NSW Health Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards acknowledge some of the State's most skilled and dedicated nurses and midwives for their outstanding contribution to healthcare in New South Wales. Ms Johnson was one of 22 finalists at the awards who were chosen from more than 150 nominees.

Our nurses and midwives deliver high-quality care at our hospitals, in the community and in people's homes. They make an enormous difference to the lives of their patients and their patients' loved ones, not just through their clinical skill but through their compassionate and good-natured devotion to their duties. There are few professions more highly valued by the community than nursing and midwifery. I again congratulate South Coast local nurse Kate Johnson and thank her for her continued service to the Shoalhaven.

TIARNA DUNN, YMCA NSW YOUTH PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.00 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to congratulate Bass High School year 12 student Tiarna Dunn on successfully representing the Bankstown electorate at the 2014 YMCA NSW Youth Parliament. The Youth Parliament provides participants with firsthand engagement in legislative and parliamentary processes, empowering young people with the leadership skills needed to make a difference to issues affecting their community. Tiarna enthusiastically represented her school, family and the Bankstown community with pride and distinction as this year's Youth Parliament representative.

Bass High School Principal David Horton described Tiarna as one of the outstanding leaders at Bass High School, and her leadership qualities are a credit to her parents, Marcus and Vanessa, and her teachers at Bass High School. Tiarna is also a leader on the sporting field: She is the current captain of the Bankstown City Lions under 17 Women's State League team and also plays women's football and touch football for Bass High School. Congratulations Tiarna.

POINT PIPER MARINA

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [5.01 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to an important issue for many people in the electorate of Vaucluse: the proposed development of the Point Piper Marina in Rose Bay. On 1 September 2014, residents advised me that they had received notification from Woollahra council that Point Piper Marina (NSW) Pty Ltd had lodged a development application that would expand the marina by an additional 24 berths. The proposed berths, although not altering the number of boats moored, would reduce the visual amenity and views of Rose Bay and Point Piper for local residents and visitors alike.

I was pleased to be a part of the efforts leading to the State Heritage listing, along with Woollahra council, by submitting a petition to Parliament in July 2012 requesting State Heritage listing for the Rose Bay seawall, promenade and its setting. More than 800 signatures were collected from the community. On 22 August 2014 the extensive view of Sydney Harbour from Rose Bay promenade—immediately adjacent to the proposed Point Piper development—was appropriately recognised by the Heritage Council and the New South Wales Minister for Heritage when it was placed on the State Heritage Register. I understand the development application would impact negatively on the visual and broader amenity that I, along with local residents, Woollahra council and the Minister for Heritage, have worked so hard to protect. For those reasons, I oppose any excessive expansion of the marina.

SEEK A SKILL CAREERS EXPO

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

ROCKDALE RANGERS WOMEN'S RUGBY TEAM

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.03 p.m.]: I congratulate the Rockdale Rangers Women's Rugby team, whose home ground is Redmond Field in Francis Avenue, Brighton-Le-Sands. They defeated Sydney University on Saturday 9 August 2014 at Granville Park to claim their inaugural women's rugby premiership. In only their fourth year in the competition, Rockdale Rangers came from third place to win 19-7 and claim the premiership. Rockdale Rangers was voted the most improved club by their peers. I wish them continued success.

READING JETS A TO Z

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.04 p.m.]: Sisters Kath and Zoe Watson from my electorate of Davidson have created a special iPad app to help children learn to read. It is called Reading Jets A to Z. Both Kath and Zoe have also provided tutoring services for students and found that using technology helped children to learn. They found a gap in available educational apps, as most were made for the United States with an American accent. They decided to create their own app in the NSW Foundation font used in our schools, with an Australian accent. It features three games for each letter of the alphabet, with voiceovers to help children with pronunciations. I congratulate Kath and Zoe on creating such a useful and innovative education product for young students. I understand the app is currently available on iPads and that an iPhone version is in development.

R U OK? DAY

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, Assistant Minister for Health) [5.05 p.m.]: Today I had the honour to participate in a range of activities to acknowledge R U OK? Day events

right across New South Wales. It is a very important day when people have the opportunity to ask family, friends, colleagues, loved ones the simple question, "R U OK?" That simple statement can save lives, and I certainly know that from my own experience over the past couple of weeks. A good friend of mine in his early twenties was posting some interesting things on Facebook. We asked him that question and it turned out that he was not okay. We immediately dropped tools and spent a lot of time with him. It turns out that he was in some pretty dark places. I congratulate my staff on identifying that and I encourage everyone today to ask somebody they know, "R U OK?"

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ILLAWARRA MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [5.06 p.m.]: I will make some brief remarks about mental health services in the Illawarra and particularly at Shellharbour Hospital. Over the past few weeks there have been some disturbing incidents relating to the provision of mental health services at Shellharbour Hospital's Eloura West unit. I am glad that the Minister for Mental Health is in the Chamber to listen to this private member's statement. These concerning incidents have been canvassed in the local media and relate primarily to the alleged murder of one patient by another on 31 July 2014. I do not intend to canvass this incident because it would be inappropriate, given that there is a police investigation on foot and the Coroner will hand down the findings in due course.

Following this incident, ABC Illawarra reported on the deaths of at least three other former patients from Shellharbour Hospital's Eloura West unit. To be very clear: I do not suggest that there is any link between the deaths of these former patients and the alleged murder that took place on 31 July 2014. Following this report by ABC Illawarra, I formally wrote to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Mental Health seeking an urgent briefing on the adequacy of mental health services and the protection of patients and staff at Shellharbour Hospital's Eloura West facility. I am pleased that the Minister for Mental Health has agreed to hold a briefing for me and my parliamentary colleagues representing the southern Illawarra region by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District on 23 September 2014. Concerns about the Eloura facility have been raised with me over a period of time since I was first elected.

Indeed, just prior to the incidents I have mentioned, I met with a constituent who was a patient at Eloura West for approximately three weeks, who described to me what she viewed as the failing of mental health services at Shellharbour Hospital. I have made a representation on her behalf to the Minister. The provision of mental health services should be above politics, and I believe it is in this place. I have made it very clear in all of my public comments—and I do so again this evening—that I am not critical of the Government for the incidents that have been reported in the local Illawarra media. Unfortunately, that has not stopped at least one of my local parliamentary colleagues from the Government side asserting in appalling comments published in the *Lake Times* this week that because I asked for a briefing from the Minister I was "playing politics".

Mr Gareth Ward: You were.

Ms ANNA WATSON: No, I was not. However, I note with interest that he quite happily disclosed to the *Lake Times* that he too had sought a briefing from the Minister. It is our obligation as elected local members of Parliament to ensure that we are satisfied that the provision of mental health services available at Shellharbour Hospital's Eloura West unit is adequate. The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District indicates that there are two hospitals in the Illawarra region at which inpatient mental health services are provided. They are Wollongong and Shellharbour public hospitals.

According to the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, there are no similar inpatient services available in the Shoalhaven region at present. Non-inpatient services are, however, provided across the Wollongong, Shellharbour and Shoalhaven communities at outpatient mental health clinics, by community mental health teams and at rehabilitation, accommodation and specialist services for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and adolescents. According to the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District's Asset

Strategic Plan 2013-14 to 2023-24, Shellharbour Hospital's adult acute and high-dependency service currently has 49 beds available to treat mental health inpatients. It projects by 2022 that 103 beds will be required. The Health Services Union [HSU] told the *Lake Times* last week that it was concerned that some high-dependency beds at the Eloura unit had been reduced.

I will be interested to hear from Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District officials at our briefing that this is not the case or, if it is, why the reductions have occurred. The other important issue that I will seek assurances about is the safety of patients and staff at Shellharbour Hospital, including at the Eloura unit. I will be meeting with HSU officials tomorrow to discuss their concerns about the adequacy of mental health services and safety issues at Shellharbour Hospital. I will update the House on the results of the briefing with Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District officials in coming sittings.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, Assistant Minister for Health) [5.11 p.m.]: I thank the member for Shellharbour for raising those issues. I also thank the member for Kiama, Gareth Ward, for helping to organise a meeting with people from all sides of politics in that region. The Government is committed to delivering mental health services to people in need across this State. In fact, this year the Government allocated \$1.62 billion for the provision of mental health services, which is a 32 per cent increase in the term of office of this Government. I am dedicated to ensuring that everybody receives the help they need. I am advised that every local health district across this fine State will treat more people now than they did in the past 12 months. I look forward to the briefing.

NOAH'S SHOALHAVEN

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.12 p.m.]: On Saturday 6 September I had the pleasure of attending the Noah's Shoalhaven Adventure Challenge at the University of Wollongong Shoalhaven campus at West Nowra in my electorate. The work Noah's does in the Shoalhaven is some of the finest community service I have been privileged to see in our community. Providing early intervention services for children with special needs aged from just three months to seven years, Noah's has played an essential part in laying the foundations for young people in our area to have the support they need to live happy and meaningful lives.

Established in 1981, Noah's Shoalhaven provides a number of valuable services. By providing developmental delay and disability services, behaviour support services, Aboriginal partnerships, and early childhood services support, it is clear the organisation does all that it can to service and reach children in our community. Its work recognises that each child is different and it strives to provide individualised services that bring out the best of a child's passions, interests and personality. Noah's provides countless individualised services including playgroup programs, helping children with autism, providing psychology services and a behaviour support network and specialised Indigenous services. The organisation works to not allow any child's needs to go unmet. Since 2011 the Adventure Challenge has provided an integral part of the community support that allows Noah's to continue to provide such a high level of service.

Whilst the much-needed rain over past weeks dampened the tracks and clouds circled above, the weather did not prevent more than 200 participants from taking part in the Noah's annual adventure race day last Saturday. A broad cross-section of the community took part in the race, with teams coming from bike-riding groups, a surf life saving club, the Royal Australian Navy, local high schools, businesses and the general local community. Each year Noah's receives assistance from members of the 816 Squadron from HMAS *Albatross* who dedicate their time to set up the adventure race and help facilitate the running of the event. This support further displays the regard in which Noah's is held on the South Coast.

It is clear that the course is a challenging one that requires all participants to demonstrate their fitness in running, paddling and mountain biking. On the day approximately \$50,000 was raised to help support Noah's Ark Shoalhaven. I commend each team and squad that took part in the Adventure Challenge for coming together to support such an important cause. I am privileged to be a patron of Noah's Shoalhaven and the Noah's Adventure Challenge and I am absolutely committed to its work. It is rare to see such selflessness and devotion as is exhibited in this organisation's activities. The organisational values of inclusiveness, collaboration, adaptiveness, respect and pursuing evidence-based solutions allow the best possible outcomes to be reached in each individual case.

I am pleased to be part of the Baird Government, which was the first State government to sign onto the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I am also proud to be part of a government that has delivered

\$1.43 million in funding for Noah's Shoalhaven under the Restart NSW Illawarra Infrastructure Fund. This funding is to be utilised to construct an Early Intervention Family Support Centre at the University of Wollongong Shoalhaven campus.

The \$2.9 million centre will be a purpose-designed one-stop shop for families of children with higher support needs and children with a disability. The centre will provide accommodation for early intervention services and an outreach program of the university's Early Start Program, which delivers innovative teaching programs, conducts multidisciplinary research and provides targeted family and parental engagement. The new facility will also provide targeted therapy services, family group sessions and training programs and will include playgroup rooms, therapy rooms, training facilities, parent meeting areas and additional disabled car parking spaces.

Minister Ajaka, the member for Kiama, the Government and I are committed to working with Noah's, other community organisations and local families to make individualised support possible for people with a disability. I am confident that the work and efforts, of which we are a part, will foster innovation, research, best practice and awareness to allow those living with a disability to realise their aspirations and achieve their full potential. I congratulate Ginger O'Brien, who is the Chief Executive Officer of Noah's Shoalhaven, and the entire Noah's team and volunteers on their continued work and efforts. I extend my congratulations to the participants in the 2014 Noah's Adventure Challenge and I thank Noah's for tirelessly serving our community. I look forward to continuing to support such a worthy organisation.

COONAMBLE EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western NSW) [5.16 p.m.]: What if the cure for cancer is inside the mind of a student who cannot afford to go to university? That question was put to me last month when I was lucky enough to attend the 10-year anniversary of the Coonamble Education Foundation, the group that has had arguably the biggest impact on the youth of Coonamble over the past decade.

The Coonamble Education Foundation provides funding to help local school leavers make the transition into further education or jobs. Grants are provided for education- or job-related expenses such as tools of trade, textbooks, computers, or accommodation costs for students moving away from home. The foundation raises money through donations and local events, and some of this is matched by university and corporate sponsorship. No government funding goes towards the foundation; it is up to the commitment of the community to ensure the funds are raised.

When establishing the Coonamble branch 10 years ago foundation chair Ginny Taylor said, "We'd really like to help all the kids who apply, but it depends on the money that we raise." Ten years later the foundation has received donations to the value of \$218,000, which has been distributed to 85 local students. That is 85 young people who were given the opportunity to go to university or TAFE to complete their studies who would not otherwise have been able to do so. It is 85 young people who have had the opportunity to learn skills that will secure them a decent income for the rest of their lives and who could become doctors, nurses, teachers, or—heaven forbid—politicians. It is also 85 young people who can bring their skills and qualifications back to the bush for the greater good of their community.

In a shire where one-third of the population live on rural properties and are reliant on the seasons, a poor run of years means parents struggle to send their kids to further education. The extra bit of help and support provided by the Coonamble Education Foundation can mean the difference between receiving a tertiary qualification and missing out for life. The work of the Coonamble Education Foundation has shown that it does not necessarily take a huge amount of money to send these kids on to further studies. Often they are only given a relatively small amount to help with the cost of textbooks but the encouragement and support that the students receive with the donation will spur them on to take the plunge into tertiary studies and complete their education.

All the grants are non-cash and instead cover the cost of study- or work-related expenses. Grants are not awarded based on academic success but on a student's financial need and demonstrated commitment to achieving their goal. The result of this support has led to recipients completing courses in medicine, law, physiotherapy, economics, electrical and mechanical trades, education, occupational therapy and a host of other pursuits. I am pleased to say that many of these students have brought their skills back to regional areas and rural businesses are profiting from them. One local example is Coonamble law firm Waterford Ryan, which employed local lad Sam Slacksmith after the foundation helped him to achieve his law degree. The Coonamble

Education Foundation is just one branch of the Country Education Foundation, which is a network of local education foundations that is expanding across Australia. If the success of the Coonamble Education Foundation is being replicated by the 40 other education foundations across the country, I think we can be confident that the future of education and employment in rural Australia looks very bright.

TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR AND SIRENNE GOULD

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [5.20 p.m.]: I am pleased to inform the Chamber of the life and service of a wonderful couple, Mr and Mrs Arthur and Sirenne Gould. Although Mr and Mrs Gould now reside out of my electorate, they remain well-known figures in the Lane Cove electorate. Indeed, I would go so far as to call them icons in the Lane Cove area. I am proud to refer to them in this House as my dearest of friends. Arthur, more commonly referred to as Nat, made himself a living by picking mushrooms in the 1930s as a teenager in Queensland. He used the little money he made to pay for flying lessons at Archerfield, Brisbane, and by the time he was 17 he had acquired his A licence in flying.

Nat served with distinction with the Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] from the commencement of World War II. Nat's service culminated in May of 1942 when he and his squadron occupied a forward position at Milne Bay, New Guinea. Japanese forces were closing in on the landing from the sea. Nat valiantly dive-bombed through significant anti-aircraft fire to successfully sink an enemy ship. It is sobering to stop and think about the danger involved and the courage displayed by this great man. Nat chose his path at a very young age and took on the responsibilities of a man well beyond his age and stage of life. This no-nonsense approach to life would serve him well in years to come as he would be entrusted with the lives of many.

Along with Nat's unstinting service to the RAAF during the war, he managed to add to his list of successes by way of a short service commission with the Royal Navy, being based in England for three years. In 1965 Nat concluded his 17 years of service, retiring with the rank of commander. The generous service of the Goulds is not exclusive to Nat. His lovely, ever-charming and beautiful wife, Sirenne, has for many years gone beyond the call of duty when giving time to the community. For almost half a century Sirenne has been a member of the Spastic Centre. In fact, this year marks her thirtieth year as an honorary life member of the Spastic Centre of New South Wales.

Now living in Killara, Mr and Mrs Gould were long-time residents of Greenwich. Their time spent in Greenwich saw them serve and volunteer with a large number of local municipal and community-based organisations. The couple's civic service was pursued with a vigour that put younger couples to shame. Not surprisingly, in 1984 Sirenne was nominated for and received the Order of Australia medal for services to people with disabilities and in 2003 was awarded the Centenary medal for her ongoing works with charitable organisations. Sirenne remains a proud Australian, an indefatigable champion of Australia's great heritage and our nation's constitutional integrity. Despite Nat's years, he remains an avid sportsman and carries himself with the sort of humility yet confidence that could only be that of a war-time fighter pilot. Indeed, he still gets out to the golf course three times a week.

Even in their later years Nat and Sirenne are unable to stay still and are both ferociously independent. I have always believed that family and traditional marriage are not only enduring institutions but also the bedrock of a strong community. Nat and Sirenne proved me right in this respect, as after all these years they are still very much in love and very happy in marriage. The Goulds exemplify a spirit of service that we can all admire. The time they have given to the welfare of others serves as a shining example for younger generations in New South Wales and indeed our country at large. A compelling disposition of sacrifice and generosity make Mr and Mrs Gould a rare gift to our community as we look to them and others like them not only for wisdom and guidance but also to see the qualities that make a stronger and better world. We salute them and thank them for all they have done and continue to do.

CHINESE MOON FESTIVAL

CHINESE AUSTRALIAN SERVICES SOCIETY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.24 p.m.]: On 3 September I was honoured to join the Chinese Australian Services Society [CASS] Hua Xing Activity Group and approximately 200 members of the local Chinese Australian community in Bankstown to celebrate the 2014 Moon Festival at the Bankstown senior citizens centre. The Chinese Moon Festival falls on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month and is one of the

most significant traditional events on the Chinese lunar calendar celebrated by the Chinese Australian community in Bankstown, and indeed worldwide. The Moon Festival takes place at the time of the year when the moon is at its roundest and brightest. Upon the rising of the full moon, families congregate to participate in the traditional customs, including watching the full moon, eating traditional moon cakes and singing moon poems.

At the CASS Moon Festival celebration I had the pleasure of witnessing many traditional customs, including trying the delicious moon cake and viewing traditional dances and performances. The Chinese Australian Services Society Hua Xing Activity Group, based in Bankstown, was founded several decades ago to provide a wide range of welfare services to the community and vital settlement services that aim to assist new Chinese migrants to integrate into Australian society. The group arranges a variety of daily activities for elderly members of the Chinese Australian community throughout Bankstown and the wider Western Sydney community, including games, exercises, information sessions and a range of recreational opportunities. CASS, as it is better known, provides a comprehensive range of community services and activities not only in my community of Bankstown but throughout New South Wales.

More than 1,800 Chinese Australian families access settlement, health, welfare and social services and activities on a weekly basis. As the shadow Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, I take this opportunity to commend the work done by CASS in providing wonderful social and recreation activities that encourage healthy lifestyles, particularly amongst the elderly in the Chinese Australian community. CASS's growth and successes can be attributed to the tireless efforts of an active team of dedicated volunteers, and I commend them for their significant contribution. The Australian Chinese community is an important part of the fabric of our society. According to the 2011 Australian census, Chinese Australians make up about 4 per cent of Australia's population, with approximately 865,000 people identifying as having Chinese ancestry.

Two of those people are my parents, who were born in China of Russian descent. My parents and my grandparents spent many decades living in China. My grandparents have entertained our family with many stories about growing up in China and particularly the traditions of the Moon Festival. The Chinese Australian community in Bankstown is well established, with some members of the community tracing their roots back to the nineteenth century. I specifically thank the board of directors of the Chinese Australian Services Society and their council elders, including chairperson Mr Benze Leung and founding chairman Mr Henry Pan, OAM, and all the members of the CASS Hua Xing Activity Group for inviting me to join them.

I was delighted to attend the 2014 Moon Festival celebrations and experience the amazing hospitality on the day to mark the significance of this distinguished occasion. As members of Parliament we have many opportunities to embrace these wonderful traditions. The Moon Festival provides an opportunity to learn more about the wonderful culture and traditions of the Chinese. The Chinese are willing to engage with the broader community and to give us an opportunity to be part of their festival celebrations. Once again I congratulate CASS. I hope that everybody has had a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the Moon Festival.

WAVERLEY LOCAL HERO AWARDS

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [5.28 p.m.]: On Wednesday 27 August I attended the Waverley Council's 2014 Local Hero Awards, which celebrates the unique achievements and contributions of dedicated residents in my community. This year five truly inspirational people received awards. First, I congratulate Ruth Toflier-Riesel on receiving a certificate of commendation award for her work with Kids Giving Back, which is an organisation that encourages students to volunteer in their community. Ms Toflier-Riesel co-founded Kids Giving Back less than two years ago. Her goal is to inspire the next generation of our youth to be more involved in their communities and encourage them to give back. She believes if young people start volunteering at a young age they will contribute to their community throughout their lives. Carol Schlessinger, who is the other co-founder of Kids Giving Back, accepted the award on Ruth's behalf. I congratulate Carol as well for her unstinting efforts in encouraging students to volunteer.

Peter Quarterly, who also received a certificate of commendation, was recognised for his 26 years as Chairman of the North Bondi Precinct Committee. Twenty-six years is a long time. While he was recognised for his work as chairman of the committee, he has also been very active in the community in other ways, including as President of the Bondi Amateur Swimming Club. Nechama Israel, who is aged 17, received a certificate of commendation award for galvanising the Kesser Torah College community to donate to Sydney Homeless Connect. Nechama and her friends one day decided to donate food packages to homeless people but, upon hearing one man's story, Nechama was motivated to do whatever she could to help him and others in need on a

larger scale. She was able to arrange for many items, such as clothing and blankets, to be donated from across the school community. I commend Nechama for identifying homelessness as an important issue in our community and for then taking the initiative to address it.

Liron Smith, who is aged 13, won the 2014 Young Hero Award for his volunteer work in the Kids Giving Back program, Cook For Good. Liron has contributed his time making meals for homeless shelters, including the Wayside Cafe and Rough Edges, and by giving both young and old in the Waverley area food to eat. Whenever Kids Giving Back posts a call for volunteers on its Facebook page, Liron is always the first person to respond and participate. He is an inspirational young man and a great role model for the younger people of my local community. Finally, I congratulate the 2014 Local Hero, Joan Heather Johnson, AM, who was recognised for her distinguished 34-year career as a registered nurse and more than 30 years of service in roles such as President of Waverley and Woollahra Community and Seniors Centre Associations and the New South Wales President and committee member of Australian Council on the Ageing.

Additionally, Joan Johnson was either president, committee member or volunteer for the following organisations: the New South Wales Nurses Association, the New South Wales Occupational Health and Safety Council, the New South Wales Health Complaints Committee, the Sydney Town Hall volunteers and the South Eastern Sydney Committee for Quality Health Care. Joan's commitment to the areas of ageing and women's services is unsurpassed in our local community and led to her being awarded the Order of Australia medal in 1994 for services to the aged. She is both a local hero for my community and a national hero for her widespread impact throughout her lifetime.

I thank the Waverley Council and its mayor, Sally Betts, for again organising these awards. The guest speaker on the night was Mr Jon Dee. Jon is recognised in Australia and internationally for work co-founding the environmental organisation Planet Ark and National Tree Day. Jon delivered a very entertaining speech in which he emphasised how small actions, persistence and devotion to a cause can lead to big achievements that touch the lives of many people. That was clearly applicable to this year's local heroes, who volunteer their time in our community on a low-key basis—not expecting anything in return, but simply wanting to help. In doing so, their efforts have led to much bigger things. The Local Hero Awards are a fantastic initiative that really shines a light on people who contribute their time so selflessly, with their efforts often going unnoticed. I am pleased that their efforts are now recognised. I congratulate all local heroes for their extraordinary efforts to improve the lives of others and for the betterment of my local community. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

MOLONG MAGPIES RUGBY UNION CLUB

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.33 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the recent miracle at Molong when the Molong Magpies rugby team claimed the 2014 GrainCorp Cup southern division title. It was an absolutely thrilling game in which the Magpies, the defending champions, were up against the Blayney Rams at Molong. It has been a wonderfully successful season for the mighty Magpies, who are in their sixtieth year. It has to be said that things did not start well for the Molong Magpies. There was so much contact in the first half that they were trailing at half-time by a considerable margin. The score was 19-3 at half-time, but in what people are still calling the "miracle at Molong", in the eightieth minute the Magpies stormed back, courtesy of a Kyle Travis try, to hit the lead in the dying seconds of the game and convert the try to seal the match as a 29-26 thrilling victory over the Blayney Rams. It was a day that will be long remembered in Molong. I was there and saw it myself. When Captain Kyle Travis crossed for the try there was almost a stunned silence because the huge crowd could not believe what was happening. The match certainly was the miracle at Molong.

I pay tribute to all the mighty Magpies who were part of that thrilling victory. In particular, I pay tribute to all the team members and committee members who have worked so hard. I mention the club's legend and president of the committee, Gordon Welsh. I also mention Jim Gavin; Tom Degreenlaw; Brodie Travis; Ross Cary; Josh Pepper; Dean Butler; Tim Rodd; Chris Hayes; Will Oldham; Dan Sandford; Joe Reid; Kyle Travis—the miracle worker who scored in the dying seconds of the match—Matt Hawke; Joe Doyle; Pat Russell; Mitch Tabernor; the great Gordon Welsh, who deserves to be mentioned again; Michael Sandford; Michael Reynolds; Dan Walker; Dylan Travis; Stuart Hobbs; Matthew Stevenson; Stephan Stander; Shaun McGarity; Rob Ferguson; Nick Rodd; Simon Shannon; Dave Murray and Mac Gorringer. I also pay tribute to the team's super coach, Andy Hillan, who worked miracles with the team this year. I saw the team's very first game of the season, at Canowindra, the semi-final against Condobolin and the final, where I witnessed the miracle. It is a very close-knit club and its members all came together wonderfully throughout the season. For those who are interested, I commend the Kyle Travis try, which is available for viewing on the *Central Western Daily* website.

I offer commiserations to the Blayney Rams, who put up a magnificent fight but who were unlucky. Nevertheless, one cannot take anything away from the mighty Molong Magpies. For the benefit of the House, and for the Parliamentary Secretary, I have with me a Molong rugby trucker's cap. Given the miracle that was witnessed at Molong, I intend to approach the Speaker and suggest that the cap be placed in a glass cabinet in a prominent place in the parliamentary foyer until next year—or even under the portrait of Sir Henry Parkes, which would be appropriate. Nothing is too great an honour for the wonderful Molong Magpies and the courage they displayed. They never gave up—not once. When everyone had written them off, with that cut-out pass and the Kyle Travis score in the corner, it was goodnight Blayney. I congratulate the Molong rugby club. We are all very proud of you.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.38 p.m.]: I commend the member for Orange for bringing us news from the Central West of that incredible sporting event—the grand final match between the Molong Magpies and the Blayney Rams. The member for Orange knows only too well that he stirs deep emotions in me when he speaks about Molong and Blayney, which are areas that are well known to my family. My father was born in Blayney many years ago and many members of my family still reside in Molong. I know the member for Orange is doing an exceptionally good job of representing his electorate because my family members let me know in no uncertain terms that they see him at all the important events. I should mention that some time ago he took part in a theatrical event. I understand his theatrical debut is rated as highly as the miracle of Molong and is mentioned widely across his electorate. I commend the member for Orange for bringing news of the Molong Magpies to the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! Was the member for Orange referring to a rugby union team?

Mr Andrew Gee: Yes, I was.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I understand that it is the time of year for magpies. In relation to the trucker's hat, I will make it known to the Speaker that there is a container under the portrait in which it could be placed.

MEN OF LEAGUE

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.39 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the good work of the Men of League [MOL], a foundation that was established in 2002 to look after its own. Its mission is to take care of every man, woman and child who has an involvement in the great game of rugby league. The foundation was formed by one of the legends of the game, Ron Coote, who was present when I had the pleasure of hosting a luncheon in the Strangers Dining Room today. George Peponis was also in attendance. Ron was inspired to form the Men of League after he visited an ex-player in hospital who Ron thought had been forgotten. From an initial membership base of 120, it has now grown to more than 26,000 members.

The MOL does great work in the rugby league community. It provides a range of services and offers of support, including medical expenses, rehabilitation and nursing home equipment, grants and scholarship assistance, counselling, social contact, and promoting and supporting fundraising events. Just last week the MOL held a special event to raise funds to send another legend of the game, John Peard, to the United States of America. John, who starred in the Roosters premiership wins in 1974 and 1975, suffered a stroke also in 2002. There is a revolutionary medical procedure in the United States that can assist stroke victims called perispinal etanercept and, thanks to the Men of League, more than \$50,000 was raised that night to support John. John will now be jetting his way to the United States to undergo this procedure. If it is successful it may reverse some of the effects of his stroke. We all wish John the very best and look forward to a positive outcome.

The Men of League has a great team dedicated to the cause, and some of them are here in the public gallery today. I draw the attention of the House to Mr Andrew Gifford from the Men of League, who is in the gallery. Ron Coote has been the chairman since the foundation was established in 2002. The foundation is currently being led by chief executive officer Corene Strauss. The Men of League has some past players and coaches on the staff, namely Stuart Raper, Ben Ross and Michael Buettner, and the New South Wales team is rounded out with Sandra Hopwood, Jason Turik, Claire White and Andrew Gifford. The Men of League is striving to be the sporting charity of choice within Australia, and it gives me great pleasure to announce to Parliament that I have accepted the role of parliamentary patron of Men of League. I look forward to working with the foundation to the betterment of this great game and to support sport in this State.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.44 p.m.]: I commend the member for Baulkham Hills for his contribution. He mentioned many people, including Andrew Gifford, who is in the public gallery, and also two greats of the game, Ron Coote and George Peponis. I never cease to be amazed at the number of good people in our society who are prepared to lend a hand to others who are less fortunate. Men of League is certainly one of those worthwhile institutions, and I commend those involved for doing what they do.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! As the member for Wollongong and coming from the Illawarra, I am well aware of the great work of the charity, Men of League. When I was elected in 2003 one of the first organisations I was asked to support and be involved in was the Men of League. I bought a lot of paraphernalia from the organisation that, quite frankly, I did not need—and still have.

Mr David Elliott: You should donate it.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! That is a great idea; I will donate it. I was not asked to be its patron when Labor was in government—

[Interruption]

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! The member should not be so sure about that. I add my voice in support of the great job done by the Men of League. I congratulate the member for Baulkham Hills on raising this issue.

TRIBUTE TO PATRICIA GOULD, OAM

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.45 p.m.]: John Howard may have been called "Lazarus with a triple bypass" by his long-term watcher Paul Keating, but Albury has its own politician who has survived, indeed thrived, where many others have fallen. This year marks 40 years as a local government councillor for Albury's Patricia Gould. She has held the position of mayor five times, and deputy mayor for another year on top of that. When Local Government NSW checked its records for me, it could find no woman councillor who has served as long as 40 continuous years in this State. She has sailed well past the 35 years served by my former neighbour, Margaret Stevenson, on Orange City Council. Patricia Gould has broken the records and set the benchmark for service by a woman.

There have been many accolades for Patricia. They reached their pinnacle when, in 2004, she was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for service to local government and to the community of Albury. She even has a park named after her: the Patricia Gould Reserve in Nicholson Place. That is when you know you have inked your name into the geography of the place you represent. As mayor, she was at everything—from sports events to Border Music Camp concerts, the Relay for Life and the Solar Car Challenge. She has been patron of the Albury and District Historical Society, and has attended the prize giving for a local literacy project, River of Stories, from year one to its eleventh year. That is commitment.

Patricia has served on the boards of health services and foundations, and school and sporting associations. She is well known for her love of sport and, in particular, of swimming. She is a life member of the Ovens and Murray Association—an acknowledgement she received in 1992, having joined in 1958. But Patricia is equally well known for being a good sport. One Mother's Day, Pat was occupied shaving the head of Wodonga Councillor Ed Foulston, helping raise money to pay for a workshop for a cancer support group. Derek Boyer, Australia's Strongest Man, met Pat on a visit to Albury for a stunt involving dragging an aeroplane behind him. He said:

During a recent plane pull I was helped out by no other than the mayor herself, Patricia Gould.

She was great and she didn't mind getting her hands dirty with some hard work. She is considered a treasured member and leader of the Albury Community.

This level of involvement has been a hallmark of her office. She does not just talk; she attends and she contributes personally. And while she sits on many committees and holds meetings, she is also known as a leader who always has time for a chat on the street. Pat has never been remote, even when fulfilling the duties of mayor in a large regional city. She does not walk by you; she makes time for you in the midst of a busy day. In this way Pat has developed her great understanding of our community. She never needed anyone to write a report to brief her on what the people of Albury were thinking; people told her directly.

I remember Patricia got me involved in Albury's Australia Day parades and award ceremonies many years ago. It was also through Pat that I also worked on Albury's Carols by Candlelight, back when I was manager of the local Prime television station. Patricia is a person who brings people together to achieve outcomes. She has always been politically savvy, pulling together coalitions of supporters to get things done in Albury. And she did this, we must remember, at a time when local government in Albury was very much male dominated. She has truly been a forerunner for women getting involved in political leadership at a regional level. In preparing this speech I asked a number of people for their experiences of working with Patricia. They told me:

She works smoothly,

She seeks input and advice, she has a good feel for the community, its desires and needs.

Pat takes pride in being an advocate for all the people of Albury. Her trademark, if you like, is that there are no great scandals in her wake. You would be hard pressed to find a co-worker with cross words to say about Pat. Patricia Gould is an Albury icon. When, earlier this month, Albury's current mayor announced that he was standing for re-election, the local newspaper reported it thus:

The last time an Albury mayor was elected unopposed was in 2008 when Patricia Gould took the job fresh from a huge personal vote at the elections in the same year.

The model she has demonstrated since joining council in 1974 is one of care, involvement and service. When others risked turning council proceedings into a circus, she brought dignity. In return, the people have elected her again and again—for 40 continuous years. Throughout her life she relied on her late husband, Noel, who encouraged her in her devotion to this private career in public life. As we celebrate her record years on council, we thank Patricia for her elegant and sustained contribution, and wish her all the best for continued leadership within her beloved Albury.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [5.49 p.m.]: I also pay tribute to an outstanding public servant in Patricia Gould. My family is from the Albury district, which is a very special part of Australia. It is made special by people like Patricia who have devoted themselves to improving the character and amenity of its suburbs, and given of their time to serve a community that Patricia obviously loves. At a time when we hear a lot of negative things about public servants and politicians, we forget the enormous contributions that the vast majority of public figures make. People such as Patricia Gould represent what is best in our political process, and represent what is best in a public servant. Tonight I join the member for Albury in thanking Patricia Gould not only for her outstanding and distinguished service to her community at Albury and New South Wales but also for her contribution to making our country a better place.

LIVERPOOL CBD CONSTRUCTION NOISE

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.50 p.m.]: I advise the House of very serious problems encountered by a constituent of mine, Bassem Saeed, relating to construction noise. His quite real and understandable distress has been exacerbated and aggravated by the entirely unresponsive attitude of Liverpool council. My constituent lives in a unit in Liverpool's central business district. The unit is in Castlereagh Street. He lives in the unit with his wife, their eight-year-old daughter, Mr Saeed's mother and Mr Saeed's sister. Next door to their block of units another block of units is being constructed. This construction is at the intersection of Campbell and Castlereagh streets. My constituent and his family live on level 5. Mr Saeed's mother has significant disabilities and is largely housebound.

The construction noise from next door is extreme. It is being generated at very antisocial hours. I would have thought that council regulations would have prohibited the amount of noise concerned at the hours complained of, and council should be enforcing any such regulations, although it is not. If the regulations are not sufficient to deal with this, then that is a reflection—and an adverse one—on the council. I suspect that this reflects the mindset of the majority of the council who simply uncritically support the development and overdevelopment of Liverpool without thought of the consequences.

There have been significant approvals in recent times of bigger, taller and denser residential developments in Liverpool central business district [CBD]. There seems to be little regard in the design of these approvals for the amenity and social benefit of the residents of the CBD. The council does not have the balance

right. We can have increased density in a socially beneficial way. However, it requires more commitment to basic principle and more competence than displayed by the majority of the council. My constituent has said this to the council:

I wish to draw your attention to the high level of disturbance to the community I live in as a result of building construction work being undertaken at 87-91 Campbell Street. This building site is located immediately adjacent to my home 18-22 Castlereagh Street, Liverpool. There are more than 50 occupied units in my building, which is an eight-story building.

My family have been woken by construction noise on a regular basis since February at around 6am and have heard noise regularly continuing into the night, sometimes until 12pm at night. A generator placed a few metres from the window operates constantly while construction work is taking place. This has been unbearable for my family, especially my mother, who spends all her time in the unit. I recently discussed my experience with a worker at Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, who were shocked to hear my account and told me to raise the matter with Liverpool council.

As of today, my constituent has said this to me:

I write to let you know, for yesterday and today they started the generator before 5:30am and that is a very terrible situation.

Mr Saeed has been assiduous in trying to raise these issues with Liverpool council. He contacted customer service staff at the council. On their own advice, on 11 August he sent an email to a designated council officer. It bounced back. He then sent another email to the general council email address. Nothing happened. A few days later an industrial accident occurred on the site with an explosion of high-pressure concrete. A worker was injured, there were police and ambulance, and the street was closed. About 22 August he rang customer service again and eventually got through to the designated officer whom he had tried previously to contact. The officer had not seen his email, did not know about the accident, and seemed more concerned than anything else with who had given his name to Mr Saeed. Mr Saeed explained his problem. The officer undertook to investigate the matter and get back to Mr Saeed. Mr Saeed records the melancholy conclusion:

He has not contacted me since and I have seen no improvement in the situation at the site.

Mr Saeed and his family have had significant disruption to their life. That is bad enough, but the abject failures of the regulatory authority not only to solve the problem but also to be interested are deeply distressing. I quote further from Mr Saeed:

I subsequently found out that all complaints/service requests are to be acknowledged by council and given a number. I have yet to receive any written acknowledgement of my correspondence to council on this matter.

Mr Saeed is in considerable difficulties. He is subjected to what he describes as terrible noise every day, often until midnight. This includes the noise of a generator. The location of the generator perhaps makes the noise more acute for Mr Saeed and his family than for other residents. The condition of his mother, making her largely housebound, renders the problems more severe for this family than perhaps for others. There are other consequences of the construction is well. There is often work being done on the footpath, with steel cluttering the walkway area, making it impassable. The concrete footpaths have also been destroyed. This makes it much harder for Mr Saeed to walk his young daughter to school.

In addition, the road is often closed without warning for many hours by the construction work. Mr Saeed not unreasonably says that if that is to happen there should be adequate notice. I note that seems to be a congenital problem for this council at the moment as it has also taken, without notice, to trying to block off the Northumberland service way on Saturday mornings. It apparently has not worked out that, even if council officers and some councillors do not work on Saturday mornings, other people do and they need access to their offices.

I note yesterday's *Liverpool Leader* had one councillor ostentatiously declaring his support for more high-rise development in the Liverpool CBD. This one-sided and unbalanced approach by this council is typical of the deeply uncritical pro-development at any cost bias of the council. The councillor concerned is a real estate agent, so he has a financial interest in having more units in Liverpool CBD. Of itself, that is fine, but not when it takes precedence over his broader responsibility as a councillor for the common good of the local area. Mr Saeed cannot move from where he lives; he does not have the financial resources to do that. The council needs to start treating the residents of Liverpool CBD seriously and stop taking them for granted. It needs to fix Mr Saeed's problem.

ILLAWARRA INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.55 p.m.]: I update the House on Illawarra infrastructure projects following the Port Kembla transaction and the Government's allocation of \$270 million from Restart NSW for

the Illawarra Infrastructure Fund, which includes the upgrade of the Berry bypass. The Illawarra Infrastructure Fund assessment process was overseen by Infrastructure NSW and I was delighted to play a role in facilitating community consultation during this process. The successful applicants were announced in December 2013. All projects are either fully or jointly funded by both government and successful proponents.

The Government's \$100 million Restart NSW investment supported 12 projects with a total value of \$190 million to the Illawarra region. The Illawarra has benefited through Restart NSW funding under the \$130 million Resources for Regions program, which included a \$4.5 million allocation for the Cordeaux Road upgrade at Mount Kembla and the bridge upgrade at Cordeaux Road. The Government further allocated \$170 million in Restart NSW funding for the Princes Highway upgrade. I will return to the Berry bypass later in my address. In total, this represents \$275 million in Restart NSW investment for the Illawarra.

I recently had the great privilege to join my friend and colleague the Minister for the Illawarra, John Ajaka, and the member for Heathcote, Lee Evans, and Nieves Murray from the IRT Group to inspect the Kanahooka site where a consortia led by IRT Group will deliver an innovative, purpose-built community of 12 homes for people with intellectual disability who are ageing. The consortium includes Greenacres Disability Services, Community Options Illawarra and Interchange Illawarra. This project is emblematic of how the New South Wales Government is getting on with the job of transforming the Illawarra economy.

By partnering with organisations such as the IRT Group, the Government will make the Illawarra a centre of excellence for aged and disability support. I was delighted to see this project reach this important milestone. This project will enhance and transform the delivery of services in the Illawarra. It will allow ageing people with intellectual disability to live with their ageing parents and continue to age in place within a well-supported community, avoiding the need for crisis accommodation. The projects supported through Restart NSW co-investment under the Illawarra Infrastructure Fund include a number of projects that I have mentioned, and will go into in further detail.

Mr Mark Coure: Name them.

Mr GARETH WARD: Projects such as the University of Wollongong iAccelerate project is a great initiative and step forward for the Illawarra, creating 500 direct jobs in a new centre of excellence for information and communications technology. The centre will establish technology business acceleration programs, provide space for 25 or more start-up companies, and potentially create another 1,000 jobs in the wider economy. The projects are located in each one of the five local government areas covered by Restart Illawarra—Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee, Kiama, Shellharbour and Wollongong. Applications were received from organisations across the region, including local councils, educational institutions, private organisations and the health care sector. An assessment panel including community representatives evaluated 20 shortlisted projects and made recommendations to Infrastructure NSW based on the selection criteria and after considering community feedback.

The Berry bypass is a project that has been spoken about since 1955. Labor talked about it for its 16 years in government—and we will deliver it in government. In July 2013 I was extremely pleased to announce that the New South Wales Minister for Planning and Infrastructure had given approval for the project. In April Fulton Hogan was announced as the preferred tenderer to design and build the bypass and work to date has included site preparation, earthwork, site restoration and temporary landscaping. I was delighted to be able to announce today that that temporary landscaping is underway. I am delighted with that progress. Surveying, geotechnical and utility investigations is now taking place to gain important information about the route's ground conditions and enable detailed design for the new highway. The project will provide a four-lane divided highway, which will be separated by a median strip for 11.6 kilometres of the Princes Highway between Toolijooa Road and Schofields Lane.

The upgrade will include a bypass of the existing winding highway at Foxground and a bypass of Berry, with access ramps at the north and south of the town. The upgrade will provide significant safety, traffic flow and travel time improvements and is expected to reduce flooding for many properties in Berry. I commend Minister Duncan Gay for his assistance in this regard. One hundred per cent of the funds to complete this work have come from the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government; not one cent has come from the Commonwealth Government. One of the reasons I stood for Parliament was to fix the Princes Highway. I was sick of Labor's continual ignoring of our community and our deadly highway, so this is a major accomplishment and milestone as it represents the largest infrastructure project in the history of the South Coast. It is even bigger than the \$329 million that we are spending at Gerringong. These current roadworks represent the most significant investment in the Princes Highway—all delivered by this Liberal-Nationals Government.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I call the member for Oatley to order for the first time.

Mr GARETH WARD: These projects were ignored by the former Labor Government, but have been delivered by this Government today.

CRONULLA ELECTORATE SPORTING GRANTS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.00 p.m.]: Four sporting groups will receive funding in the eastern end of the Sutherland shire from the New South Wales Government under its Sport and Recreation Participation and Facility Grants Program. The program helps to improve local sporting facilities and helps programs that encourage people to get involved in recreational activities. Kurnell Community Sports and Recreation Club will receive \$25,000 towards upgrading a disused tennis court to an all-weather multipurpose facility that can be used at no charge by local sporting clubs and school groups in Kurnell. This will fill a big gap at Kurnell. It is quite extraordinary that at the moment there is no multipurpose court in the whole of Kurnell, not even at the local primary school, even though there are more than 400 children in Kurnell. The nearest one is 10 kilometres away. Those who will regularly use the new facility include Kurnell Public School students and local rugby league and netball players.

Burraneer Rugby Club, with more than 350 players, will receive \$25,000 towards upgrading pedestrian access to John Dwyer Oval in Caringbah and improving the safety of the spectator-marshalling area by separating pedestrians and cars. At the moment in wet weather John Dwyer Field has worse than average waterlogging because of existing contours. The work will increase the field's usability in inclement weather. GyMEA Junior Rugby League Football Club will receive \$25,000 towards upgrading the floodlighting at the Corea Road playing field to make it easier and safer for its 500 to 550 players to train at night.

Finally, Surfing NSW will receive \$8,250 towards hosting the Women's Surf Classic and Maxum ASP Women's Pro Junior 2014 in Cronulla on 20 and 21 September 2014. The event supports the participation of females of varied ages and abilities. At the moment it is the only women-only surfing event in Australia. In addition to the \$8,250 grant under the Sport and Recreation Participation and Facility Grants Program, Surfing NSW will receive a further grant of \$7,500 towards hosting the event under the Sport and Recreation Events Program. That program aims to support local events and thereby involve communities in sport and recreation activities.

The Women's Surf Classic has grown from strength to strength over the years. It began as a grassroots boardriders event managed by the Cronulla Girls Boardriders. It has developed into a women's festival celebrating women in sport. The 2013 event was a major success and in 2014 the event will combine many factors, from professional surfing to education. It will cater for women surfers of all ages and all aspects of surfing. It links in with a festival of surfing and the Maxum ASP Women's Pro Junior 2014. The Government recognises that sport not only is important for our health and wellbeing but also plays a vital role in binding our communities together. These sporting grants are great news for grassroots local groups in the eastern end of the Sutherland shire and for women's surfing. I commend the grants to the House.

HOLSWORTHY BARRACKS 2ND COMMANDO REGIMENT MEMORIAL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [6.05 p.m.]: Today I start my private member's statement by thanking the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Victor Dominello, for affording me the opportunity to accompany him on a visit to the 2nd Commando Regiment at Holsworthy Barracks on Tuesday 2 September 2014. The 2nd Commando Regiment has been awarded the Unit Citation for Gallantry and the Meritorious Unit Citation for its actions in Afghanistan. A posthumous Victoria Cross for Australia was awarded recently to Cameron Baird for his action in the Urozgan Province in June 2013. He is the 100th Australian to receive a Victoria Cross since the award was first created by Queen Victoria in 1856. I encourage all members—and, indeed, all Australians—to read the citation describing the events of 22 June 2013 when Corporal Cameron Baird led his team in an assault in Ghawchak village in the Uruzgan Province. I have, and I have truly never read anything like it. It made me incredibly proud to be an Australian and also made me realise what our troops go through when they serve our country overseas. It was an incredibly humbling thing to read.

The regiment has established a unit museum in Holsworthy and I had the opportunity to view the various displays during the visit. The operations major and the regimental sergeant major were incredibly

overqualified tour guides and took great pride in showing both the Minister and me the various exhibits in the museum. The museum is located close to the regiment's administration buildings and members of the regiment are encouraged to visit the museum to understand the history of the commandos and the unit and also to develop an esprit de corps.

The regiment has undertaken a project to build a memorial within Holsworthy Barracks, a place where members of the unit can honour those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, a place where the regiment can commemorate Anzac Day and other significant days. Members of this regiment have protected identities and to have a place within Holsworthy Barracks where they can meet and reflect as a group would be advantageous. Unfortunately, the general public do not get the opportunity to see and thank these troops on days such as Anzac Day so they need a special place. Because of their protected identity they do not get to march as a formed body through the streets of Sydney. We should remember that this regiment has had 13 of their own killed in Afghanistan so it becomes even more important that they have a place where they can gather and reflect, a place where they can feel comfortable among their comrades and, importantly, a place that is theirs. It will recognise those who have been killed in action and will also have another section for those who have been killed on Australian soil in training.

To their credit, a lot of work has already been carried out on the monument. At present it has a sandstone base with four sandstone arches. The regiment requires funding to assist in getting the monument usable by Anzac Day 2015. I was pleased to visit with the Minister to see how we have been able to assist them to build so far. While we were there a case was put for further funding and it was very well received by the Minister. I feel confident that the funding will be forthcoming so that the monument will be of a standard that will enable Anzac Day commemoration services to be held at the site in 2015. They have a beautiful picture of what the site will look like, including a reflection pool. I know it will be a special place and will exist in Holsworthy for many, many years.

I thank the Minister for giving me the opportunity to accompany him on the visit to the 2nd Commando Regiment. I thank all members of the regiment, past and present, for their commitment and service. Representing an area that includes the Holsworthy Barracks is a humbling experience. Members would be aware that when we receive the terrible news of a death or an injury in Afghanistan I have made the point of coming into the Chamber and recognising each one that has occurred. We know that it impacts on our schools. Often a son or daughter attending one of the schools receives the news that dad may not be coming home or that dad may be injured. The school gate is a place where all the other mums and dads gather around to see whose family may have been impacted. It impacts significantly on my community and I know that this monument will make a big difference to that very special and giving community.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [6.10 p.m.]: New South Wales is experiencing a major youth unemployment crisis. In the latest census, youth unemployment in greater Western Sydney was at an unacceptable high of 12.6 per cent. In my electorate of Cabramatta it is even worse, with youth unemployment at 16.6 per cent in the Fairfield city region. That means more than 2,200 local young people are actively looking for work. These figures are even more worrying when one considers that the average unemployment rate in New South Wales is just 5.9 per cent. Young people want jobs, but they need the opportunity from employers, educators and government as well as just support. While the State Liberal Government sits on its hands on this issue, Daystar Foundation is one community organisation tackling youth unemployment with its iCareer program at the Bonnyrigg Youth Centre. iCareer is helping at-risk young people in the area make a smoother transition from school to work, education or training. The program commenced in late December 2012 and has helped more than 180 young people.

The program aims to stop young people from becoming long-term unemployed and disengaged. The program achieves this by motivating and supporting young people to address barriers to employment, such as poverty, poor communication and presentation skills, low self-esteem, emotional abuse and mental health issues. iCareer provides practical support and advice on things such as resumés, organising work experience, grooming, interview outfits, life skills and, importantly, one-on-one casework to identify and address barriers. The program has been so successful that recently it was nominated and shortlisted for the Champion of the West Awards. Results show that of the young people who have completed the program 35 per cent have found jobs, 33 per cent are undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships, and 25 per cent have gone on to further education and training. Just 7 per cent of young people were referred to other support services.

I shall share one of iCareer's shining success stories. When iCareer first met a young man named Joshua he was angry, unable to hold a conversation or maintain eye contact and drank alcohol daily. He was scared and did not trust authority or the system. After working with iCareer intensively, Joshua grew to be confident and to thrive on challenges. He now loves learning. He has limited his alcohol intake to once or twice a month. He has started an apprenticeship in the automotive industry and was awarded a place in a mentoring program through the Greater Western Sydney Giants AFL team. Joshua is just one of the many success stories coming out of iCareer. Programs like this are crucial to addressing New South Wales' crippling and rapidly growing youth unemployment.

The State Liberal Government should invest more in these programs because they will save taxpayers money in the long term. Investing in programs such as iCareer will mean that fewer young people will be on unemployment benefits. Every dollar invested in iCareer today will save taxpayers \$16 in 10 years. This does not even include money saved from having fewer people accessing public housing, family support services or being incarcerated. It is really a no-brainer: Supporting young people to be productive members of our community reaps rewards for the rest of the community in years to come. I urge the State Government to invest more in young people, in their education and in support services such as iCareer.

SYDNEY AIR QUALITY

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [6.15 p.m.]: Air quality remains a major concern for inner-city residents who are exposed to ongoing traffic congestion and emissions from road tunnels. I hear from constituents who see thick, black dust on their window sills and worry about their health. Air quality was one of the top three environmental concerns identified in the State 2012 "Who Cares about the Environment?" report, with concern highest among Sydney residents. Air pollutants are associated with acute and chronic respiratory and cardiovascular problems, and have been linked to low birth rates and poor lung development in children. Poor air quality can cause tiredness, headaches, nausea, and eye, skin and throat irritation. In 2005 the then Department of Environment and Climate Change estimated that air pollution cost metropolitan Sydney \$4.7 billion a year—equating to \$893 per head. Motor vehicle emissions cause more than half the world's air pollution and are responsible for most inner-city pollution.

The Australian Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics estimates the health costs of motor vehicle pollution alone at \$3.3 billion a year nationally, with \$1.5 billion in Sydney. The recently released National Environment Protection Council report identified that Sydney's air kills more people than traffic accidents. While Sydney has experienced air quality improvements from reduced industrial activity and stronger motor vehicle, fuel quality, industry and wood-heater standards, actual motor vehicle use is growing with the population, thus offsetting air quality gains from fuel and vehicle standards under the Action for Air Strategy. As a result, improvements have stabilised since 2008. The six major pollutants identified by the National Environment Protection Council in 1998 are carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, lead, ozone and particles. The 2012 State of the Environment Report identified that New South Wales fails to meet national air quality standards for ozone and particle pollution.

Motor vehicles and fuels are responsible for most of Sydney's ozone-forming pollutants—nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds. They contribute 12 per cent to 18 per cent of particle pollution, especially from diesel engines, and exposure is worse near major arterial roads. Motor vehicles also contribute to climate change, which erodes air quality because hotter days increase air pollutants through atmospheric changes and more bushfires. Bushfires and back-burning often result in serious particle standard breaches in Sydney. We must reduce car dependence. I welcome the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan, which includes vital projects to boost public transport use and provide new transport options. Included are plans to extend light rail through the central business district [CBD], freeing up the city centre from bus congestion, and to the Moore Park sporting stadia and entertainment area where events regularly bring traffic to a standstill.

The North West Rail Link will reduce the number of buses entering the city and give residents of the north-west a fast and efficient travel option. The second Sydney Harbour tunnel is essential to ensure that new services do not disrupt existing ones and that the rail system can expand in the future. The Government's Sydney City Centre Access Strategy will improve public transport flow, give priority to pedestrians and close the missing links in the bicycle network in the CBD. I understand that future plans will extend beyond the city centre. Bike riding does not create pollution and is a viable transport option if safe paths are provided. We need to ensure that cycling continues to grow if we are to reduce car dependence. Licensing cyclists will be expensive, a deterrent to cycling and should not be adopted. Notwithstanding current progress, massive road network expansions continue to get priority, including the WestConnex project, despite encouraging car use and significantly increasing toxic emissions.

Inner-city residents continue to ask that the Eastern Distributor and Cross City Tunnel ventilation stacks be filtered. The stacks are adjacent to homes, businesses and even children's playgrounds. Filtration should have been a condition of consent to protect neighbours from noxious emissions, improve overall ambient air quality and prevent pollution. The Government should filter tunnels in all new underground road projects. I point to concerns raised by the Australian Medical Association NSW and the Asthma Foundation about local health impacts, particularly on children, from the unfiltered tunnel ventilation stacks of the proposed NorthConnex motorway. The Sydney-wide air quality monitoring network should include stations in the central business district.

The closest station is at Randwick, with stations at Tumbalong Park in Darling Harbour and Mary Ann Park in Ultimo—part of the Cross City Tunnel approval having been decommissioned. Melbourne has two air quality monitoring sites in its CBD and Brisbane has one. Clean air is essential to social and economic sustainability. Regardless of breaches and compliance with basic standards, continually improving air quality should be a major government aim to improve population health. Cars are the biggest cause of air pollution in urban areas and reducing car dependence should be part of a long-term air quality strategy.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH KOREA

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.20 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House about a public forum held in Hornsby highlighting human rights abuses in North Korea. As many members in the House are aware, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea recently published a damning report detailing human rights abuses committed by the country's leadership against its own people. It compared the scale of the abuses identified in the report to atrocities committed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Anyone who cares about human rights, democracy and freedom should have serious concerns about the findings of the report.

Hornsby supports a large and vibrant Australian-Korean community. It is a community that makes an enormous contribution to this country as outstanding citizens. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Communities and member for Hornsby I decided to organise this public forum to highlight the disgraceful abuses that have occurred under the North Korean regime and to bring the issue to people's attention, make them aware and inform them of what they can do to bring about change. We were joined on the night by Hornsby's mayor, Steve Russell, the President of the Hornsby State Electorate Conference, Julian Leaser, many journalists from Korean-Australian newspapers and a selection of senior Korean community leaders.

I acknowledge the significant efforts of Susan Lee from the Korean Unification Advisory Council and Luke Song, head of the Korean Society. His Excellency the Consul General for South Korea, Mr Lee, joined us to lend his support and meet many of the Australian-Korean residents in attendance. We were fortunate to be joined on the night by an outstanding Australian, one of the brightest legal minds in our country, Justice Michael Kirby. Justice Kirby was the chair of the commission of inquiry into human rights abuses in North Korea and he detailed the human rights atrocities that are occurring in the region. Over the past year Justice Kirby and his team have compiled evidence on human rights abuses by interviewing North Korean defectors. He has recommended that the International Criminal Court investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression.

There were more than 300 guests at the forum. Justice Kirby spoke of the international efforts to speak out about the Kim family dictatorship. Justice Kirby informed the audience that the North Korean authorities had prevented the panel from entering the nation during the investigation. The panel instead focused its investigation on interviewing several hundred North Korean defectors to compile their stories and gather evidence of life in North Korea. I pay tribute to Justice Michael Kirby. He has devoted his entire life to being a champion for human rights in Australia and abroad. This report is another example of the outstanding work he has done to support and speak up for human rights. Justice Kirby spoke about several aspects of the inquiry, including the existence of concentration camps, the lack of freedom of movement, access to information and food, discrimination and military-led abductions.

The overview was a harrowing insight into the plight of the rogue state, which continues to persecute and torture its own citizens. We also heard testimony from a witness to some of these crimes. North Korean defector and local resident Mr Sung Min Jeong spoke of his own experiences inside the hermit state. Mr Jeong captivated the audience with his harrowing tale of escape from the communist state and subsequent recapture and torture at the hands of North Korean authorities. In a question-and-answer session an emotional Mr Jeong

recounted his time in a concentration camp where he was forced to do hard labour and was severely beaten, which resulted in the loss of hearing in one ear. His body is also covered in scars as a result of the inhuman torture that he was subjected to.

Speaking through a translator, Mr Jeong shared his memories of his second escape when he was able to link up with a Chinese tourist group and travel to Australia to seek asylum. Stories and testimony such as that of Mr Jeong are among the few methods that the international community can use to gather evidence about the closed and isolated state of North Korea. Since the Korean armistice agreement in 1953 North Korea has remained mostly shut to the outside world. Its citizens have been tortured, oppressed and savagely beaten into submission. What we know today is that everyday life and freedoms that we take for granted are not available in North Korea. This report details gross violations of human rights and every one of us who cares about democracy, freedom and human rights has an obligation to stand up and call for an end to this barbaric regime. This is occurring to people in our region and enough is enough.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.25 p.m. until
Tuesday 16 September at 12 noon.**
