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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 16 September 2014

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NSW PREMIER'S HISTORY AWARDS

CENTENARY OF ANZAC

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Veterans Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [12.10 p.m.]: On Friday 5 September I had the privilege of representing the Premier at the New South Wales Premier's History Awards and the launch of History Week at the State Library of New South Wales. Appropriately, the theme of History Week this year was the Great War, which resonates with this year's Centenary of the First World War. The awards were first presented in 1997 to honour distinguished achievements in history by Australian citizens and permanent residents. The awards assist in establishing values and standards in historical research and publication, and encourage everyone to appreciate and learn from the work of our historians.

All award winners demonstrated the strength of historical thought and research in this State through a range of means. I sincerely thank the State Library of New South Wales and the History Council of New South Wales for their leadership in organising and facilitating this successful event. Only through in-depth historical research can we as a community ensure the past is better understood and future decisions are made for the betterment of our national prosperity. I was also delighted to witness two Ryde electorate residents receive prestigious awards. John Gascoigne of Denistone was awarded the general history prize for his work entitled *Encountering the Pacific in the Age of Enlightenment* and Michelle Arrow of Eastwood was awarded the multimedia history prize for her work entitled *Public Intimacies: The 1974 Royal Commission on Human Relationships*. The Ryde community has a rich and proud history. I am grateful to have those two scholarly leaders reside in my electorate to promote the spirit of learning and understanding.

Both John and Michelle contribute significantly to the academic and scholastic elements of the Ryde and wider communities. Their work not only has increased understanding of pertinent historical issues but also has inspired others to engage in historical research. Their research, which differs in content and method, has positively impacted our State's knowledge of different yet equally important subjects. I congratulate John and Michelle on their deserved recognition and wish them very well in their future pursuits. I look forward to learning more about their meaningful research and publications. I encourage my parliamentary colleagues to engage with their inspiring work. I must admit it was an honour for me to attend and to represent the Premier at the New South Wales Premier's History Awards because it gave me an opportunity, in my capacity as Minister for Veterans Affairs, to also reflect upon the important role that researchers and historians have to play in the Centenary of Anzac.

When we turn up to the dawn service, we all pay our respects. Why do we pay our respects? It is because we need to remember those who have given their lives in sacrifice for our country. We cannot remember unless we understand who those people were, and that requires research. It is critical during this Centenary of Anzac that each and every one of us in our communities understands and knows more about the

people who made the ultimate sacrifices on behalf of our great country. Once we understand by doing the hard yards of research, then we can remember. Once we remember, then we can pay our respects. That is what the Centenary of Anzac is all about: getting those three Rs in place.

I am very pleased to say that the commemoration of the Centenary of Anzac kicked off on 4 August and will extend to 11 November 2018 and that already the level of community engagement in relation to the centenary is well underway. I am very proud to see in my local community of Ryde that through the Ryde Historical Society, which is working very closely with the local RSL sub-branches, the history will be extracted and presented so that we can all learn and understand, and all then remember and appropriately respect the diggers throughout the commemoration period in the months and years ahead. I extend my sincere thanks to all those who participated in the Premier's History Awards, but in particular I congratulate those worthy winners from my great electorate of Ryde.

LAKE MACQUARIE CITY ART GALLERY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.15 p.m.]: When I was appointed to the shadow Arts portfolio earlier this year I was thrilled at the prospect of visiting some of the State's finest galleries. Shortly thereafter I had the pleasure of visiting the Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery. It is a fantastic cultural institution and a true asset for the people of Lake Macquarie and the Hunter. Special thanks must go to the gallery's director, Debbie Abraham, and Lake Macquarie City Council's manager of cultural services, Narelle Reichert, who showed me around the gallery and were very generous with their time. "I'm the least arty guy going," Lake Macquarie City Councillor Chad Griffith tells me. "But I'm very proud that Lake Macquarie boasts such a great gallery. It's something for all of us who live around the Lake to be proud of", he said.

There are a number of exhibitions on display at the Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, which showcase some real Australian and Hunter talent. For example, it is magnificent for the Hunter to have a local exhibition of Janet Laurence's work, as she is a world-famous sculptor who has received many awards. Another great exhibition is First Class 13, the sixth annual exhibition that showcases the outstanding work of last year's Higher School Certificate [HSC] students on the Hunter and Central Coast. The Janet Laurence case study has been curated specifically for senior school students and includes iconic pieces by the artist. A comprehensive artist case study has been produced, which aims to fit seamlessly with the HSC curriculum. CLICK is the second exhibition in a new initiative to showcase secondary school photo media projects. The current exhibition features work by students from Lake Munmorah High School.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Jodie Harrison said, "One of the things I really like about the Gallery is that a high percentage of exhibitions feature work by local artists. The Gallery and its surrounds, particularly the outdoor sculpture park, provide a wonderful opportunity to enjoy a free day out with friends and family." That is what the mayor said; now let us hope a new city council mayor will be more willing to engage with the arts constructively. She went on to say, "The CLICK exhibition also taps into another of the Gallery's key focuses, that of Aboriginal programs." Mayor Harrison continued, "As a cultural institution, the Gallery plays a key role in supporting cultural practice and provides a place where Aboriginal voices can be heard and culture presented." The gallery aims to include Aboriginal content in 70 per cent of its exhibitions.

For me, the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives is a vital part of Australian art. It is noteworthy that two of the gallery's exhibitions are set up to showcase the talent and creativity of the Hunter's youth. I spent a lot of my life teaching in some of the more disadvantaged parts of the State and it would have been great for our students to have the kind of creative outlets that the Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery is providing for aspiring artists on the Hunter and Central Coast. On a personal note, I have a great love for the arts. It is my very great pleasure to be a country member of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, which I was long before I became a shadow Minister.

I am thrilled that the gallery's permanent exhibitions are open to the public free of charge—that is very important. There is so much we can learn as a society and as individuals from the beauty, workmanship and creativity displayed through the arts. That is why I am committed to fighting for them in New South Wales, especially in regional areas. When I was teaching in Walgett and Kempsey there were no local galleries there. Institutions like the Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery would have enriched those communities immeasurably. Amy Hurrell, who is a Hunter arts lover, said about regional art:

Art galleries are important physical spaces in the community. They're places where unique ideas and experiences can be communicated and shared through the visual arts. For regional communities, it's especially important: you shouldn't have to go to a capital city or overseas to experience everything the arts have to offer.

Art galleries sow the seeds of future creative and economic growth as the Hunter's Young People see their own career potential in the arts.

Over the coming months I will be speaking on the arts more and more as I reach out to the State's arts community and find out what they need and how we can help them deliver to the people of New South Wales the ideas and experiences that Ms Hurrell has described.

TRIBUTE TO FLORENCE WIGMORE PRICE

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina) [12.20 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the work and generosity of a woman who has had an enormous impact on the town of Ballina in my electorate. Florence Wigmore Price was born in 1882, the daughter of Mary Baird and William Wigmore. William Wigmore came to Ballina in the 1870s and was a trader and storekeeper. He became an alderman on the first Ballina Municipal Council. In the 1880s he purchased a paddle-steamer and began a floating store service along the Richmond River, travelling to Duck Creek, Wyrallah and Emigrant Creek. William Wigmore was a very successful businessman and his wealth was inherited by his daughter, Florence, when he died in 1908.

Florence lived in Ballina and attended school in the river town. By all accounts she was an intelligent and shrewd businesswoman who made the most of her inheritance. She was also deeply committed to the welfare and growth of the town of Ballina. The local newspaper, the *Northern Star*, reported in 1950 that Florence Wigmore travelled extensively in Europe and was educated partly in Geneva. It was on an overseas cruise that Florence Wigmore met her husband, Norman Price, a mining engineer from New Zealand. They settled in Sydney, living on a 400-acre property near Camden and raising cattle.

Despite making infrequent visits to Ballina in her adult life, Florence Price still held the town close to her heart. After World War II she heard of plans to build a home in Ballina for the rest and convalescence of returned servicemen, who had come home from war needing care, help and rehabilitation. In an extremely generous gesture, she donated an area of land comprising approximately 20 acres at beautiful North Creek in Ballina for the North Coast and Tablelands Rest and Convalescent Home. She also gifted a further £850 to kick-start the building fund. She travelled to Ballina on 3 September 1950 to lay the foundation stone for the home. She was 68 years old. The *Northern Star* reported 5,000 people turned out to see Mrs Price lay that foundation stone. The convalescent home is today the Kokoda Village, previously known as the Ballina Ex-Services Home—a facility that provides exceptional services and care for the senior members of our community and is administered by RSL LifeCare.

On 4 September this year I had the great honour to be invited to help unveil a plaque to Florence Price at the official opening of the refurbished nursing and hostel facilities at the ex-services home. The 120 beds spreading over four wings have all been modernised and this section of Kokoda Village is now called Florence Price Gardens. On a sunny morning hundreds of people gathered to celebrate the opening, at which the keynote speaker was Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, retired. We both attended later on the same day the opening of the Patrick Bugden VC Gardens at Suffolk Park. On both occasions Lieutenant General Leahy spoke about the need to look after our veterans, whether they are older or from more recent wars like Afghanistan and regardless of whether their wounds are physical, psychological or a post-traumatic stress disorder.

I return now to the aged care facility and Florence Price Gardens in Ballina. The land was a great gift and I am sure Mrs Price, who never had any children of her own, would be very proud to see the magnificent facilities that are now on the site where she laid the foundation stone some 64 years ago. When Florence Price died in 1964, aged 82, she bequeathed several properties to the Ballina Municipal Council, including land in Swift Street on which Wigmore Park and Wigmore Hall are located and Wigmore Arcade in the main street of Ballina. Her donations to Ballina would total more than \$15 million in today's value. That is an impressive legacy for the people of Ballina and Ballina Shire Council.

Florence and Norman Price left the bulk of their estate to charity, including bequeathing Emerald Hill, a 365-hectare property at Narellan, to the Presbyterian Church. I believe this was later converted to an agricultural college for boys from broken homes. Another bequest, of £250,000, was made to the University of Sydney for two Norman Price memorial engineering scholarships to allow the winning students to study abroad. UnitingCare Australia still operates the Florence and Norman Price Memorial Trust, which provides one-off funding for projects that have the objective of relieving poverty.

Despite what I have been told about Florence Price, it is difficult to obtain detailed information about her. By all accounts she was a kind and quiet woman, and an extremely generous benefactor. Her philanthropy has had an impact on many lives, from those people at Kokoda Village to the engineering students who were given the opportunity to study abroad and the community groups still using benefits from the memorial trust

administered by UnitingCare Australia to help relieve poverty. I think it is fitting that the New South Wales Parliament be informed about the kindness of Mrs Florence Wigmore Price who, as I said, made an enormous contribution to the town of Ballina.

BLUE MOUNTAINS RURAL FIRE SERVICE BRIGADES

STEP BY STEP BUSHFIRE SUPPORT SERVICE

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [12.25 p.m.]: I have spoken many times previously about the wonderful work that our Blue Mountains emergency services do for their local communities so it was my great pleasure to attend the NSW Fire Service Open Day last Saturday 13 September 2014 that was held not only in the Blue Mountains but throughout New South Wales. The Blue Mountains District of the Rural Fire Service has 23 brigades, including an administration and catering unit located at the Bushfire Control Centre at Katoomba. They, too, are a very important part of the whole service, especially during emergencies when many people descend on the area and they all must be fed.

Unfortunately, I was not able to visit all the brigades but I did manage to visit a great many. Every brigade has its own identity and this is displayed through distinctive badges. For example, the Warrimoo brigade—which is my home brigade—has an eagle on a nest. This illustrates that "Warrimoo" in the local Aboriginal language means "eagle's nest". The Winmalee brigade has the Road Runner cartoon as its symbol. When I visited the brigades this year I was told of the large increase in the numbers of visitors who attended the open day. Woodford brigade took the opportunity to invite the RSPCA, the civilian fire units [CFUs], the local fire and rescue unit, the local Bushcare group and the Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue Service to be part of its open day at the shed. Importantly, there was considerable community engagement, with information about the local brigade and about joining the brigade as well as talks on preparing a fire plan.

Memories of the 2013 bushfire disaster in the Blue Mountains—it is almost the one-year anniversary; it is amazing how quickly time passes—are still very raw for most residents, so they have a heightened sense of awareness and preparedness and they eagerly seek information. The overwhelming sense of gratitude for those who look after the Blue Mountains community and a willingness to volunteer has resulted in a swelling of numbers in all five brigades. In fact, there were so many new recruits that some brigades had to turn people away; I think there were several hundred new recruits. Training of new recruits has been decentralised back to the brigades under a well-designed program put together by the group captains. Therefore, more new recruits are now able to undergo their basic firefighter training in a timely manner, and the brigades that I have spoken to all applaud this move.

I visited also members of the Step By Step Bushfire Support Service, which was originally supported by Gateway Family Services, led by Anne Crestani. I did this last week also but separate to my visits to the Rural Fire Service stations. The Step By Step initiative was initially funded by the State Government to assist affected families, supporting them and directing them to appropriate recovery services. The team is made up of members of various local community services organisations. On my visit we all shared experiences and stories, and discussed lessons learnt. It was evident that members of the teams that service the Winmalee and Mount Victoria areas find their work challenging but very rewarding. One of the recurring themes was the positive strengthening of personal and community ties. They also expressed the invaluable experience gained, which enhanced their skills in working in these disaster relief areas—something that, unfortunately, they could learn in no other way.

The Step By Step Bushfire Support Service has now completed its work and has handed over to community organisations to support the recovery effort. I thank the service very much for its wonderful work, which I heard about firsthand from affected residents. As part of the emergency services team the CFUs provide an invaluable service to their local communities and they provided that service during the fires. I attended the twentieth anniversary of the CFU units at the Penrith Museum of Fire. The CFU units competed against each other in different competition categories. I was pleased to note that a couple of the units—the Yellow Rock Chicks and Emma Parade—won numerous awards. When I visited the Woodford Rural Fire Shed, I was told that their goal was to have a CFU unit on each street. I congratulate them on having achieved their goal.

TRIBUTE TO COUNCILLOR EMANUEL TSARDOULIAS

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.30 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to Councillor Emanuel Tsardoulis. He passed away on 16 August 2014, aged 38, after losing his long battle with cancer. It is a tragedy

to lose someone so young and full of life. I am pleased that Linda Burney, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, is in the Chamber today. She too knew Emanuel well. Tributes have been pouring in for Emanuel; he was a much-loved and respected member of the inner-west community. "Passionate", "optimistic", "enthusiastic" and "exuberant" are words that have been used to describe him and they are all true. He always saw the positive side of life, always had a smile on his face, and was always ready to lend a helping hand.

Sometimes Emanuel would drive one to distraction with his relentless pursuit of an idea or a proposal. However, one learnt to be patient with his enthusiasm because it came from a genuine desire to improve the lives of local residents. Emanuel never stopped thinking, planning and dreaming about how things could be improved and about what he could do to make that happen. Emanuel grew up in Dulwich Hill and went to Dulwich High School. On leaving school he worked in retail and in local government and then started his own businesses. He married Zoe—the love of his life—and they had beautiful twin boys, Dimitri and Stephen.

Emanuel was elected to Marrickville Council in 2008, to represent West Ward. I remember how proud he was on that day. Emanuel came into his element as a councillor. He was chairperson of council's Infrastructure, Planning and Environmental Services Committee; a member of a number of council's special committees; and he served as deputy mayor between 2012 and 2013. He knew the inner west intimately—particularly Dulwich Hill—and he used that knowledge to advocate effectively for the needs and aspirations of the people he represented. Some of his projects included upgrades to the Jack Shanahan Skate Park in Arlington Oval and Movies in the Park at Johnston Park. Emanuel also involved himself enthusiastically in broader local government responsibilities. He was a metropolitan director on the Local Government NSW board and a member of the board of the Marrickville Metro pool.

Of more importance, Emanuel was always available to residents to talk through their problems, big or small, and to work with council staff to try to resolve those issues whenever he could. His genuine pride in his role as a councillor was a reminder to us all of the privilege of elected office. Much of the work of the local councillor is dealing with day-to-day issues that may seem small but which loom large in the lives of people. Emanuel always found time for this side of his work as a local councillor and many people in our local community are better off because he did.

For as long as I can remember, Emanuel has been an active member of the Labor Party in Dulwich Hill. In every campaign we could rely on Emanuel to do the jobs that required high energy, late nights and hard work. Never content to be involved in just one campaign, he would work for me and for Linda Burney, and he would lend a helping hand to other candidates. He was truly dedicated to the community. In addition to his Labor Party activism and his role as a councillor, he was active in Marrickville Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Police Citizens Youth Club, the NSW State Emergency Service, and in the Greek community.

I could never understand how he found the time for all his activities. When one asked him this, he would just smile and say, "I have to do my bit." Emanuel has been taken from us too soon. Together with many others, I will miss Emanuel—his warmth, his infectious grin, his enthusiasm and optimism. The community will miss his activism and energy in working for improved services and infrastructure. To Zoe, his young sons, Dimitri and Stephen, and to all his family, I extend my deepest sympathy.

FRIENDS OF NIOKA

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.34 p.m.]: I update the New South Wales Parliament on the dedicated and caring volunteers of the Friends of Nioka, the Palliative Care Unit at Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital. I thank the President of the Friends of Nioka, Mr Bryan Singh, for allowing me to use his words so that the great work of the Friends of Nioka can be recorded in *Hansard* in the New South Wales Parliament:

Palliative care is seen as being about dying but I would say that's a mirage ... it's about living the last days of your life as well as you can and as comfortably as you can with your family being supported.

Everyone wants to die at home but that happens in only about 16 per cent of cases. The rest die in hospitals or palliative care situations. The Nioka Palliative Care Unit opened in 1991 in Tamworth and the Friends of Nioka started in June 2002 when the palliative care ward was threatened with closure and the group lobbied for its continuation and improvement. Nioka treats about 120 patients per year in a six-bed ward with a staff ratio of three beds per staff member. Nioka is about quality of life, which means it is about the quality of pain control. Its objective is to support the dying and their families. The Tamworth Hospital redevelopment is well under way.

An amount of \$210 million has been allocated to build a five-star facility that will deliver palliative care closer to home. I note that the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, is in the Chamber today. She brokered the deal with the then Federal health Minister, Nicola Roxon, to get the funds to build this facility. It was not built—and never would have been built—under the previous Government. The close working relationship and the consultative process between the Friends of Nioka and hospital management is greatly appreciated. The new Nioka ward is being constructed on the ground floor of the hospital redevelopment. The ward has six rooms, each with an en suite, and the rooms are of the largest size that can be constructed in a public hospital in New South Wales.

I am amazed at the amount of work that the Friends of Nioka does and the passion and commitment of those involved. This year a remembrance service was conducted at the Tamworth City Uniting Church during Palliative Care Week. A Christmas raffle was organised, sponsored by New England Mutual. Various guest speakers have attended their meetings and there have been donations from fishing clubs, service clubs, businesses and, of course, bequests and collections at funerals. The group organised a sausage sizzle at Bunnings, grief workshops and volunteers who help out in the ward. Each year Friends of Nioka spends over \$50,000 supporting the palliative care ward. Equipment purchased includes portable oxygen concentrators, syringe drivers and blankets. The group supplies spring water, newspapers, coffee, bedding and medical manuals. Friends of Nioka has committed \$178,000 to equipping and furnishing the new Nioka ward, including beds and chairs at a cost of over \$6,000 each, cabinets and telecommunications equipment.

New England Mutual is one of the many sponsors who do great work in supporting the Friends of Nioka and it was recently acknowledged at a community partnership meeting where that support was gratefully received. Once the furnishing of the Nioka ward in the new hospital is completed, the focus will then shift to purchasing equipment that can be loaned to patients for use in their own homes, allowing them to be cared for at home for a much longer time. The most important thing that one can do for end-of-life patients is to listen, alleviate their symptoms, support them and their families and give them dignity. As Cicely Saunders said: "You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life". I thank and pay respect to the dedicated, caring volunteers of the Friends of Nioka Palliative Care Ward in Tamworth Hospital.

DARLING STREET, ROZELLE, EXPLOSION

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [12.39 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the tragic events that took place in my electorate nearly two weeks ago—the explosion and fire that occurred in the convenience store on Darling Street, Rozelle, shortly after 4.00 a.m. on Thursday 4 September. I pay tribute and send my thoughts and regards to the friends and family of those who died in this tragic event: Chris Noble, 27, Bianca O'Brien, 31, and her baby son, Jude. They lived in apartments above the store and died in the explosion and subsequent fire that caused the building to collapse. Rozelle convenience store owner, Adeel Khan, remains in hospital after he was found in his shop underneath rubble and a refrigerator.

The explosion obliterated the convenience store and the units above the shops. It is important for the House to be aware of and acknowledge the grief and sense of tragedy felt in the Rozelle community. I thank and bring to the attention of the House those who were involved in the emergency response and subsequent activities. In particular, my thanks go to emergency services including Fire and Rescue NSW, police, ambulance services and officers of Leichhardt Council, including the councillors and mayor, for their response during this recent terrible disaster in Darling Street. I acknowledge the Minister for Police who contacted me directly and took the time to ensure I had the necessary contacts in the NSW Police in order to assist in the process.

For almost 14 years, since 1999, I represented the community of Balmain as a councillor on Leichhardt Council and now I represent the community as a State member of Parliament. We have never before experienced such a severe tragedy in the area. It has brought many people together to support the community. It is important to note that those who died are foremost in our hearts but there are other victims of this tragedy including business and property owners such as the property owner who was required to demolish the two shops adjacent to the explosion site. All of them are victims in this situation and our thoughts are with them.

Leichhardt Council has been doing a lot of work in this area. I have attended many of the regular 11.00 a.m. meetings at the Hannaford Centre that provide updates on the situation. I have attended a range of community meetings in order to offer my condolences, support and active engagement on this issue. It is important to note that the NSW Police have advised that they expect to reopen one lane of traffic on Darling Street between Nelson and Merton Streets by 6.00 a.m. on Wednesday 17 September. Forensic investigators and Fire and Rescue NSW officers will continue to process the crime scene within the footprint of the incident site. There is an exclusion zone but it will be confined to the immediate vicinity of 625 and 635 Darling Street.

The neighbouring building on Darling Street, which has suffered significant structural damage, is being demolished and that is almost complete. It is a delicate operation as it is still a crime scene. Members will understand the prime importance of the investigation continuing in order to get to the bottom of this incident. Due to safety concerns those people who lived in the building being demolished were unable to return to retrieve their belongings. I will continue to work with them to ensure that they have the best possible care and support. Safety has been paramount while detectives work around the clock to sift through twisted metal, concrete and debris. Those investigations are ongoing and I offer my full support to the police and associated services in that process.

The tragic loss of members of our community will be compounded if businesses in that local area are forced to close. I encourage people to support the local businesses in Rozelle. A Rozelle fire appeal concert will be held on Sunday 21 September starting at 12 noon. The headline acts include Diesel. Other local representatives and community organisations will be present. In order to raise funds for those tragically affected by the incident there will be a sausage sizzle and jumping castle. In the future we will be organising a fete and street fair to encourage people to visit that area of Rozelle. It is a tragic situation but I am encouraged by the way that this community has come together. While it will take time it is important that we rebuild. Foremost in our minds are the friends and family of those who have lost loved ones and I encourage all members to join with me to send our deepest sympathies to those people.

CAMP QUALITY ESCARPADE

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [12.44 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to share with the House the fact that Kermit and the Rotarians are riding again in the Camp Quality esCarpade. It is a great privilege to have the Minister for Health present in the House. Kermit and the Rotarians take part in the annual Camp Quality esCarpade to support children living with cancer. This year the esCarpade will be a week-long journey through outback New South Wales that will cover the beaten bush roads between my alma mater, Broken Hill, and Albury. The esCarpadians will rev up to provide fun therapy and usher in Camp Quality's national puppet program. The national puppet program will travel with the convoy. It is an educational performance that teaches children about living with children who are battling cancer.

Team Kermit includes my friends Barrie Grimes, Marty Magro, Rob Elliott, John Gannon, Tony Ross and Wayne Gannon. I am proud to say that this is their fourth year of helping esCarpades prove that for children with cancer laughter is indeed the best medicine. Last year the team had a nasty accident and the Kermit car did a number of somersaults on one of the dirt roads. In the interim Kermit has been given a new lease of life with notable assistance and repair work donated by the automotive engineering class at Campbelltown TAFE, a new suspension system provided by Campbelltown's Ultimate Suspension at Ingleburn and a bright Kermit green paint job from Blueprint Smash Repairs at Ingleburn. The car is really looking quite schmick.

In their bid to reach the \$70,000 raised in last year's event team Kermit recently hosted a fundraising dinner at Harrington Grove Country Club. The audience listened to a presentation by Mr Rory Muscat. Although he lives at Glen Alpine, Campbelltown, Mr Muscat is a director of the illustrious Manly Warringah Rugby League Football Club. Mr Muscat provided interesting insight into the National Rugby League. There was a wonderful presentation by Klark Quinn, general manager of the beloved Australian confectionary company Darrell Lea. I was honoured to attend the opening of their new factory on Saturday 6 September. All these people turned out to support a wonderful cause.

Since their involvement with esCarpade Kermit and the Rotarians have raised \$200,000 for Camp Quality. I am pleased to say that they are supported by our Premier, Mike Baird, who has made a donation to support the exemplary volunteer work of team Kermit. I and my good friend Russell Matheson, Federal member for Macarthur, are also sponsors of the team. These volunteers take part in this annual venture to give back to the community in a small way and raise awareness for children living with cancer. I fully commend the efforts of team Kermit and Camp Quality to the House.

PENRITH PANTHERS RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [12.48 p.m.]: On 15 September 2014 the Penrith Panthers held their presentation night. The pavilion was buzzing with energy and excitement among the mighty Penrith Panther players, their partners, the Panthers' executive and supporters to a degree we have not sensed for some time. As I speak the Penrith Panthers are only 80 minutes away from the 2014 grand final. In 2012 commentators were suggesting that the Panthers would receive the wooden spoon. How much change have we witnessed in just two

years? The momentum and performance of the Penrith Panthers have certainly reversed and our team is now within reach of the ultimate prize. But this turn-around has not magically popped out of thin air; on the contrary. Players from across all divisions have been totally committed to their roles in training, delivering on the field and teamwork.

The coaches and assistant coaches have developed a tight-knit family bond amongst the players and embedded the simple message: believe. Last night Warren Wilson spoke of this culture, developed by head coach Ivan Cleary, being the envy of the whole NRL family. As I experienced last night it is a culture that is tangible. Supporting the hard work on and off the field has been the strength and unwavering backing of the Panthers' executive, ably led by Don Feltis, OAM, chairman of the board, as well as the legendary Gus Gould, AM, executive general manager of rugby league. Last Saturday I attended Alliance Stadium with my family and friends to cheer and will on our team in the battle against last year's premiers—the Roosters. While Panthers supporters were outnumbered at the Roosters' home ground, we matched it with the Roosters in our passion, excitement and belief in our team.

Mr John Sidoti: Turn it up. It's called luck.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: The evidence is on the board, member for Drummoyne. It was a pleasure also to meet two fervent Panther supporters who live in Bronte and Bellevue Hill. Within the first 10 minutes of the game as I watched our team take it to the Roosters I could sense that they believed they could win this game. It was a tough and challenging game on many fronts but the mighty Panthers never lost sight of the goal. With the courageous and inspiring leadership of Jamie Soward and the raw guts to give it their all, the Panthers finished the game in the final minutes with a field goal to seal a 19 to 18 victory. What sheer joy and unbridled exuberance washed from the Panther players up into the stands to engulf the Panther supporters. I almost lost my voice that night—as is now evident—from yelling and cheering so loudly and proudly.

While we will not get ahead of ourselves and predict the future, it was clear from last night's presentation that no fluke or lucky star has positioned the Penrith Panthers where they now stand. Watching outtakes of this season's highlights on the big screen last night, the crowd witnessed young men who not only could play rugby league at first-grade standard, but also were creative, daring, connected risk-takers and believers. This spirit and belief in themselves and each other has lifted the team into the final stages of the 2014 season. A number of very special players were celebrated last night with acknowledgements. As each player moved to the stage to collect his award the audience was treated to an inspiring video presentation of that player's season highlights.

The Welfare and Education Junior awardee was Dave Cowhan, who has completed his first year in carpentry. The Welfare and Education Senior awardee was Nathan Smith, who is completing his electrical apprenticeship with Lea and Ian Hix, studying at TAFE, meeting his Penrith Panthers commitments and raising his family with his lovely wife. He is a tremendous role model. I was proud to hear last night that the Penrith Panthers lead the National Rugby League [NRL] in having 91.7 per cent of their players in either work or study. Clearly, this demonstrates that the Penrith Panthers broader executive and management are sincerely dedicated to the long-term wellbeing of their players. The NYC Player of the Year was awarded to Brendon Attwood. The NSW Cup Player of the Year was awarded to Ryan Simpkins. Clubman of the Year was awarded to none other than Jamie Soward. The John Farragher Award for Courage and Determination was presented to Adam Docker, who, it was said, is playing against guys 10 kilograms or more heavier than himself.

The Members Player of the Year award went to Jamie Soward. The Ben Alexander Award for Rookie of the Year was evenly split between Bryce Cartwright and Dallin Watene-Zelezniak. Try of the Year went to Josh Mansour and the Merv Cartwright Award for Penrith Panthers NRL Player of the Year was awarded to bright young Matt Moylan. From rookie of the year last year to Player of the Year this year, Matt has had a stellar 12 months. Special acknowledgement and sincere thanks also go to the sponsors who make all this possible: OAK, Hertz, SportingBet, HostPlus, Asics, Tooheys New, Literacy for Life Foundation, Abcoe Distributors, Jim Beam, SEW Eurodrive, Coca-Cola, Hogs Breath Cafe, Hanks Seafood, and more than another 120 sponsors and supporters. Thank you to everyone for a brilliant 2014 season. Go The Mighty Panthers!

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.53 p.m.]: It would be remiss of me as a fellow Western Sydney member of Parliament not to commend my Western Sydney colleague the member for Mulgoa for congratulating the mighty Panthers on their game last weekend. The field goal by Jamie Soward in the dying minutes of the game was outstanding. This time of year brings out the very best in football.

Winners are grinners. The others can please themselves. I wish for Penrith—the remaining doyen and bastion of rugby league, the true code—to go forward, recoup the flag this year and bring the mantle back to Western Sydney where it firmly belongs. I commiserate on behalf of my beloved team the Eels, but if we are to have one Sydney team in the grand final, let it be the Penrith Panthers.

GREAT LAKES BE AWARE AND SAVE A MAN AWARENESS DAY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.54 p.m.]: I inform the House that on Father's Day last my office took part in the Great Lakes Be Aware and Save a Man family fun day at John Wright Park, Tuncurry, to raise awareness and funds for prostate cancer. More than \$8,500 was raised on the day, which was well supported by the electorate's eight Men's Sheds—Bulahdelah, Coomba Park, Wallis Lake at Tuncurry, Old Bar, Taree, which has two, Wallamba and Wingham—as well as the Manning Great Lakes Woodworkers Club. These groups were making and selling things from their displays and each donated an item for an auction later in the day. Such a day requires many volunteers and groups to lend support.

I thank Angry Anderson, who attended as the prostate cancer ambassador. Of course, he also is The Nationals candidate for Cessnock at the next State election. I thank also for their support the *Manning River Times*, *Great Lakes Advocate* and the *Wingham Chronicle*; Prime Television; 2RE/Max FM Radio; Great Lakes Printing; the Sicilian Restaurant; Highway Motor Inn; Slipway on Wallis; Jonathon Sleiman from Medco Service Station, who always supports good causes; Grant Coleman, general manager of Wingham Beef Exports; and Woolworths Tuncurry. Rex Airlines, Sydney Harbour Marriott Hotel and Captain Cook Cruises jointly provided the major raffle prize. The raffle raised about \$5,000.

I thank also Matt Yates from Bing Lee, who donated a 60-inch television; Bunnings Taree; Wallis Lake Fishermen's Co-Op; Taree Fishermen's Co-Op; John Andrews and the Wingham Pipe Band; Great Lakes Concert Band; Justin Hayes and the Taree PCYC Gymaroos; Ian Davis from North Coast Lakesters Car Club, who is known affectionately as Elvis; Forster Lions Club, which cooked the sausages and steaks throughout the day—with Wingham Abattoir donating the steaks—raising about \$1,600; Baker's Delight; the various Men's Sheds I have mentioned; Great Lakes YMCA, which provided a jumping castle for the children and face painting; Kevin McGrath from McGraths Meats; and Griffo's Gourmet Meats and Nabiac Butchery, which donated the sausages.

Also on display for the day were the various rescue organisations: Taree Volunteer Rescue Association, NSW Ambulance Service, Gloucester Great Lakes Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire Brigade. Tuncurry Beach Bowling Club, Robert Marlow from J. R. Richards and Sons, and Woolworths Forster also were present. A number of performers attended, including local Matt Zarb and Snowy Robson, to entertain the crowd. Specialist urologist Dr Ben Kwok and oncologist Dr Ted Livshin spoke to the crowd about men's health, particularly prostate cancer, and the importance of men seeing their general practitioners to undergo the blood test to determine if they carry the prostate-specific antigen [PSA]. Both practitioners said that any man over 35 years should undergo the test. Despite the surrounding activity, one could almost hear a pin drop as the crowd listened to their words of advice.

Other sponsors included Karenne Norling from Itravel; Justin Walker from Bean Me Up Espresso; Michael Thomas from the local Marine Rescue; and Stan Wilson from Oasis Service Station, who donated the use of a coolroom for the day. It was a phenomenal day with thousands of people passing through for a fantastic cause. The funds raised were divided equally between the Great Lakes Men's Support Group and the Manning Men's Support Group, both of which do a fantastic job working with men diagnosed with prostate cancer, and their families. This disease affects not only men but also their spouses, children, families and businesses. I commend those two support groups for helping families dealing with this problem. I commend also the community for getting behind such a worthy cause.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN D'AMATO

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [12.59 p.m.]: I acknowledge in the Parliament a special individual from my electorate of Rockdale: Mr John D'Amato. John was born in Malta on 13 December 1936 and grew up during World War II. During his early life in Malta John always took part in church activities. He studied at a seminary and the De La Salle College and was often selected as a group leader. John's interest in Australia was heightened during his early childhood while studying the geography of the British Commonwealth—of which Australia was and is a part—when discussions between the governments of Malta and Britain were taking place on redundancies from the services in Malta. John welcomed the opportunity and realised his dream to move to

Australia. He arrived in Sydney on 15 January 1959 and settled at Mascot. In March 1971, John married Lina and they raised three children: daughter, Margaret, and two sons, Godwin and David. The family moved to Brighton-Le-Sands in July 1980, where John and Lina still live today.

It was not easy to settle into the new land of opportunity discovered by John D'Amato and he decided to help migrants to settle and to assimilate into their new country. He helped new arrivals to adapt to challenges they faced in finding a job and settling into their new home. The surroundings in Australia were vastly different from the familiar environment and culture in the Mediterranean and Europe. Like every new arrival to Australia, John D'Amato did not neglect his place of origin. John's passion for Australia and his dedication to new immigrants led to him being elected the first chairman of the management committee of the Botany Migrant Resource Centre in 1981, having been appointed to the committee by the then Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, the Hon. Ian Macphee. The centre, now known as Sydney Multicultural Community Services, provides a diverse range of assistance and care services to people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including workshops and English classes.

John D'Amato, now retired, is still involved in voluntary work and continues to give his time to the community. John established and became the president of the St Thomas More parish seniors' group and he organises regular excursions and bus trips. John's efforts have been praised for giving seniors a sense of belonging, companionship and community involvement after retirement. As a local justice of the peace, he also uses his knowledge to assist the community. John regularly helps elderly and sick parishioners of his local church—St Thomas More at Brighton-Le-Sands—to deal with religious and commercial issues in their home or in a hospital bed when required. His caring nature and willingness to help people in need regardless of their origin is a great example for others to follow. By his actions, John D'Amato has gained the respect of the community and I acknowledge and thank him for his selfless and ongoing commitment to the people of Rockdale.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): I welcome to the gallery Sam Patel, Nick Patel and Nishet Acharya, members of the Parramatta business community who are involved in the solar industry. I welcome them to New South Wales Parliament as guests of the member for Parramatta.

PARRAMATTA HIGH SCHOOL LOCAL COURT TOUR

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [1.04 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to Parramatta High School, which is one of the exceptional schools in my electorate. Last week I had the opportunity to join year 10 history students from the school in a tour of the Parramatta Local Court. We were privileged to have the Hon. Brad Hazzard, the Attorney General, accompany us on the tour and be on hand to answer questions about our justice and legal system. The students watched a criminal hearing unfold and when the proceedings were adjourned for lunch they had the opportunity to talk to the magistrate about the types of cases over which she presides and to hear about what she takes into account during her deliberations.

The tour was a great opportunity for those students who may be thinking of pursuing legal studies and a career in the law to see first-hand the wonderful work that our courts do. It is amazing that our Local Court system deals with about 480,000 cases every year. The students on the tour were: Vighna Sritharan, Manasi Agarwal, Tayyaba Ahmad, Kevin Amid, Anmol Arya, Jonathan Chen, Nina Chen, Hamish Hibbert, Amy Lee, Rachael Lee, Amy Luo, Andy Mai, Poonam Narayan, Jason Nguyen, Samikshya Sapkota, William Yang, Karen Yu, Jana Zeidan, Henry Zhang and Tammy Zhong.

The principal, Ms Dominique Splatt, joined the students on the tour and said that they were privileged and delighted to have the opportunity to speak with the Attorney General and the local magistrate. It was great to be part of the question and answer session during which the students were able to ask any question they wished. I thank the local registrar, Anthony Raymond, who escorted the students around the court, set up the meeting with the magistrate and facilitated discussions with the Attorney General.

Parramatta now has the second largest justice precinct in New South Wales. The establishment of that precinct has resulted in the emergence of an industry employing many within the legal fraternity, including aspiring lawyers. The Attorney General's Department office at Parramatta employs approximately 1,000 staff. The Parramatta Community Justice Clinic, a not-for-profit legal organisation, provides legal advice to people who cannot afford it. The advice is provided by students from the University of Western Sydney School of Law under the supervision of qualified lawyers and the clinic allows them to get the practical training that is required for the completion of their degree.

It was also wonderful that Her Honour was able to discuss some of the many things that a magistrate must take into account when making decisions, especially sentencing decisions. This program demonstrates the Government's determination to give young people every opportunity to observe our courts first-hand so that they can consider future employment and achieve their goals. The courthouse tour is one way of exposing students to different opportunities and making the justice system more friendly and accessible for the community. I commend the Access to Justice Campaign Committee for its success after a three-year campaign to have the Supreme Court sit in Parramatta with Chief Justice Tom Bathurst presiding. I also commend Parramatta High School for the wonderful work it does and the leadership shown by Principal Dominique Splatt.

ROTARY CLUB OF HOLROYD

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [1.09 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge the Rotary Club of Holroyd and pay tribute to the many men and women Rotarians for their outstanding commitment and service to the community. I was honoured to attend a Rotary Club of Holroyd community forum. Local residents were invited to hear from Superintendent Matt Appleton, Commander of the Holroyd Local Area Command, and to hear about the many activities of the club and the contribution it has made to the local community. The club also hosted Diabetes Night, which I was unable to attend because I held a business forum in my electorate that provided information about how this Government supports businesspeople. I have learned a great deal about the services that Rotary clubs offer to local communities and I believe this work greatly exceeds the expectations of those communities. Rotary is making a real difference. People are coming together and developing friendships while utilising their individual talents to actively contribute to serving the wider community. Every community is served well by having an active Rotary club that unites people to achieve extraordinary things.

Rotarians convert the power of one to the power of many to achieve exceptional changes in the world. For more than 100 years people from around the world have become Rotarians in order to help their communities. Rotary is a non-political, non-religious, global organisation that has more than one million Rotarians in more than 33,000 clubs around the world making a difference in their communities. Australia has 32,000 Rotarians in 1,164 clubs. Rotarians roll up their sleeves and achieve extraordinary outcomes by bringing the people of the world together. Their desire to help others is expressed through Rotary's five avenues of service—community service, youth service, international service, club service and vocational service—which form the foundation of its activities.

Community service concentrates on improving life within the community. Some of the activities undertaken by Rotary include assisting and supporting flood- and fire-affected communities, health projects and air rescue. Youth services involve youth programs run by Rotary such as Youth Exchange and the Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment. International service improves the wellbeing of humanity around the world and promotes world understanding and peace. Rotary clubs sponsor and aid international partners, which enables them to support projects in local communities in other countries and assist with disaster relief. Club service focuses on making clubs strong; a thriving club is anchored by its strong relationships and an active membership development plan.

Rotary has a mission to enable Rotarians to advocate for understanding, goodwill and peace. I am proud of my strong relationship with the Rotary Club of Holroyd. I look forward to continuing to support its services, which bring love and peace to local communities and the world. Other members of Parliament may pay tribute to Rotary but I have witnessed the services it provides in my electorate; and I pay tribute to Rotary clubs in Australia and around the world for the services that they provide.

PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE DAME MARIE BASHIR, AD, CVO

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [1.13 p.m.]: Since being elected as the member for Drummoyne, I have had the pleasure of meeting our outgoing Governor Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Dame Marie Bashir, AD, CVO on a number of occasions. Last week I was not well so I take this opportunity to contribute to the Address-in-Reply debate. Her Excellency is a warm and wonderful person and has injected a sense of honour and, purpose and brought great leadership to the Office of the Governor. Her unassuming presence has made her one of the most popular governors of all time and she is genuinely loved by the people of New South Wales. Indeed, her appointment in 2001 proved popular on all sides of politics. As the longest serving State Governor, Her Excellency will be long remembered for her sincerity and her achievements.

Her Excellency has exemplary credentials as a doctor, a professor and a psychiatrist. She was named Australian Mother of the Year in 1971 when her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie, was Lord Mayor of Sydney.

She has had many links with the electorate of Drummoyne, in particular, as the Founding Director of the Rivendell Unit at Concord West, which is part of Concord Hospital. Her Excellency was Director of the Rivendell Unit from 1972 to 1988. The unit performs important functions that are close to her heart. Its mental health facility specialises in problems that affect many young people in my electorate. Her Excellency was instrumental in setting up outreach programs to be attended during the school holidays by young people with special needs such as Indochinese and Latin American refugees, and refugees who have experienced severe torture and trauma.

In 2002, again drawing on her expertise in medicine, Her Excellency became a patron of the Australia Vietnam Medical Trust and became closely involved in collaborative health programs in rural Vietnam. In 2003 she received the Mental Health Princess Award for her contribution to joint mental health programs between Australia and Thailand. Her tenacity to improve mental health initiatives has never diminished. I have had the pleasure of meeting Her Excellency at a number of events in the Drummoyne electorate. One occasion was at the opening of the Ashfield home for adolescents and another was at the Embroiderers' Guild, of which she is a patron. I bumped into her on many occasions at the opera and at Kokoda-Anzac Day ceremonies in my electorate, and recently at investitures. I will miss seeing Her Excellency at official events but I treasure the opportunities I have had to meet this wonderful Australian. I wish her and Sir Nicholas the very best for the future.

MATER DEI FOUNDATION ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DINNER

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.17 p.m.]: Last Saturday evening I had the honour of attending the fourteenth annual Mater Dei Foundation Dinner. The fundraiser was attended by more than 600 people. The event was a renowned success and raised more than \$250,000 in much-needed funds for the school. I acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues who attended the dinner: the Hon. John Ajaka, member of Parliament, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra; the Hon. Jai Rowell, member of Parliament, Minister for Mental Health, Assistant Minister for Health; Dr Andrew McDonald, member of Parliament; Mr Bryan Doyle, member of Parliament; Russell Matheson, Federal member of Parliament; Councillor Lara Symkowiak, Mayor of Camden; and Councillor Clinton Mead, Mayor of Campbelltown. The highlight of the evening was having Bishop Ingham at the function.

Mater Dei was established by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in 1910. Mater Dei School now offers co-educational school from kindergarten to year 12. The school is located in beautiful Camden and is renowned across the State as being a leading provider of care for children with disabilities. It has a reputation for its wonderful caring Catholic education, which is a credit to its principal, Tony Fitzgerald, all the staff who work at Mater Dei and the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. I acknowledge members of the Mater Dei Board of Directors and leadership team whose dedication and commitment to Mater Dei is exceptional. The Board of Directors includes Rob Burns, John Adam, Kevin Lawler, Joanne Hewitt, Paul Rodney, Professor Patricia O'Brien, Katherine Bland, Mark Kofahl, Daniel Kuchta, Michael Lavorato and David Taylor.

The leadership team is made up of Tony Fitzgerald, the chief executive officer [CEO] and principal; Debbie Gates; Samantha Giles; Anne Lauder; Karen Taylor; and Pamela Templeton. The Foundation Dinner is Mater Dei's annual fundraising event and owes much of its success to hardworking and dedicated committee members Jim Marsden, OAM, John Adam, Martin Cascarino, Tony Fitzgerald, Debbie Gates and Kevin O'Keefe. I also mention the master of ceremonies on the night, Steve Edge, who kept us entertained throughout the evening. David Campbell, the entertainer for the night, was fantastic and should be commended.

I commend the wonderful student performers from Mater Dei school: Thomas Allen, Miles Andrews, Michael Backhouse, Breeana Bruin, Ethan Campbell, Mischa Castaneda-Abalos, Saul Castaneda-Abalos, Jett Charlton, Jye Cooper, Luke Corcoran, Harley Dengate, Harry Dickinson, Jade Di Girolamo, Nathan Donoghue, Olivia Dore, Emma-Jane Duggan, Ciaran Ellis, Victor Fineanganofu, Jack Foweraker, Jake Franzman, Torey Franzman, Reilly Galway, Kaylee Glassington, Rachele Hadchiti, Olivia Leadbeater, Nakeita Lewis, Zachery Leone, Eliza Madeley, Rickardo Martinez, Sommer McClelland, Amie McClymont, Andrea Moretto, Ryan Moutia, Isabella Nolan, Linda Obeido, Thomas Perrin, Nicholas Pithio, Phoebe Said, Benjamin Savich, Beth Simpson, Charlotte Skinner, James Slender, Matthew Stone, James Tabone, Sarah Vassallo, Olivia Veneran and Daniella Violentis. I also mention Mater Dei student representatives Mouhamad Bassal, Peter Kutle, Amie McClymont, Ryan Moutia and Phoebe Said.

This was a wonderful evening and it was fantastic to see the Macarthur community supporting and contributing to this worthy cause. I acknowledge the sponsors whose generous donations will ensure that Mater

Dei school can continue to provide quality education in the Catholic tradition and provide early intervention therapy services, education and residential programs for babies, children and young people with an intellectual disability or developmental delay. I mention all the sponsors who contributed to the wonderful success of Saturday evening's event; however, Mater Dei is so well supported by our local community, time just does not permit me to mention each sponsor today. I thank each and every one of them, as do the Mater Dei and Macarthur communities.

However, I mention the major sponsors of the evening's event: platinum sponsor Bob Ingham, AO, and family; gold sponsors Campbelltown Catholic Club, Perich Group, BRADCORP, David Wilson Discount Chemist; silver sponsors Max and Nola Tegel, Clintons Toyota, Dartanyon, Ingleburn RSL Club, Camden Hire, Macarthur Automotive, Western Suburbs League Club, Tony Wolf & Son; bronze sponsors Marsdens Law Group, Commonwealth Bank, Fresh Creative Styling, Wivenhoe Village, Wakeling Automotive, Macarthur Heights, Kelly+Partners Chartered Accountants. To all involved, I thank them for a wonderful and successful evening. Mater Dei is a wonderful school and the Camden community is extremely proud of it. This can be largely attributed to the school's principal and CEO, Tony Fitzgerald, and his fantastic staff and, of course, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan.

Private members' statements concluded.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.22 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the Speaker's Gallery today Councillor Mathew Schiebel from Lismore City Council and Dr Chris Ingall, Chair, Staff Medical Council, Lismore, guests of the Deputy Speaker and member for Lismore.

I welcome to the gallery Lachlan Day and Tom Bailey, year 10 work experience students from Barker College, guests of the Deputy President of the Legislative Council, the Hon. Jenny Gardiner.

I also welcome Mr Martin Smith, National Organiser, General Municipal Boilermakers Union, from the United Kingdom, and Mr Greg McLean, OAM, Head of Public Services, Australian Services Union, guests of the member for Shellharbour.

I also welcome to the gallery today 19 year 5 and 6 students and their teachers from St Joseph's Primary School, Bulahdelah, guests of the member for Myall Lakes.

I welcome 38 year 11 legal studies students from Santa Sabina College, Strathfield, guests of the member for Strathfield.

I also acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Mrs Lucy Haslam, mother of Dan Haslam, a Tamworth constituent currently battling terminal cancer, a guest of the member for Tamworth.

Finally, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of 44 year 9 geography and history students and their teachers from Holy Trinity School, Inverell, guests of the member for Northern Tablelands.

CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR

The SPEAKER: It is testimony to the unquenchable nature of the human spirit that from the blood and the mud and the horrors of the Great War there arose so much remarkable poetry. Poetry gave a solace in words where otherwise no solace was to be found. The names of many are familiar—Brooke and Owen, Sassoon and Graves, Vera Brittain and Jessie Pope—although for many these days their actual poems are no longer familiar.

On the other hand, few of us recognise the name of Laurence Binyon. A quiet man and a Quaker who worked most of his life in the British Museum, he saw service working in the field hospitals of France and was later Professor of Poetry at Harvard. His name is little recognised but his words are known to us all. On a desolate part of the Cornwall coast in the days after the terrible Battle of the Marne from 5 to 12 September 1914, where the invading German thrust towards Paris was halted and the war of the trenches began, where

two million men engaged in battle suffering 500,000 casualties, killed or wounded, Binyon composed his poem *For the Fallen*. The *Times* printed the poem on 21 September 1914. Its power and pathos have resonated with us now for 100 years. We all know it—or at least we know the third and fourth of its seven verses:

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

FORESTRY ACT: REVOCATION OF DEDICATION

The Speaker reported receipt of correspondence from Her Excellency the Governor dated 18 August 2014, acknowledging receipt of the resolution adopted by the House on 5 August 2014 regarding the revocation of the dedication of a State forest.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

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. Will the Minister confirm that the member for Port Stephens arranged for prohibited donor Buldev to fly her by helicopter from Newcastle to Sydney in 2010?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am glad to have an opportunity to answer. The answer is no, I will not confirm that because that is not my recollection.

CANNABIS USE FOR MEDICINAL PURPOSES

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government showing care and compassion to people when they need it most?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question, and I pay tribute to him for his work. All of us in this place have a duty and obligation to look after our constituents. I can think of no more pressing need than looking after constituents who are in an incredibly difficult and unbelievably unfortunate position of dealing with a terminal illness. The member for Tamworth has done an outstanding job in bringing forward a very personal case. As I came here today I reflected on the opportunity I had to meet an inspiring Australian. I met the Haslams in my office on 21 July. Daniel is a young man who in any other respect has every right to expect a future and to change the world. Unfortunately, Daniel has a terminal illness. When I met him and his family—his mum, Lucy, and his wife, Alyce—and despite the circumstances he was in I was inspired by the fight that he was determined to take for thousands of other people in similar positions both now and in the future.

I remember seeing clearly in his eyes a determination to do something. He explained to me that there is an opportunity to take away some of the pain; there is an opportunity to take away nausea to enable him to eat. If he eats he has the capacity to fight; if he has the capacity to fight he has the opportunity to spend more days, more weeks with those who love him most. He said one challenge he has is what is provided in terms of medical cannabis, which has given him relief. He said he has become a chemist. I looked in his eyes and I saw the pain.

He said, "I shouldn't be having to do this." As I sat there and listened to the member for Tamworth I thought, "It's time we did something. It's time we helped him. It's time we helped those across the State in similar positions." We say to them, "He shouldn't have to do that."

Every ounce of energy he has should be put into ensuring that he gives himself every chance to get better. Why not bring some of the greatest minds in this State together to do that work for him? Why not take a stand and say to the rest of the country, "This matters. It is time we did something about it." At the same time we want to give the terminally ill and those around them, their carers and their family, greater peace of mind. We also want to ensure that carers are not forced to watch their loved ones suffer when their pain can be alleviated. That is why today I am proud that the New South Wales Government is announcing a clinical trial for medical cannabis that will be established to explore further the role that cannabis can play in providing relief for patients suffering from a range of debilitating or terminal illnesses.

The Government has formed a senior working group to set up the clinical trial, and it is due to report back by the end of 2014, following which the Government will announce the next steps. The working group will consider all issues, including the scope of the trial, as well as advice from experts to find the best way to advance the availability of safe and effective cannabis use. I hope the proposed government-sponsored clinical trial will support high-quality medical research and bring some clarity to this area and enhance our understanding of the medical application of cannabis. The Government will also implement NSW Police Force guidelines to formalise the current arrangement which allows police to exercise their discretion not to charge terminally ill adults who use cannabis to alleviate their symptoms, or their carers.

The New South Wales Government will commence discussions with other Australian jurisdictions, including the Commonwealth, to place the use of medical cannabis on the national research agenda. This is a significant step forward. A member brought a private bill, determined to make a difference for a family in his community in an incredibly difficult position. Today the Government has said that we want to take on that challenge. Not only do we want to take on the challenge; we want to make a difference not only to the Haslam family but also to families across the State, and indeed across the country, who are in this position. We want to ensure that we do it right. We want to ensure that all the work is done in the proper and appropriate way, with experts and with due consideration.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is why we welcome the report coming back before the end of the year. Ultimately, this is an open invitation to the rest of the country to get involved. A group of people have taken up the fight. The Haslams represent passion and inspiration, and a group of people will change Australia as a result of their battle and their causes. Let us take advantage of that. That is my call to everyone in this House, every stakeholder, every member and every party that wants to play a role: It is time we got this done. The country has waited too long. This State has waited too long.

Ultimately, we want to say to every person in that position: we are doing everything possible to ensure that we provide relief, that we provide the appropriate research and work that ensures that your sole focus, your sole concern, is to look after yourself and spend time with your family; and if you do that you will be richer in the sense of spending quality time while you are in the midst of an incredible battle. So we say to those in the battle: our hearts, minds and prayers go with you, but while you are in that battle this is a tangible way that the Government can support what you are doing, not only in this State but across the country. We are proud to announce the clinical trial. Certainly, we will be doing everything possible to ensure that those in that situation have every support they need.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given the Minister's previous answer, and her refusal to answer questions last week in relation to her helicopter joy flight, will the Minister inform the House of her recollection?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I did not refuse to answer questions last week. I answered this specific question, and I refer to it.

REGIONAL JOBS

Mr ANDREW GEE: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government creating jobs in the regions?

Mr ANDREW STONER: How is the Government creating jobs in the regions? Let me count the ways. We are creating jobs in regional New South Wales—and I know those opposite are not interested—by stimulating the key drivers of the New South Wales economy. We are investing in infrastructure that creates jobs, we are supporting profitable regional industries and we are encouraging skilled relocation to regional New South Wales. In relation to infrastructure, this Government is in the process of building and investing a record \$13 billion in critical projects across the regions—projects like regional roads and highways, hospitals, schools and water projects.

Those projects not only revitalise our regional economies and communities by enhancing quality of life and increasing productivity but also create enormous numbers of jobs during the construction period. For example, the Pacific Highway upgrade is currently employing approximately 1,700 people across the North Coast. We expect that figure to double in coming years with peak employment of approximately 3,500 workers to be reached in 2015. Our infrastructure investment extends to other regional roads, like the Princes, Great Western and Newell highways, not to mention the Bells Line of Road. It also includes the rollout of regional hospitals across the State by the Minister for Health, and water projects including the State's first large inland dam for more than 30 years in the Orange electorate.

Those projects employ thousands of people in regional New South Wales with long-term economic benefits in productivity. Additionally, this Government is supporting regional businesses. Since April 2011, NSW Trade and Investment has helped create more than 8,000 full-time jobs, and generate investment of almost \$1 billion in regional New South Wales. Today I am pleased to provide an update on the Central West Jobs Action Plan which this Government developed following the closure or down-sizing of several manufacturing businesses which had struggled with punitive increases in energy costs which resulted from State and Federal Labor policies.

Mr Clayton Barr: Except they didn't fit the criteria.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I'll get angry with you.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: He is a bad boy.

Mr Clayton Barr: Sorry about that, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member is not sorry.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Like our Northern Rivers Regional Action Plan in 2012 this Liberal-Nationals Government responded this year with its Central West Jobs Action Plan to assist private sector projects that have strong job creation potential. We are already seeing some great results. In Bathurst we are supporting BAEC Electrical to expand its electrical contracting business, creating at least 40 new jobs, with more envisaged by next year. In Orange we are assisting Xylem Australia, a commercial furniture and kitchen manufacturing business, to help deliver vital electrical infrastructure upgrades and new equipment, creating an additional seven full-time equivalent jobs.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber, particularly coming from Opposition members. I am finding it hard to hear the Deputy Premier.

Mr ANDREW STONER: They are not interested in jobs unless they are their own—that is the problem with the Labor Party. Other projects under the Central West Jobs Action Plan include the Orange-based engineering network Renweld to develop its supply chain and capitalise on larger resource projects through collaborative tendering, support to Simplot Australia to help it retain up to 77 full-time jobs at its Bathurst plant—

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: We are supporting Electrolux in Orange to assist with workforce transition when its factory closes in 2016.

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

Mr John Robertson: You helped them transition out of work pretty well.

Mr ANDREW STONER: If you want to talk about your jobs plan for regional New South Wales, it is to close down the coalmining industry in the Hunter Valley. We will talk about your jobs plan for regional New South Wales any day.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: I say to the Leader of the Opposition, "You should never be afraid to laugh at yourself, after all, you could miss out on the joke of the century"—all credit to the late great Joan Rivers for that one. The Government's Central West Jobs Action Plan consolidates and builds further on the broad package of government initiatives already in place to support key projects in the regions. This includes the Orange Airport upgrade which will stimulate jobs in tourism and mining, and the BE Campbell abattoir re-opening in Young.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Members of the Opposition should listen because collectively that means another 650 jobs over three years in that great region of our State.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: In summary, this Government's efforts to create jobs across all of New South Wales are working.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Since coming to office we have created more than 165,000 jobs—many in regional New South Wales. Our State's unemployment rate is 5.7 per cent, the second lowest in the nation, and well below the national average. By investing in the key drivers of the economy, this Liberal-Nationals Government is getting our economy going again and, as a result, we are seeing strong results for the regions including the Central West.

MEMBER FOR LONDONDERRY

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Given it has been 20 days since the member for Londonderry was forced to stand aside from the parliamentary Liberal Party following revelations at the Independent Commission Against Corruption regarding illegal donations, does the Premier still have confidence in the member for Londonderry as chair of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Police Integrity Commission and the Crime Commission?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As I and the member have outlined, the member for Londonderry has joined the crossbenches, which is appropriate. I say to those opposite there was an inquiry. We have said very clearly that we will have a lot to say when that inquiry finishes but until then let the inquiry do its work. We are very happy with what we have seen.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have announced a range of measures that are about restoring trust to New South Wales politics. Those opposite continue to try to pick away, and play whatever political games they want.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Standing Order 129—the question was very simple: Does the member for Londonderry still retain the Premier's confidence?

The SPEAKER: Order! I heard the question. The Premier is answering the question and is remaining relevant to the question asked of him.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As I articulated, we have taken a very clear approach—very different to those opposite.

Mr John Robertson: Doing nothing.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I seem to remember a few actions that those opposite did not take. We have taken actions that are determined to restore trust in politics in New South Wales.

Mr John Robertson: You've done nothing, mate.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am very happy.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If this is the same point of order on relevance and the member for Canterbury is using this as an opportunity to debate the matter, I will sit her down. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: It is the same point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Premier remains relevant to the question he was asked. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. The member for Canterbury is using this as an opportunity to further her own ambitions. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Opposition said that we have done nothing. Let me remind the House of what we have done so that Opposition members can understand that we have done a lot of things.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Since the Coalition came to office we have delivered record funding for the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC], the Ombudsman, the Audit Office and the Police Integrity Commission.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Shellharbour will come to order. I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. Members will come to order. Opposition members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have given additional resources to ICAC to pursue corruption investigations for mining licences handed out by those opposite, and here they come. How can they get on their moral high horse on this issue?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have banned access fees for lobbyists and given added protection to whistleblowers. We have brought forward a range of opportunities in relation to donations. We have said that we want Kerry Schott, with John Watkins, to undertake—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the member's point of order under Standing Order 129?

Mr John Robertson: It certainly is.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier's answer has been relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr John Robertson: The question did not ask him what he has done, because we know how little he has done. The question was: Does he retain your confidence? Yes or no?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is using this opportunity at the microphone to argue. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that question time is not the time for debate. The Premier remains relevant.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Not only are we doing something in relation to donation reform, which is obviously needed—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: —we have appointed Michael Symons, a former director of ICAC, to the party to oversee governance. We have appointed John Fahey to oversee funding and fundraising in the party.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have also said that we want to improve transparency in government decision making, which is why we are the first government to bring forward the releasing of government diaries.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah will come to order. I call the member for Cessnock to order for the second time. I call the Kogarah to order for the first time. The member for Liverpool will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Members opposite may laugh, but they are yet to commit to releasing their diaries. If members opposite want to come into this House and bring forward their grand plans for probity and accountability, they should convince their shadow Cabinet that they want to release their diaries.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As soon as they do that we might start to take what they say seriously. Until they do that they have no basis to make any claims.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The Attorney General will come to order.

NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Hunter. What progress has the Government made in delivering one of the most important transport infrastructure projects in the history of New South Wales—the North West Rail Link?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Riverstone for his question and acknowledge that he, along with all our colleagues in the north-west and all of Sydney, appreciates what a significant week we have had in public transport infrastructure. It has been a very significant week for major infrastructure in this State. Today I was joined by the Premier in Castle Hill in Sydney's north-west to announce the signing of the biggest public-private partnership contract in the history of New South Wales. The \$3.7 billion contract includes brand-new modern rapid transit trains that will run every four minutes on the new North West Rail Link.

We are taking customer service and safety to a whole new level, bringing a world-class rapid transit rail service, which is not just a first in New South Wales; it is actually a first in Australia. We know that those opposite were a disgrace when it came to public transport infrastructure. We know they promised this project time and time again for more than a decade; they did not get anything started for 16 years. Worse still, in stark contrast, they wasted half a billion dollars on the Rozelle metro.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In a very dark stage for New South Wales, they also ruined our reputation internationally with people who wanted to make a contribution to public transport infrastructure, but who were let down by those opposite. Opposition members do not want to hear this. I note the interjections from those opposite. They should remain quiet while I talk about this.

Mr Guy Zangari: Where is exhibit A, the rock?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The rock is coming back, don't you worry.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In addition to delivering on this infrastructure that is so necessary to the good people of our State, we have also restored our reputation in the international community and ensured that the best and brightest around Australia and around the world are building infrastructure for us in New South Wales. That is why today is such a proud day for all of us. The Northwest Rapid Transit consortium, which was successful in winning the operations contract, is made up of MTR Corporation (Australia), John Holland, Leighton Contractors, UGL Rail Services and the Plenary Group. This is how we do projects in New South Wales. We get the best in Australia and the best in the world working together.

Mr Richard Amery: And you fly them by helicopter.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Mount Druitt is lucky his Government did not get off with worse. When we came to government Labor left us nothing but a mess. Not only did Labor leave us with half a billion dollars in relation to the Rozelle metro; it left this State in a state of disrepair.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: One would think members who purport to represent Western Sydney would actually care about this project. This project will deliver for Western Sydney, something members opposite were not able to do. I am also pleased to say that we are on track to have customers using the north-west rail line in 2019. There is no doubt that this project will transform the way people move around. I was also very pleased to confirm this morning, now that we have awarded the third and biggest part of the contract for the north-west rail line project, that this project will come in under budget. It will cost less than the \$8.3 billion and I look forward to updating the House on a future occasion on that revised cost.

Not only is today's announcement significant, but it builds on the fact that the Premier and our north-west colleagues were at Bella Vista last week when we started the tunnel boring machines. It is a significant boost for the project. Our customers tell us the importance of frequency of rail services and that is why, instead of 12 trains an hour at five-minute intervals, in the peak our customers using the north-west rail line will have a train every four minutes. That is 15 trains an hour.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: Shame there won't be anyone to catch it.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I note the interjection from the member for Bankstown. She should be interested to know that should we get a tick from the community in March next year—

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Should the community give us a tick in March next year to proceed, the second harbour rail crossing will ensure that rapid transit is extended all the way to Bankstown. When we came to government we promised that we would have the first of the four tunnel boring machines in the ground by the end of the year. We have delivered on that. We have delivered that ahead of schedule, and speaking about early deliveries, on the weekend—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on both sides will cease conversing across the table while the Minister is on her feet.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: —I was also pleased to join the Premier and our colleagues in the south-west at Edmondson Park station to announce that the south-west rail line project is finished; it is complete. When we came to government not a single centimetre of track had been laid. We have now completed the project. It has now moved from the construction team to the service delivery team and we are looking forward to opening that up to passenger services early next year. Not only are we delivering on our commitments, but to date we have ensured that they have been delivered under budget and in less time than we anticipated.

This is a Government getting on with the job of delivering on key infrastructure projects that members opposite failed to do for 16 years. They left a trail of destruction, with transport Minister after transport Minister. Who was the last person to have the transport Minister's job? It was the Leader of the Opposition, who purported to represent Western Sydney but did not deliver a single thing. We on this side of the House will continue to deliver on major public transport infrastructure.

ROBERT WEBSTER AND BOARD ASSESSMENT PANEL APPOINTMENT

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that he appointed Robert Webster, a member of the Liberal Party's finance committee and director of prohibited Liberal Party donor Brickworks, as an external independent member of the Government's board assessment panel?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The scary music plays. Oh, my God, we are on to something here. Are you kidding?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members should listen to the reply to the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Canterbury will come to order. The Premier has not begun his answer.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is a range of panels that were put forward to improve the quality of candidates we appoint to our boards. Those opposite appointed people such as Michael Williamson.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite cannot ride the moral high horse. Opposition members must be joking to come into this House and raise those questions. I cannot believe it.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In the lead-up to the last election anyone who was a union member got on to a board. It was a free-for-all—in they came. And yet the Opposition is attacking the Government—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance, under Standing Order 129. I asked a specific question about Robert Webster, a prohibited donor and director being appointed to an assessment panel.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being generally relevant to the question he was asked. He is generalising and contextualising. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I again remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is on three calls to order. This is my last warning.

Mr John Robertson: Did you appoint him?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I still cannot believe that the Opposition would ask that sort of question. The Government set up panels and Mr Webster may have acted on a panel as a senior recruiter that oversees expertise in appointing people. We want the best possible talent on government boards so those businesses can be driven properly. Those opposite appointed their mates, such as Michael Williamson. They do not care. I do recall one board appointment—the Leader of the Opposition was appointed to the WorkCover board.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When appointed to a board there is a responsibility to look after that organisation. How many meetings did the Leader of the Opposition attend? It was absolutely none. If the Opposition want to talk about its track record—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This Government has come forward proudly and said we need to get the best possible people on boards. It has set up panels to recruit and ensure that people are appointed on the basis of merit and full Cabinet approval. That process was very different under the Opposition. I encourage the Opposition to have a good hard look at itself and say sorry to the people of New South Wales.

COUNTERTERRORISM MEASURES

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. How is the Government ensuring New South Wales is prepared following the raising of the national terror alert to high?

Mr STUART AYRES: I thank the member for Campbelltown for his question. The horrific events in Syria and Iraq remind us that the threat of global terrorism remains very real. Unfortunately we in Australia are not immune to this threat. Last week the Prime Minister increased the national terrorism public alert system level from medium to high. This is the second highest of four levels that consist of low, medium, high and extreme. The shift to high indicates that a terrorist attack is likely. The increase in the alert level is due to an ongoing and heightened level of threat over the previous year. I want to provide reassurance to the people of New South Wales that this does not relate to any specific threat.

It is important that the community understands that there is no cause for panic or fear, but rather that the increase in the alert level acts as a prompt for an increase in their individual vigilance. I take this opportunity to reassure the people of New South Wales that we have well-developed whole-of-government counterterrorism measures that have been practised and refined over the previous decade. We will continue to refine these arrangements with high-quality intelligence using the expertise and experience of our agencies. We are constantly reviewing our security arrangements in line with the domestic and international threat environment, and determining whether additional measures are needed.

The NSW Police Force has a very close working relationship with the Australian Federal Police and ASIO, which facilitates the sharing of intelligence information between all agencies. This cooperation extends to joint investigations where suspects are identified. The Government has adopted and will continue to adopt a range of measures to promote public safety following the alert level increase. Some of our measures will be obvious—you may see an increased level of security at major events and places of interest. It is also important to note that not all of our responses are visible. On Monday the full Cabinet participated in a discussion exercise facilitated by the NSW Police Force and the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services to ensure that each Minister understands their responsibilities under the New South Wales crisis management arrangements and Counter Terrorism Plan.

Other exercises across government agencies will continue to be conducted in line with the State's routine counterterrorism exercise program. The NSW Police Force has dedicated counterterrorism and special tactics commands, and has been engaging with businesses to ensure that the change to a heightened risk is understood and that appropriate measures for those locations are in place. It is important to be aware of the likelihood that terrorists may target areas of mass gatherings. The NSW Police Force has held briefing sessions with owners of critical infrastructure at both government and non-government locations. Transport for NSW is ensuring that transport operators are continually reviewing their security plans to detect suspicious activity and respond effectively to incidents if necessary.

Anyone wishing to report behaviour should contact the national security hotline on 1800123400. You can choose to remain anonymous. In an emergency it is important that all members of the public remember that they can still call 000. Let us be clear that the New South Wales Government condemns all forms of terrorism, this includes indirect support such as recruiting and financing acts of terrorism. Regardless of any person's origin, the one expectation that all of us have at our core is a shared commitment to this country and its values. As Australians we look with horror and a great degree of sadness upon the current worldwide conflicts and the tragic effects they have on the lives of the innocent. We live in a peaceful and harmonious country, a multicultural society, and we will not compromise on any of those values. It is those values that guide us at times such as this to ensure that we have the appropriate counterterrorism measures in place. At the end of the day it is as a State and as a people that we will look out for each other, because that is the Australian way.

ROBERT WEBSTER AND BOARD ASSESSMENT PANEL APPOINTMENT

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Premier. Will he confirm that as a member of his board assessment panel Mr Webster assessed the appointment of Liberal donor and lobbyist Nick Di Girolamo to a government board and then to the State Water Board?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call. I remind the Attorney General that the Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am happy to go back and check the records of the panels, but I make the point that panels were put in place, which is a very different from what the opposition did. When a panel makes a decision it comes to Cabinet for the full Cabinet to make a decision. Those opposite do not care. There is no rhyme or reason, no morals or ethics; they could not care less.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind Opposition members that several of them are on three calls to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I do remember a little transaction called the gentrader deal. If members recall, in the gentrader deal there were board members who stood up and said, "Don't go ahead with the deal, it is not in the public interest". Indeed, some of them said that it stinks to high heaven. What did members opposite do? They sacked the directors and installed new ones at midnight. That was signed off by former Treasurer Eric Roozendaal and the member for Maroubra.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was about the appointment of Mr Di Girolamo.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Why is governance important? The Auditor-General said that the sale price was less than half of what should have been achieved. Members opposite also forgot to mention the little coalmine out the back.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Members opposite left behind a \$1.75 billion liability.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra wishes to take a point of order. The Premier has remained relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr Michael Daley: Cobbora coalmine has nothing to do with—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Question time is not the time for argument or debate.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Members opposite signed off on that deal. I will not be lectured by the mafia opposite about ethics. This Government has set up a panel process to determine merit and to present the results to Cabinet. That is very different from what members opposite did. Members can see the difference that that is making. Networks NSW—which the Opposition enjoys attacking—has delivered \$4 billion of savings in the cost of electricity to businesses and consumers because the process is being managed sensibly. That is the result of sensible governance. Members opposite can play their games and smear this Government, but their smears have no substance. Given their track record, all the Labor Party has to do is to go to the people of New South Wales and say, "We are sorry. We are sorry. We are sorry." That sums up their 16 years in government. They were nothing short of pathetic and the State went backwards. This Government is making a difference. We are proud of what we are doing.

PUBLIC RESERVES MANAGEMENT FUND PROGRAM

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I address my question to the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water. How is the Government strengthening our local communities by improving public reserves across the State?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I thank the member for Tweed for that good question because it goes to the heart of what good government is all about. The Liberal-Nationals Government continues to build on improving social, economic, environmental and recreational outcomes for the people of New South Wales no matter where they live. Our Crown lands and public reserves are an integral part of our State's heritage, and they play a fundamental role in maintaining the social fabric of communities across the State. I am pleased to

announce that the New South Wales Government is committing \$18 million as part of the second round of the Public Reserves Management Fund Program to improve our Crown holiday parks, camping grounds, showgrounds, walking tracks, local parks and reserves. We must ensure that they are maintained in good order for the use and enjoyment of the people this State. This funding is in addition to the recently announced \$5 million to be spent across the State.

The people of Cowra, which is in the electorate of the Minister for Primary Industries, were overjoyed to receive \$230,000 to upgrade their showground. The people of Warialda, which is in the electorate of the member for Northern Tablelands, could not be happier about the \$100,000 they have received for vital works at their showground. I visited Sutherland Shire recently with the member for Cronulla, the member for Menai and the hardworking member for Heathcote to see firsthand the impact of the \$220,000 spent on vital pest and weed control programs that have been established to fight noxious and invasive weeds and pests, and former Labor Party members in the region. These are just a few of the many examples of funding that has been provided to strengthen our local communities.

The second round of funding will enable Crown reserve managers to continue to develop, maintain and improve public reserves. It will ensure that recreational and tourism facilities on public reserves are developed for community use. It will also enhance business opportunities that realise the potential of the Crown land estate, and in doing so support and promote regional economies. Importantly, this \$18 million will also support the role that volunteers play in the ongoing management of the Crown reserve system. This round of funding is open to all Crown land caravan parks, local parks, reserves, State parks, showgrounds and schools of the arts. The funding ranges from multimillion dollar loans for improvements to holiday parks to grants of a few hundred dollars for urgent maintenance work. About \$6 million is being made available as loans to provide the opportunity for Crown reserve managers with the financial capability to undertake substantial projects using affordable finance.

Close to \$4 million will be available for grants of greater than \$500,000. This is the first time this has been done, and it is being done because the Government wants to see participants across the State undertaking more significant works than have been undertaken in the past to bring a greater social and economic benefit to many regional communities. Those communities have been asking for a single significant injection of funds that will often be matched by local trust reserve managers or local communities, which have done a great job over many years. The remaining \$8 million will be available to other applicants. I encourage members to find out about the reserve system and the publicly managed reserve fund because this is the largest financial injection into the reserves—particularly the Crown estate—for a long time.

Public reserves are a wonderful asset for the State and the community. They are highly valued by everyone. They are extremely diverse in nature and vital to the success of many local sporting associations, social clubs, businesses and tourism operators. In fact, many of them have a number of co-located activities. This is not only about showgrounds, racetracks and tourism; in many cases it involves all of the above. I am very pleased to announce today that the New South Wales Government will continue its commitment to improving our public reserves with this \$18 million in funding.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: This program is designed to benefit communities in every corner of the State. All members should encourage Crown reserve managers in their electorates to apply for funding.

Question time concluded at 3.07 p.m.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 61/55", dated 16 September 2014, together with minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 60/55, dated 9 September 2014.

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

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 **Mrs Leslie Williams**.

Public Housing Sale

Petition opposing the sale of public housing in Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks, 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**.

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

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Rail Rolling Stock—lodged 7 August 2014 (Mr John Robertson)

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Killara Railway Station Car Park—lodged 13 August 2014 (Mr Barry O'Farrell)

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Killara Railway Station Car Park—lodged 13 August 2014 (Mr Jonathan O'Dea)

The Hon. Pru Goward—Hunter Economic Zone—lodged 14 August 2014 (Mr Clayton Barr)

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Presentation

The SPEAKER: I have ascertained it to be the pleasure of Her Excellency the Governor to receive today at 4.30 p.m. at Government House the Address-in-Reply to Her Excellency's Speech.

[The Speaker left the chair at 3.10 p.m. The House resumed at 6.00 p.m.]

The Speaker reported that the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech had been presented, and that Her Excellency had been pleased to give thereto the following answer:

Government House, Sydney
16 September 2014

The Honourable the Speaker
and Honourable Members of the
Legislative Assembly of New South Wales

It gives me much pleasure to receive your Address and to thank you for your expression of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales.

I have every confidence that your labours will advance the general welfare and happiness of the people of this State.

MARIE BASHIR
Governor

ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING) BILL 2014**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 11 September 2014.**

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [6.03 p.m.]: I support the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014 which has as its purpose to improve road safety by updating some elements of the alcohol and drug-testing regime. In November 2012 we celebrated 30 years of random breath testing. In New South Wales during that time it is estimated that 7,000 lives were saved as a result of the operation of random breath-testing units across New South Wales. Last year 20,000 drivers were charged with drink-driving offences as a direct result of five million random breath tests conducted by the police. In 2007 the police began conducting roadside random drug-testing to detect whether drivers were under the influence of a drug other than alcohol. Last year 34,000 roadside tests were conducted and 834 drug-driving charges were laid against drivers.

As we can see, the alcohol and drug programs for road safety have had a positive outcome in reducing associated trauma from road crashes. The community expects that drivers under the influence of alcohol and drugs will be penalised. The bill introduces amendments to update and strengthen current arrangements to uphold the high expectations of the community. The Government is committed to improving road safety in New South Wales and to maintaining the clear message that driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs is in no way, shape or form acceptable. Extensive consultation occurred between various government departments, including the NSW Police Force and the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, to prepare these changes to the legislation.

The first key element of this bill is a new power to facilitate the collection of blood from drivers who are physically unable to submit to breath analysis. Drivers who are unwilling to provide a sample will be dealt with as having refused a breath test. This amendment will allow the police to take a driver, who has been arrested under existing provisions following a failed breath test or who has failed to submit to a breath test, to a hospital to provide a blood sample instead of a breath sample. Under the current law, the police can have drivers charged who refuse or fail to submit a breath sample for analysis. This action incurs serious penalties. The bill makes it an offence for a driver who is taken to hospital to refuse to provide a blood sample. This amendment reinforces the clear message of the dangers of drink-driving and that people who drink and drive will be caught and will be dealt with by the full force of the law. Previously drivers would leave as soon as they had provided a sample without waiting for the results.

The second key element of the bill is to reinforce the power of the police to direct drivers to remain near the place of testing until the roadside random drug-testing process is complete. This bill will make it an offence for a driver who does not follow this simple direction: Drivers must wait for the results. If it is a negative result, they will be permitted to leave. If a positive result is given, the driver must then comply with the appropriate steps that include giving a second sample and being banned from driving for 24 hours. If the second sample returns a positive result, the driver will be charged. The bill states that police officers can conduct a drug test if they have observed a person's manner of driving and have formed a reasonable belief that the person may be under the influence of a drug. This very much limits police officers in relation to conducting a drug test and prevents them from properly investigating impaired drivers. New South Wales police officers are very well trained and experienced in being able to deal with drug-affected individuals.

The third aspect of the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014 ensures that if police officers have a reasonable belief that a driver may be under the influence of a drug, they will be able to conduct a drug test. Police officers must record all behaviours witnessed in order to validate their assessment. This additional power does not give police officers the green light to subject any driver to a random breath test at any time. They must have a reasonable belief that the person is under the influence. A statistic issued by the Police Citizens Youth Clubs indicates that drink-driving is the cause of about one in five road crashes in New South Wales. I am sure that all members agree that that is one in five too many. These drivers are a danger to themselves and to others on the road. One does not need to be drunk to be affected by alcohol. Any extra powers given to police officers to stop people driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol should be supported. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [6.10 p.m.]: I support the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. This legislation is important because any measures that a government can take to reduce the road toll are extremely worthwhile and should be supported by all sides of politics. This bill updates

and enhances some elements of the current alcohol- and drug-testing regimes. It makes sense to keep these regimes up to date with the latest scientific breakthroughs. It is now more than 30 years since random breath testing was introduced in New South Wales and it is estimated that over that time about 7,000 lives have been saved on the State's roads. Last year police conducted more than five million breath tests, which resulted in 20,000 drivers being charged with drink-driving offences. This proves that the community awareness campaigns and tough penalties are deterring most drivers from drinking and driving.

Testing for drugs was introduced in 2007 and last year police conducted nearly 34,000 roadside tests with 843 people testing positive. The drink- and drug-driving campaigns have been enormously successful and have significantly reduced accidents resulting in death or trauma. More importantly, the campaigns have community support and are well established. Provisions covering alcohol and drug testing are set out in the Transport Act 2013. This is the legislation that gives police officers the power to test drivers at the roadside; that is, to collect breath, oral fluid, urine and blood samples from drivers. It also allows for hospital staff to collect samples from a patient following a crash.

It is interesting to note that over the years the law has been constantly updated to ensure that it remains valid and effective. For example, mobile random breath testing was introduced in 1987 and in 2004 a zero blood-alcohol concentration level was introduced for novice drivers. This bill aims to strengthen the current arrangements and to reinforce the Government's commitment to reducing drink- and drug-driving offences. In drafting this legislation the Government undertook wide consultation with the following: the NSW Police Force; the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services; Transport for NSW; the Department of Police and Justice; the NSW Forensic and Analytical Science Service; the NSW Ministry of Health; and the Independent Transport Safety Regulator. Their input has been invaluable in preparing the framework for this legislation.

I will now deal with the major provisions in the bill. If a driver is unwilling to take a breath analysis test, police have the ability to charge that person with refusing to do so. If the inability is due to a medical condition, the person would not be charged. The bill allows for the collection of blood samples to determine whether a driver is over the limit. It also allows the police to take a driver who has been arrested under the existing provisions following a failed blood test or who has failed to take a breath test to hospital for the purpose of obtaining a blood sample. The blood sample can then be analysed to determine the person's blood alcohol level and whether he or she will be charged.

Amazingly, police officers have come across drivers who are so inebriated that they have fallen asleep or passed out and have been unable to submit to a breath test. The inability to obtain a blood sample means that drivers who have refused to take a breath test cannot be charged with that offence if they agree to take a blood test. However, it will be an offence should the driver refuse to take a blood test at a hospital and the driver will be subject to the same strict penalties that would apply if he or she had refused to take a breath test. These penalties are the equivalent of registering a high blood alcohol concentration, which include licence suspension and disqualification.

The bill includes provisions that require a driver to remain near the place of testing until the drug testing process is complete. It also makes it an offence for a driver to fail to comply with such a direction. Until now, drivers pulled over for drug testing have left the scene prior to the production of the results, which has made it difficult for police to charge them with an offence. Under the amended legislation, any driver who tests positive for drugs will be required to take another test and will be banned from driving for 24 hours. Should the further test be positive, the driver will be charged.

Under the current legislation police can conduct a sobriety test on a driver if there is reasonable evidence that the driver is under the influence of a drug. This is useful if the driver has registered negative having taken a breath test. Police are usually well trained in recognising drug-affected behaviour and the physical effects of drugs, for example, dilated or constricted pupils, slurred speech or drowsiness. This bill is important because it will get people affected by drugs or alcohol off the roads. Another amendment streamlines the urine sampling process for drug testing by making it easier, less cumbersome and cheaper. The bill also provides for evidence certificates from laboratories to have clearer and more precise wording. There have been instances of legal representatives requesting additional information regarding first-person statements.

The bill updates the language used in evidence certificates to reflect accurately how a modern laboratory works. It further clarifies that there does not need to be a direct supervisory relationship between the senior analyst signing the certificate and the officer who performs the task. This amendment will in no way dilute the sample testing process. A further amendment provides that evidence certificates taken interstate will

be admissible in New South Wales. I believe that this bill will enhance the ability of the police and the courts to deal harshly with drivers who have been convicted of drug- and drink-driving offences. Any measure that reduces the road toll is important. I congratulate the Minister for Roads and Freight on the introduction of this bill and I commend it to the House.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [6.19 p.m.]: In November 2012 we celebrated 30 years of random breath testing in New South Wales. It is estimated since then we have saved about 7,000 lives. I clearly remember when random breath testing was introduced. Many people were dead against it and thought it was un-Australian. Some people, including some very close to me, said that they drive better when they have had a few drinks or when they are drunk. That was a common attitude in days gone by. However, we have now seen an astounding number of lives saved and injuries prevented as a result of the introduction of random breath testing.

Police officers conduct millions of random breath and drug tests each year. This extensive enforcement is supported by public education awareness campaigns and reinforced by tough penalties, including fines and licence disqualification as well as imprisonment for the more serious offences. The Road Transport Act 2013 created drink- and drug-driving offences and schedule 3 to the Act created the relevant alcohol and drug testing regime that provides the police with the relevant powers and testing procedures to ensure that sufficient evidence is collected to enable the prosecution of drink- and drug-affected drivers.

Random breath testing began in 1982. In 2013 New South Wales police conducted more than five million breath tests that resulted in more than 20,000 drivers being charged with drink-driving offences. However, 20,000 alcohol-affected drivers are still too many. In 2007 the police commenced random roadside drug testing. Last year nearly 34,000 tests were conducted and 843 charges were laid. Alcohol and drug programs have seen a massive reduction in trauma from road crashes. As a result, in the last two years we have seen drink-driving and related fatalities at unprecedented low levels.

The purpose of the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014 is to ensure that the alcohol- and drug-testing regime continues to remain robust and effective in 2014 and beyond. Driving while impaired by alcohol and other drugs poses a significant safety risk. Research indicates that in order for road safety programs to be effective alcohol- and drug-testing regimes need to be robust. This is in order to facilitate both the successful enforcement and prosecution of drink-and-drive offences and the community's understanding of the likelihood of being caught and penalised for drink- and drug-driving. Drivers must be deterred from undertaking these risky behaviours.

There has been a 25-year gap between the introduction of random breath testing and roadside random drug testing. Unfortunately, police have encountered situations at the roadside that are not explicitly dealt with by the current provisions. Further, there have been instances in New South Wales in which the alcohol or drug evidence certificate has been inadmissible and the defendant has avoided a drug- or alcohol-related conviction. That has come about because the wording on a certificate has been misinterpreted or the wording of an interstate certificate did not match that of the New South Wales certificate.

The bill will make amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 to improve the ability of New South Wales police to obtain necessary evidence for the prosecution of impaired drivers. It will do this by creating a new power that will enable police to facilitate the collection of blood samples from intoxicated drivers who are physically unable to submit to breath analysis for the purposes of determining a blood alcohol concentration. This is consistent with the amendment to clause 9 of schedule 3, which allows for drug testing by taking blood samples following arrest if a person has attempted to provide an oral fluid sample but was unable to do so. A person who provides a blood sample under this new provision is not liable to be convicted for the offence of refusal or failure to submit to breath analysis.

The bill will also amend clause 6 of schedule 3 to reinforce the power of 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 penalty for drivers who fail to comply with that direction. Clause 13 of schedule 3 will be amended 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. The bill will also make an amendment in order to streamline the process for taking a urine sample in a hospital for the purposes of drug testing.

The bill will amend clause 25 of schedule 3 to remove the requirement to provide a person with a portion of their urine sample and instead to provide the person with a certificate relating to the sample which 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 over 10 years. The laboratory stores the sample correctly and securely but the person can arrange to independently analyse their sample. Finally, the bill will make amendments to keep up to date with modern laboratory processes for the purpose of evidential veracity in proving drink- and drug-driving offences.

The bill is in keeping with the objectives of the New South Wales Government. The 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 being strengthened and improved. The Government is committed to ensuring that regime is robust and to ensuring that drink- and drug-driving offenders will be caught. I commend the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014 to the House.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.25 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. When the bill was introduced in the other place, the Minister for Roads and Freight indicated that for the last 30 years since random breath testing had been introduced some 7,000 lives have been saved. That statistic has been given by almost every speaker in the other place and in this House and I have no doubt that it is true. The introduction of random breath testing 30 years ago was one of the great achievements of Labor. This bill simply builds upon a successive series of legislative amendments to strengthen the current regime.

Last year statistics indicated that police conducted five million random breath tests. That is an enormous effort by New South Wales police. The achievements from random breath testing over the past 30 years have gone beyond those expected by the then road safety committee or the government that introduced this measure. It has transformed people's attitudes towards drink-driving. When I was growing up and as a young driver, I regularly heard people observe that they did not remember driving home the night before. Police could only breath test somebody if they were involved in an accident or if they were caught doing something wrong behind the wheel. Development approvals for clubs and pubs required substantial car parking and people were encouraged to drive to venues that retailed alcohol.

Since the introduction of random breath testing, the drinking culture within the community has changed dramatically. I have been surprised by its impact on the new generation. When my children started to drive motor vehicles, they and their friends had been indoctrinated to always appoint a designated driver. It is part and parcel of the culture of people today—particularly young people who drink alcohol, often to excess. The culture today is that one does not drink and drive and that there is always a designated driver. That highlights the success of this policy. Alas, according to police statistics, 11 per cent of fatalities that occur from motor vehicle accidents are drug-related fatalities. It is my hope that this bill will address some of the restrictions that inhibit police in detecting people who are drug-affected behind the wheel.

Excessive alcohol consumption and drug consumption both affect judgement. Criminal law judges impartially impose penalties on offenders who make a conscious decision to commit a crime. When those who have used alcohol or drugs then get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle they have impaired judgement in driving a motor vehicle and society must punish them through legislation enacted by this Parliament. The consequences of that misjudgement can be horrendous and often people die because of it. It is without doubt a difficult concept for the legislature to draw a line under the quantity of alcohol that is required to impact upon a person's ability to drive a vehicle.

Over the years I have listened to evidence from Dr Judith Perl in a variety of court cases. She asserts that one schooner impacts on the ability of a person to manage and control a motor vehicle and argues that nobody who consumes alcohol should drive a car. That is a standard we impose upon learner drivers and P-plate drivers. The same applies for the consumption of any form of drugs. Today cannabis consumption seems to be far more widespread in young people than it was in my youth. Many sections of the community consume cannabis that is grown illegally. Hydroponics are often used in the cultivation of cannabis and the tetrahydrocannabinol [THC] content is high, so even infrequent and small usage can impact upon people's ability to drive a motor vehicle.

Consequently, the Parliament must send a very firm message that driving after consuming excess quantities of alcohol or any form of drugs will not be tolerated because lives are put in danger. This bill

addresses an issue I experienced when I was involved in the court system. A number of years ago I appeared for a person charged with aggravated dangerous driving causing death. That person's wife unfortunately died as a result of the vehicle overturning when being driven by this person after he had consumed an excessive quantity of alcohol. He had attended Bega District Hospital with his deceased wife and had refused any form of treatment. He had been persuaded by hospital staff to provide a blood sample.

In that person's trial on those charges, I objected to the admissibility of the blood sample insofar as the accused was not a patient and had not received treatment in the hospital, and therefore the staff had unlawfully extracted a blood sample from him. The trial judge excluded that evidence, which would have resulted in the acquittal of the accused had the Court of Criminal Appeal through some mental gymnastics—I feel I can say that in this House—provided a vehicle for that evidence to be readmitted. Consequently, this bill ensures that the litigious part of those criminal charges will not occur again by providing a vehicle for the admissibility of evidence of that nature. Magistrates have complained to me privately about the accumulation of disqualifications for these and other offences associated with driving whilst disqualified.

There seems to be a statutory regime that ensures the accumulation of disqualifications; sometimes disqualifications can be accumulated up to 20 or 25 years. For young people that can be a recipe for continued failure. I am not sure of the merits of the argument; I have been told about this privately by a number of magistrates who believe there is some difficulty in that regard. I ask the Minister for Roads and Freight to examine this issue independently from the bill to make sure the disqualification provisions are appropriate. I advocate for judicial discretion; the Parliament should set minimum periods but there should be judicial discretion. On the whole, the Government has sought by this legislation to address all the loopholes. This legislation should ensure a more effective policing regime of people who drive under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [6.34 p.m.]: I support the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. The purpose of this bill is quite simple: to improve road safety by updating and enhancing elements of the alcohol- and drug-testing regimes. In November 2012 New South Wales celebrated 30 years of random breath testing [RBT]. It has been estimated that over the past 30 years around 7,000 lives have been saved as a result of RBT. It is not just the breath testing that has saved lives, it is also the additional support and enforcement of the message through public education and awareness campaigns, reinforced by tough penalties that include loss of licence, fines and even imprisonment for serious offences.

In 2013 police conducted over five million random breath tests, which resulted in more than 20,000 drivers being charged with drink-driving offences. That is a staggering number. While I am sad and disappointed that there are still so many people who drink and drive when they know the risks, I am very happy to know that the police are out in force to catch these drivers and get them off the roads before someone gets injured or, worse, someone gets killed. To keep up with society, New South Wales police introduced roadside drug testing in 2007. Last year police conducted nearly 34,000 roadside tests and as a result 843 drug-driving charges were laid.

It is pleasing that the impact of the alcohol and drug programs seems to be working as there has been a massive reduction in trauma from road crashes. There is also strong community support for these laws and an expectation that those who are high-risk drink- or drug-drivers will be caught and penalised. As a result we have seen drink-driving related fatalities at unprecedented low levels in the past two years. Over time there have been a number of changes to ensure that the legislation remains robust and effective. This includes the introduction of mobile RBTs in 1987, zero alcohol limits for learner and provisional drivers that were introduced in 2004 as well as random drug testing, as I mentioned earlier.

I think that we all know by now that driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs poses significant road safety risks. Research has shown that in order for road safety programs to be effective, alcohol- and drug-testing regimes need to be robust to ensure the successful prosecution of drink-driving offences as well as to garner the community's understanding of the likelihood of being caught and penalised for driving under the influence. This, in turn, will ensure that drivers are dissuaded from this type of behaviour. A period of 25 years passed between the introduction of random breath testing and the introduction of random roadside drug testing. Unfortunately, this means that there are situations now being encountered by police that are not explicitly dealt with in the current provisions.

There have been cases in New South Wales where unfortunately a defendant has avoided a drug- or alcohol-related conviction due to an evidence certificate being inadmissible, wording being misinterpreted or the

wording of an interstate certificate not being an exact match with the certificate within New South Wales. When I am on my way to a meeting or coming home from an event, the last thing I want to do is to be stopped for a random breath test. It always seems to happen when I am running late or I just want to get home for the night. That being said, I am so grateful for our police who are out on the roads in all types of weather ensuring our safety and protecting us from those who believe they are above the law or that they are not affected and are able to drive safely when clearly they are not.

This bill is instrumental in moving forward with road safety. It makes amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 to improve the ability of New South Wales police to obtain the evidence necessary for the prosecution of impaired drivers. This includes creating 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 their blood alcohol concentration. The bill will amend the Act 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. This amendment also includes the creation of a specific penalty for drivers who fail to comply with the direction. The bill also streamlines the process for urine sample taking in hospitals for drug testing by removing the requirement for the sampler to provide the person with a portion of their urine sample. Instead, they will be given a certificate that contains sufficient information to enable the sample to be identified.

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/or drug-driving offences. Additional amendments will 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. I am extremely proud of this Government's strong commitment to improving road safety in New South Wales. This bill is another clear message that driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs is not accepted and that if caught, offenders will be prosecuted and could face jail time.

I am very happy that the Government continues to review the alcohol- and drug-testing regime to ensure it is robust and effective so that lives are saved. I want to know that when I or my friends and family go out on the road we are safe and that the police have the powers they need to catch and prosecute drivers who are doing the wrong thing. Through the provisions in this bill more lives will be saved. I take this opportunity to thank the police who are on our roads protecting us from these offenders. I thank also Minister Stuart Ayres, who worked on this bill. This bill is in the best interests of our community. I commend the bill to the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): I acknowledge also the great work of the police in the Wollongong and Lake Illawarra area commands.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.41 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to contribute to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. This bill makes amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 in three main areas. First, it will improve the ability of New South Wales police to obtain necessary evidence for the prosecution of alcohol- and/or drug-impaired drivers; secondly, it will streamline the process to take urine samples in hospitals from those suspected of having drugs in their system while driving; and, finally, it will make amendments to reflect modern laboratory practices for the purpose of evidence accuracy to prove alcohol- and drug-driving offences.

Random breath testing [RBT] was introduced 30 years ago. I remember its introduction well: I was in the Air Force at the time, and mess bars suddenly stocked the new low-alcohol beers. Everyone had become very cognisant that police were conducting random breath testing. Where patrons used to drink full-strength alcohol, they now consumed fewer drinks and then changed to the low-strength beer. RBT profoundly changed the behaviour of the majority of motorists and members of the Air Force. Unfortunately, in those days the defence forces had a strong culture of alcohol misuse, which I am not sure has diminished.

The introduction in 2004 of zero alcohol concentration for P-plate drivers resulted in noticeable changes in the behaviour of our novice drivers—taking turns as designated drivers when their groups socialised at parties. I know that even today, from personal experience, when couples go out one person will not drink and will be the designated driver so that the person's partner can enjoy a drink or two. When my daughters were learning to drive I was amazed at the change in their attitudes to drivers who drank and drove: They were strongly against it. They absolutely did not tolerate it. This progress in the policing of drink-driving has made a huge difference to the number of accidents and fatalities that result from alcohol intoxication. However, the rate of illicit drug-related incidents, including fatalities, has increased.

Statistics from the NSW Centre for Road Safety show the following contributing factors for fatalities from 2010-2013: speed 41 per cent; fatigue 18 per cent; alcohol 17 per cent; seatbelt-related 8 per cent, which is still disappointing; and illicit drug-related 11 per cent. Drug-driving incidents are increasing, with 166 people having died in 146 drug-driving fatal crashes in the four-year period from 2010 to 2013. Of the 146 drug drivers, alarmingly, 12 were drivers of heavy trucks. Many trucks travel along the Great Western Highway through the Blue Mountains region trying to drive to industry standards to reach their destinations on time.

In 2007 police began roadside testing of drivers for cannabis, speed and ecstasy. Police conduct about 32,000 annual roadside saliva tests and detect the presence of illicit drugs in about one in every 50 light-vehicle drivers and one in every 86 heavy-vehicle drivers. Police conduct approximately 4.6 million random alcohol breath tests each year and on average one in 241 drivers returns a positive result. Driving under the influence of alcohol is significantly more common than driving under the influence of drugs, and the higher enforcement level combined with public education campaigns helps to create a deterrent. Certainly, the Government's Plan B campaign is targeted at younger people to help them understand that if they are drinking they should not drive; they should have a contingency plan to get home.

Consistent evidence shows that the risk of crashing is increased greatly when mixing drugs and alcohol, particularly cannabis and opiates. The risk of being killed when using both drugs and alcohol is estimated to be 32 times more likely than when using alcohol, and 18 times more likely to be fatal when using multiple drugs than when using alcohol. Quite evident is the increasing problem of police conducting drug testing. This bill will address some of those issues as well as some alcohol-related issues with which police are experiencing problems. This bill is bringing testing up to modern standards. The community and drivers expect to be able to travel safely from one place to another without the danger of a driver with impaired cognitive function due to alcohol or drugs being on the road.

Nothing is more terrifying than sitting behind a vehicle swaying from side to side when, obviously, the driver is under the influence of something, be it alcohol or drugs. I have encountered this situation many times. Usually the swaying vehicle cannot be passed. Since the formation of Highway Patrol the Great Western Highway in the Blue Mountains seems to have a much greater police presence conducting alcohol and drug testing. People may complain, but if they do not drink or take drugs and drive there will be no problem. It is comforting to see the police doing that job and doing it well. Some of the proposed legislative changes improve the ability of New South Wales police to obtain necessary evidence for the prosecution of impaired drivers.

Under this legislation police will have a new power to enable them to collect blood samples from intoxicated drivers who are physically unable to submit to breath analysis for the purpose of analysis to determine a blood alcohol concentration. Some people cannot exhale sufficiently for medical reasons, for example those with lung diseases, and some people are so intoxicated that they cannot follow police directions to provide a breath sample. This new legislation will enable police to arrange for blood samples to be taken. This is consistent with clause 9 of schedule 3, which relates to the taking of a blood sample following arrest when the person has attempted to provide an oral fluid sample but is unable to provide the sample for drug testing. The amendments also provide that a person who provides a blood sample will not be liable to be convicted for a failure to submit to breath analysis.

The bill also amends 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, because when a random drug-testing process is carried out the results take some minutes to be determined, and often people drive away during that time. The bill also provides for changes to schedule 1 of the Marine Safety Act to bring alcohol- and drug-testing arrangements under the Act in line with these changes to road transport law. There have been many very highly publicised fatalities as a result of intoxication on the waterways, especially during periods of celebration, such as New Year's Eve, when people have been out drinking and are in control of a marine vessel. They are some of the provisions this bill will address. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [6.51 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. This bill will make amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 to improve the ability of the NSW Police Force to obtain necessary evidence for the prosecution of alcohol- or drug-impaired drivers. The bill will make an amendment to streamline the processes for the taking of urine samples 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 also provides for changes to schedule 1 of the Marine Safety Act 1998 to bring alcohol- and drug-testing arrangements under this Act in line with these changes to road transport law.

Making amendments to the Act is imperative to ensure that the alcohol- and drug-testing regime in New South Wales continues to remain robust and effective in 2014 and beyond. 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 must be robust to facilitate effective enforcement and prosecution of drink-driving offences and to enhance the community's understanding of the likelihood of being caught and penalised for drink- and drug-driving to ensure that drivers are deterred from these risky behaviours.

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 encounter some situations at the roadside that are not dealt with explicitly by the current provisions. I note that the police Minister has entered the Chamber and that he will speak on this bill. Other members have spoken about the amendments in this bill and I will not reiterate what they have said. I commend my local area command under the leadership of Ward Hanson. The Camden Local Area Command does a tremendous job; not a week would go by without people seeing its extremely hardworking members performing random breath tests.

Clearly, the visual presence of the police works wonders because it leads to reduced incidents of drink-driving on our roads. I commend the Camden Local Area Command for all the time its members spend performing roadside drug and alcohol tests in Camden, which I know has resulted in a marked improvement in the behaviour of our local residents. I and the community thank the members of our local area command for their outstanding efforts. I will not labour all the points that have been made by other members. I commend the police Minister and the roads and transport Ministers for their work on these amendments. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [6.55 p.m.]: I make a contribution in debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. I join the member for Camden in acknowledging the strong work that is being done by Ward Hanson, the Local Area Commander. He runs a fantastic command in the area and the people in that area are in a very safe community. I have been there a number of times and I know the local area command is doing an outstanding job.

Road safety remains an important issue for this Government, and the NSW Police Force takes it very seriously. The partnership between police and the Centre for Road Safety works well on many levels. On a practical level, police and the centre regularly run complementary enforcement and awareness campaigns, and at the policy level they work together so that road transport law can remain responsive to emerging issues. This bill—which I and the NSW Police Force fully support—is the result of this collaborative approach to road safety. New South Wales already has a well-established alcohol- and drug-testing regime. To assist with the detection and prosecution of alcohol- and drug-impaired drivers, this Government's proper legislative framework provides for police powers to test impaired drivers at the roadside; powers to collect breath, oral fluid, urine and blood samples from drivers; the technical requirements needed for hospital and laboratory staff; and robust sample handling and evidentiary requirements so the community can be confident in the results.

Police use their alcohol- and drug-testing powers every day. In the first half of 2014 alone, the NSW Police Force conducted around three million breath tests and charged more than 10,000 motorists with drink-driving offences. They conducted around 17,000 roadside drug tests, resulting in some 700 motorists being charged with drug-driving offences. The New South Wales Government is always looking for ways to modernise and improve our legislation based on evidence from the field. Amendments over the years have kept the regime robust and up to date. Today's bill is yet another evolutionary step, and brings forward amendments to update and strengthen the current arrangements.

Several elements of the bill will help police to do their job better. For example, item [8] of schedule 1 will enable police to obtain a blood sample if a driver cannot physically submit a breath sample. This amendment does not apply to drivers who refuse to provide a breath sample, only to those who cannot. This can range from drivers who have a medical condition that interferes with their ability to breathe into the device to those who are passed out drunk, or so outrageously drunk that they cannot physically coordinate themselves to blow into the device. This Government recognises that no-one should be able to avoid a drink-driving prosecution and that no-one should be charged inappropriately with refusing a breath analysis just because they are physically unable to submit to the test.

This new power will provide the alternative of a blood sample being taken instead of a breath sample. This will not be a default option for police; the driver will be offered several attempts to provide a breath sample

first—the devices are capable of recording all failed attempts. Should a police officer be unable to obtain a breath sample, a blood sample will be analysed for alcohol so that a drunk driver can be charged appropriately. Item [9] of schedule 1 will also help police at the roadside by providing an express power for them to direct a driver to remain at the roadside whilst random drug testing is completed—a process that can sometimes take five or ten minutes to complete. Merely providing an oral fluid sample will not be enough. Police will need the driver to stay put while a sample is analysed for drugs to prevent a driver who may be impaired by drugs from leaving the scene or putting the community at risk and undermining the scheme. The bill prevents this rare but theoretically possible scenario from occurring, but makes it 100 per cent clear that drivers must remain at the scene for the whole process.

Another tool for detecting drug-impaired drivers is a sobriety assessment. Item [12] of schedule 1 refines the current arrangements so that observations of the driver's behaviour, condition and appearance—not just their manner of driving—can trigger a sobriety assessment. This amendment reflects changes in the types of drugs being misused in the community and especially the number of drivers who are affected by synthetic drugs and amphetamines. The new provision establishes the different ways in which drug impairment may be detected. For example, a driver may have overly constricted or dilated pupils, they may appear excessively talkative or fidgety, or they may have admitted to taking drugs. Currently none of these factors can be taken into account by police officers. While these factors alone do not mean a driver is drug-driving or is drug-impaired, a driver can now be asked to submit to a sobriety assessment so that police can make more observations and inquiries before deciding whether a drug test is justified.

Another amendment will confirm that certification by electronic signature of police officers who have previously completed breath analysis training is unambiguously supported by the new legislation. This is a precaution only. It does not change the training requirements of officers or mean that equipment will be used by untrained officers. Other provisions in the bill streamline or clarify the relevant back-end processes in hospitals, laboratories and courtrooms. Also, corresponding amendments to the Marine Safety Act will maintain consistency. Regulations are being drafted to ensure that rail and passenger transport alcohol- and drug-testing regimes are consistent. There is a high level of support for and trust in the Government's drink- and drug-driving regime in the community. These proposed amendments support the efforts of police to detect and prosecute drink- and drug-driving offences to better protect the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.01 p.m.], on behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian, in reply: On behalf of the Minister for Roads in the other place, it gives me great pleasure to speak in reply to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014. I thank the various members who have contributed to this debate, representing the electorates of Rockdale, Kiama, Riverstone, Tweed, Campbelltown, Cronulla, Granville, Drummoyne, Blue Mountains, Coojee, Menai, Camden, and the member for Penrith and Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

The bill is an important step for improving road safety. It will amend the Road Transport Act 2013 to ensure that drink- and drug-driving continues to be effectively deterred on New South Wales roads. It will assist with the detection and prosecution of drink- and drug-drivers across our State. It also improves the process for taking drug samples in hospitals. It is important to understand the context for the amendments to this bill. The current drink- and drug-testing regime in New South Wales is well established. The offences and powers that underpin this can be found in the Road Transport Act 2013. In order to ensure that the bill is robust and effective the regime has been developed and improved over time through the introduction of concepts such as mobile random breath-testing in 1987, zero blood alcohol concentration limits for novice drivers in 2004 and roadside random drug-testing in 2007. In keeping with the process of continued improvement, further amendments to the bill will update and strengthen the current arrangements.

The NSW Police Force conducts millions of random breath tests and thousands of roadside random drug tests each year and police are now experiencing situations at the roadside that are not specifically covered by the current provisions. The amendments will strengthen and improve the ability of police to obtain the evidence they need to prosecute impaired drivers. It is essential that drink- and drug-affected drivers who pose a safety risk be detected and prosecuted. The amendments will align some historical differences within the alcohol- and drug-testing regime while taking into account that random breath-testing commenced 25 years before random drug-testing.

Further, instances have occurred in New South Wales in which laboratory drug and alcohol test results from another State have been ruled inadmissible. As a result, defendants have avoided drug- or alcohol-related

convictions on the basis that the wording of the interstate certificate was not an exact match with the wording in New South Wales. The amendments will remove any doubts about the admissibility of certificates from interstate laboratories and will assist with the prosecution of drink- and drug-drivers. This Government is committed to improving road safety. However, regulation in isolation is not always sufficient to deliver the desired road safety benefits. Extensive police enforcement of drink- and drug-driving regulations is supported by public education and awareness campaigns and reinforced by tough penalties, including fines and licence disqualifications as well as imprisonment for serious offences.

Transport for NSW continues to promote the plan B campaign to support random breath-testing and to reiterate to drivers that "RBT means you need a plan B". Drivers who drink are encouraged not to drive. These well-established measures to address drink- and drug-driving will continue to assist in further reducing road trauma across New South Wales. The amendments to the bill ensure robust and effective legislation to deliver the ongoing road safety benefits of the alcohol- and drug-testing regime. I note the bill also amends the Marine Safety Act 1988 to provide for consistent amendments to schedule 1, which contains powers and processes to conduct breath-, blood- and urine-testing for drivers of water vessels to enhance safety on New South Wales waterways. The bill is an important road safety initiative that reminds all drivers that it is absolutely unacceptable to drive when intoxicated by alcohol or other drugs, and that offenders will be caught and penalised severely. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Ray Williams, on behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian, agreed to:

That this bill be now a read third time.

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

RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT BILL 2014

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

Second Reading

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [7.06 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

There is nothing more thoughtless and disappointing than fires that are lit deliberately or carelessly. Fires destroy lives and properties, which has a long-term effect on our communities and the environment in which we live. During the 2013-14 bushfire season the NSW Rural Fire Service responded to more than 6,950 bush and grass fires across the State. In that period the NSW Rural Fire Service formally investigated more than 1,900 suspicious bush and grass fires, which was in addition to the bushfire incidents that were reported to and investigated by police through Strike Force Toronto. Sadly, the suffering that was caused by some of these fires may have occurred at the hands of others. While the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] works hard to try to keep our community safe through bushfire reduction programs and public awareness campaigns, these efforts can often be undermined because of the careless acts of others. For this reason, the Baird Government is taking the threat of bushfires seriously and has proactively developed this bill to address these mindless acts.

The bill introduces two key measures under section 100 (1) of the Rural Fires Act 1997 that address the emerging problem for the NSW Rural Fire Service of persons lighting fires during total fire ban days. A total fire ban is introduced when the weather conditions pose a high fire risk. These involve predominantly hot, dry and windy conditions. When a total fire ban is in force, no fires can be lit in the open, fire permits are suspended

and general purpose works such as welding and grinding cannot be performed outdoors. Holders of fire permits are contacted by the NSW Rural Fire Service and informed that their permit is suspended until further notice. I understand that in national parks rangers routinely visit camping grounds to tell visitors that total fire bans are in operation. Camping permits also inform visitors when an open fire can be lit. Furthermore, the message is frequently broadcast in our towns and cities.

The provisions relating to the lawful lighting of a fire are contained in section 100 (1) of the Rural Fires Act 1997. The section makes it an offence for a person to set a fire or cause a fire to be set on another person's land or property. This section also makes it an offence for an owner or occupier of a property to allow the fire to escape in a way that endangers other property and people. While the vast majority of people understand the importance of a total fire ban and comply with its terms, there are unfortunately some in our community who persist in lighting fires and putting innocent lives at risk. One example is where an individual has a fire permit and is told by NSW RFS not to conduct a hazard reduction burn during a total fire ban, and that advice is ignored. This has become a key concern for the NSW RFS, particularly in certain parts of the State, and is a concern that all of us share.

A total fire ban is a serious decision made by the commissioner of the RFS based on such factors as weather conditions, bushfire risk and the amount of fuel loads, like leaf litter, around the home. Given how important this declaration is and the work that is involved in letting the public know, from someone changing the fire danger rating sign outside the town to the media broadcast statewide, it is not a step that is taken lightly. To address this, the bill proposes to introduce an aggravating factor and an aggravated offence for cases where a fire has been lit during a total fire ban. Our amendments establish a new section 100 (1A) of the bill, which enables a court, when determining a penalty for unlawfully lighting a fire, to consider as an aggravating factor that the offence was committed at a place where and when a total fire ban was in force.

Adding that the aggravating factor must be considered by the court recognises that lighting a fire during a total fire ban is a more serious offence, given the increased risk posed to the community in terms of property and stock losses, injuries and fatalities. We will now have a new aggravated offence aimed at individuals who continually ignore warnings from the NSW RFS not to light fires during a total fire ban. The offence is for a group of people who are not deterred by the existing penalty and for whom a more severe sentence is appropriate. Under new section 100 (1B) if a person, without lawful authority, sets fire, or causes a fire to be set, on another person's property, or if an owner-occupier of land allows a fire to escape in a way that endangers other people and their property and they know that the place where the fire was lit was subject to a total fire ban, they may face a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment, or 1,200 penalty units, which is \$132,000, or both.

It is important to note that when this is heard in court, the prosecution will be required to show that the person received sufficient information and warning that a total fire ban existed. If a jury is not satisfied that a person was sufficiently aware that a total fire ban was in place, the jury may still find a person guilty of an offence under section 100 (1). The aggravating factor will then also be taken into consideration by the court. The bill will also strengthen the operation of section 100 (1) by expanding the ability for Police and NSW RFS officers to issue penalty notices in cases where an offence has been committed, but no major damage has been caused, and the investigating officer decides on the circumstances of the case that it does not warrant prosecution in court.

This will be achieved via an amendment to the Rural Fires Regulation 2013. The penalty notice will be fixed to an amount of not more than \$2,200. This is consistent with the penalty notice amount issued under section 100 (2) of the Rural Fires Act 1997. In addition to these offences, we are also proposing changes to the way fire permits are issued. These changes will give agencies greater flexibility to do their work and will reduce red tape. Under section 89 of the Rural Fires Act 1997, fire permits can be issued to allow a person to light a fire on their land for certain purposes such as hazard reduction. Fire permits impose safety conditions for any burning that is done during a bushfire danger period. Bushfire danger periods restrict the lighting of fires by the use of fire permits. However, when a total fire ban is declared all permits are suspended and the permit holder is informed. Total fire bans may be declared and undeclared throughout the bushfire danger period.

A fire permit imposes conditions on the way a fire is lit and maintained, and helps ensure that agencies such as the NSW RFS know when and where landholders intend to burn. Standard conditions include requirements for a permit holder to remain on site while the fire is lit and until it is extinguished, and the ability

for the permit to be varied, cancelled or suspended depending on weather conditions. At present section 89 prevents the NSW RFS or Fire and Rescue NSW from issuing a permit unless a bushfire hazard reduction certificate, or other approval such as those found under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, is given. In practice, activities such as agricultural burns may not require an environmental approval or a bushfire hazard reduction certificate as they do not adversely impact on the environment. There are also some activities that have existing exemptions in place.

Yet if an environmental approval or bushfire hazard reduction certificate is not obtained, though not specifically required, this could render the fire permit invalid. The mandatory requirement to have a bushfire hazard reduction certificate when another consent or approval is in place represents an additional layer of resourcing and red tape. To address this, it is proposed that section 89 (2) be amended to state that an appropriate authority such as the NSW RFS may issue a fire permit for a purpose such as hazard reduction only if lighting that fire is already authorised to be carried out under another approval, or does not require authorisation to be carried out under the Rural Fires Act 1997 or any other Act. The amendment maintains the requirement for an environmental approval or bushfire hazard reduction certificate to be obtained where necessary.

The final proposed amendment establishes arrangements to enable owners and drivers of motor vehicles to nominate individuals who commit offences under section 99A of the Rural Fires Act 1997. Section 99A covers cases where a person throws a lit cigarette or matches out of a vehicle, thereby creating an increased risk of fire. Under section 99A (b) there is already an aggravated version of the offence to cover cases where the littering occurs during a total fire ban. The need for these changes was clearly demonstrated as recently as last year when a fire at Homebush Bay destroyed dozens of vehicles, showing how devastating this type of mindless behaviour can be. In most cases the offence will be dealt with by a penalty notice once the registered owner of the motor vehicle has been identified.

However, if the registered owner is not in the vehicle at the time the offence is committed, this amendment will allow for the person actually responsible for the offence to be held accountable, as is the case currently with traffic offences such as speeding infringements and red light offences. To address this, the bill will introduce an amendment to the Rural Fires Act 1997 to provide that if a fire risk object is discarded from a motor vehicle or trailer, the driver or owner will be deemed guilty unless, in the case of the owner he or she was not in the motor vehicle, including the motor vehicle to which the trailer was attached, at the relevant time and they provide the name and address of the person who was in charge of the motor vehicle at the time the offence occurred. The inclusion of the broader term "fire risk object" will ensure that this important provision captures indiscriminate and dangerous throwing of lit objects from a vehicle, not just cigarettes. These may include objects such as firecrackers.

If they cannot do this, the owner must satisfy the officer who issued the penalty notice or the court dealing with the offence that they did not know, and could not with reasonable diligence find out, the name and address of the alleged offender. In the case of the driver, he or she will be required to provide the name and address of the passenger who discarded the object while they were in the motor vehicle. The same provisions that apply to owners will apply to a driver if they cannot provide the passenger's name and address. The driver or owner of the motor vehicle will be required to provide this evidence in the form of a statutory declaration to the court or to the officer who issued the penalty notice within 28 days after the penalty notice has been issued or within 28 days after a summons or court attendance notice has been served.

I note that there are a number of exceptions to this provision. The section will not apply if the fire risk object was discarded by a passenger on a bus, taxi or other form of public transport, and in cases where the object has been discarded from a motor vehicle or trailer that has been stolen. Fires have a devastating effect on lives, properties and the prosperity of our communities. Our emergency services do a great job in keeping us safe. Their professionalism and commitment is recognised across the State. They are there when we need them, and we thank them for that. The measures contained in the bill will enhance the ability of the NSW Rural Fire Service to get on with the job of protecting our communities and will send a strong message to those who ignore their advice that their actions will not be tolerated if they light fires on total fire ban days. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**ST MICHAEL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, WOLLONGONG**

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [7.21 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House of an event that I was honoured to attend in my electorate of Wollongong. Recently St Michael's Anglican Church, which is located on the corner of Church and Market streets in the Wollongong central business district, officially unveiled its completed site works thanks to Community Building Partnership program funding and after a successful heritage submission. The Community Building Partnership program was introduced by the former State Labor Government to help community and not-for-profit groups benefit their local communities by building or improving facilities to deliver positive social, recreational or environmental outcomes. Under the former Labor Government my electorate was entitled to funding of \$700,000 from this program. Alas, the current Government has reduced that funding by no less than \$300,000.

Mrs Leslie Williams: You did not do it every year.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Yes, we did.

Mr Greg Aplin: Rubbish. You did not.

Ms NOREEN HAY: In my area we did; there were deemed areas of need. I am not surprised that Government members are defending the cuts. This has made the difference to a local preschool being able to upgrade its toilet facilities or a sportsground being able to upgrade its canteen or putting up with substandard conditions for an indeterminate amount of time. However, I was pleased to support St Michael's Anglican Church in its application to install proper disabled ramp access to the cathedral and office; to install proper drainage around the heritage-listed cathedral to prevent further damage to its walls and foundations; and to replace an ageing car park and create a wonderful, child-friendly ministry area in the courtyard space between the cathedral and office.

In 1847 the first St Michael's Anglican Church was built, in Corrimal Street. In 1859 the building was demolished. In 1858 Bishop Barker laid the foundation stone for the new church on its present site. In 1859 Bishop Barker consecrated the church building in the name of St Michael the Archangel and Psalm 24 was read—it being appropriate for the "church on the hill". In 1946 St Michael's Anglican Church offered the first childcare service in Wollongong. During World War I the church bells rang twice a day to call the community to pray for our soldiers and a speedy end to the war. This cathedral is clearly steeped in Wollongong's history and I was pleased to be able to assist in obtaining funds to ensure the longevity of the building and its grounds.

Last Sunday a ceremony was held to officially open the completed works at the cathedral site and many parishioners turned out. I was pleased to congratulate senior minister Reverend Sandy Grant, senior assistant minister Bishop Reg Piper, Renee Tenhave and the committee on their wonderful work. I also congratulate the church on its celebrations and service—I was told this was the first time that electric guitars have been used outside the church building. As I said, it was pleasing to see so many parishioners join in the celebrations. I can also vouch for the pancakes, jam and cream—I would not be telling the truth if I said I was not tempted to eat them. It was wonderful to be amongst a community happy with the services that have been delivered and happy to share their beliefs and communion with the community at large. I congratulate all involved and look forward to attending many other ceremonies at the cathedral in the future.

GLEN INNES NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [7.26 p.m.]: Tonight it is with much pleasure that I share with the House the recent successes—or, more accurately, the quarter century of successes—celebrated by the Glen Innes Natural Resources Advisory Committee [GLENRAC]. The committee was formed in 1989 by a group of concerned local land managers in the Glen Innes region who came together to address issues such as soil salinity, erosion, loss of native vegetation, feral and pest animals, natural resource management, weed control, water quality, unsustainable farming practices, catchment degradation and abandoned mining sites. Earlier that same year the late Rick Farley, a remarkable Australian, and Phillip Toyne from the Australian Conservation Foundation founded Landcare and secured funding from the Australian Government of the day for this true grassroots movement.

On 22 June 1989 GLENRAC was formed and it became an incorporated body in 1992. The inaugural committee included: David Donnelly, Phil Fogarty, Len Donnelly, Helen Kennedy, George Rozynski, John Turner, Brian Furrez, Steve Toms, Robert Weir, Des Fitzgerald and Guy Robinson. Sadly, some of the early committee members are no longer with us but others such as David Donnelly, Steve Toms, Des Fitzgerald and Helen Kennedy remain passionate champions of the Landcare principles. Twenty-five years on, GLENRAC still shares the same principle: to improve the productive environmental and social resource base of the Glen Innes district. Members will agree they are very impressive principles.

I commend the committee members for continuing this important work: chairman John Bavea; vice chair Jim Benton; treasurer Sam Baker; secretary Jeff Lowien; public officer John Brien; landholders Greg Chappell, Tony Holliss, Winsome Quilty, Mark Pietsch, Mike Norton and Norman Whitaker; Glen Innes Severn Council representatives Mayor Colin Price, Graham Price and Ian Trow; Primary Industries NSW member Carol Harris; National Parks and Wildlife Service officer Peter Croft; Local Land Services officer Rob Munro; and local Aboriginal land council member Karen Potter. Bringing this diverse group together and managing to make it look so easy are GLENRAC staff members: Landcare coordinators Kylie Falconer and Lucy Faithfull, along with project officers Tanya Weir and Pamela Benton.

Over the past quarter of a century GLENRAC has evolved to become a truly diverse resource centre for many landowners and land managers. Working in unison with a varied cross-section of service providers—including local, State and Federal government agencies, the NSW Farmers Association, New England Mutual, Meat and Livestock Australia and many other groups—GLENRAC reaches across the community and continues to deliver great results for the environment and for people. GLENRAC is instrumental in caring not only for the health of the environment but also for the health of people who live and work in that environment. Indeed, that role has never been so relevant because in the past year or so across New England and the north-west we have had a debilitating drought.

Rural Women's Day, succession planning workshops and Fit Farmers workshops attracted large numbers of farmers and their families—and why wouldn't they? The Fit Farmers workshops were apparently a surprise hit—I was not surprised. More than 50 farmers attended a workshop at Glencoe, filling the small local hall on R U OK? Day. It is encouraging to see that rural workers, who are traditionally known for their stoicism, are recognising the need to care for themselves and engage with others to ensure their better mental and physical health. GLENRAC continues to evolve and contribute in no small way to the betterment and improvement of the Glen Innes and district community well beyond just environmental principles.

As I travel through some of the most picturesque areas of the Northern Tablelands electorate I am reminded of the work completed by GLENRAC in the past 25 years, from the magnificent creek parklands that dissect the town of Glen Innes, to rest stops on the Gwydir Highway and New England Highway, to postcard-worthy riverbanks that are now so much more than the eroded and weed-choked puddles they once were—they are beautiful, living, healthy environmental assets. Farmers are reaping the benefits of improved productivity, healthier livestock and cleaner waterways. There is real pride apparent in each project, and I know when I see the little green-and-white "Landcare GLENRAC" sign on farm gates that a good show is being run there. GLENRAC is celebrating 25 years of achievements, and it will have a wonderful celebration on 25 September. I commend the work, vision and legacy of GLENRAC—a 25-years-and-beyond success story. Well done.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [7.31 p.m.]: On behalf of all members I congratulate the Glen Innes Natural Resources Advisory Committee on celebrating its 25-year anniversary, and its committee members past and present. Clearly the work it undertakes is extremely important to the local community, landholders, the landscape and the environment. Well done to its committee and staff, and I thank them for their contribution over the past quarter of a century.

FLYING FRUIT FLY CIRCUS

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [7.32 p.m.]: We all know of the circus you join by running away. But what if the circus came to stay? On the border we have a circus that settled in our backyard. It is called the Flying Fruit Fly Circus—a circus for performers aged eight to 19—and it is amazing. This year it celebrates 35 years of ordinary kids doing extraordinary things. It might now be well established, but it is definitely not an institution. When we think of an institution we conjure images of walls, solid barriers, locked doors and silent corridors. The Flying Fruit Fly Circus, however, is an open web of netting, springs and bodies flying through the air or sliding towards you at speed.

In 2014 the circus performed sellout shows at the Sydney Opera House and Arts Centre Melbourne, along with tours to Brisbane, Sale, Portland and Warragul. The circus was the brainchild of the Murray River Performing Group in the 1970s. On the border this was a fertile time for culture. People have said there was a Wild West frontier spirit, with a feeling that anything could happen—even right there in regional Australia. The Flying Fruit Fly Circus came about not as the name of a circus or organisation, but as a holiday program for children on the border as part of the International Year of the Child in 1979. The name was a cheeky nod to the phenomenon of border inspections to capture fruit crossing between New South Wales and Victoria, preventing the spread of the fruit fly pest.

The Flying Fruit Fly Circus helped ignite the explosion of youth circuses across Australia yet still sets the standard as the only full-time circus school in the nation. Its alumni perform across the world with distinction in ensembles like Cirque du Soleil, Circus Oz and Casus, which is at the cutting edge of modern circuses. The school is an important element in its ongoing success. According to the executive director, Richard Hull, without a dedicated school the children's circus would have run out of steam and folded. This is a school that carefully integrates a demanding training schedule into the daily curriculum. The school has 81 full-time students, of whom approximately 40 are in the performing group. Their ages range from eight to 19 years.

A unique problem facing the Fruit Flies, when compared with adult circuses, is that its young stars keep changing physically. One year's successful show can be difficult to repeat a year later when the acrobats have all grown in size and shape. This circus cannot rest on its achievements. It is not that the ground is moving under them; rather, it is that the cast is changing. It is easy to forget the energy that exploded on the border behind the Fruit Flies. Just three years after its founding the circus represented Australia at the Vancouver Children's Festival. At that show, in 1984, was Jay Nunns, then a child but now artistic director of Canada's CircusWest Performing Arts Society—formerly CirKids. When asked about the inspiration behind Canada's youth circus, he said:

The idea for the program came as a mother and daughter left a circus show at the Vancouver Children's Festival. The show was performed by Australia's youth troupe Flying Fruit Fly Circus. The daughter asked the mom, 'Why don't we start a circus here in Vancouver?'

And they did. One show, *The Gift*, had a five-week sold-out Broadway season in New York. Touring took the circus to Britain, Italy, Singapore and New Zealand. Trainers came from Nanjing, China, in 1983 and last July the circus welcomed members of the Moscow Great Circus to Albury. Richard Hull says:

The bigger story is that the Flying Fruit Fly Circus is Australia's most successful cultural community development project.

In recent years there has been a re-engagement with the local community. Everyone knows they are there but may have forgotten about all that the circus does, including programs with Indigenous Australians, seniors, touring, and bringing performers and trainers to Australia. Celebrations around the anniversary include a new show, *Borderville*, with performances in Albury and Melbourne. An exhibition opened on 12 September at Albury Library Museum, displaying costumes, posters and artefacts that tell the story of the circus. In September I approached the arts Minister to seek funding for the anniversary and was pleased when he provided \$5,000. This will go towards the costs of accommodating and transporting five acrobats from China during the *Borderville* season.

From humble origins, spiced with a maverick, larrikin spirit, the Flying Fruit Fly Circus has always been something uniquely Australian, displaying so much of what is good about young people in Australia, with their talent, dedication and hard work. This beloved circus has battled the odds. Financial survival was never certain. But the development of an amazing new headquarters and training facility in 2010 helped secure the quality of the circus experience, while a return to adventurous touring and skilful shows has drawn support. American author Erica Jong once said:

Every country gets the circus it deserves. Spain gets bullfights. Italy the Church. America Hollywood.

I am just glad that Albury and the border got the Flying Fruit Flies. I wish them continued success and a great anniversary.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [7.37 p.m.]: Tonight I refer to sport in my community and more broadly across New South Wales and Australia. There are fewer facilities than ever for young kids who want to

play sport, whilst the funding allocated by State and Federal governments to elite sport is nothing short of an obscenity. As we continue to charge headlong down the garden path that is elite sports funding, it is time to consider what is really important to governments. It seems bizarre to me that, on the one hand, we have fewer fields, fewer parks and fewer goalposts, and yet every election the pork-barrel brigade comes out of the woodwork with promises of expensive, state-of-the-art high-performance facilities for our elite—and only our elite—athletes.

For most of the Australian public, sport is not—and has never been—about performance. It is about participation and enjoyment. It becomes joyless when we reduce it simply to winning and losing, which is why many of our sports have become less and less enjoyable as the number of coaches goes up and up. Our governments have no responsibility to ensure that our sportsmen play well; it is not our job. We elect governments to ensure our health, happiness and safety. When governments consider sport they should do so only through the prism of what it can do to make our society healthier, through exercise, and happier, through the equally important social aspect of sport. Winning and losing is a matter for the Darren Lehmanns and Ange Postecoglous of this world—not for governments.

Of course we wish them well, but if I had a choice between Australia winning 20 gold medals at the next Olympics or significantly reducing the rate of childhood obesity, I would choose the latter without hesitation. The problem is that politicians want to get photos taken with current sportsmen and women, and want to be there for medal and trophy presentations—they want their moment in the sun. But what we should be celebrating as a nation is the fact that every Saturday morning kids play their game because they love it, no matter how little or how much sporting ability they have. What we should be concerned about is not whether Australia gets a bronze medal in curling at the next winter Olympics, but whether our children are out there on a Saturday morning playing sport and not sitting in front of a television or a computer screen.

Consider the fact that both State and Federal governments have poured public money into swimming over recent decades and yet many of the already highly paid beneficiaries of this funding seem more interested in taking Stilnox and harassing their fellow athletes than competing for Australia. The performances that were Australia's 2012 Olympic campaign rankled with the public not because of the poor results but because of the apparent lack of application or spirit shown by many of our athletes. Our response as a nation was to agree on a joint State-Federal agreement on elite sport, known as the "Winning Edge". I believe it would be more accurately named "The Thin Edge of the Wedge" because it is beginning a process that will entrench disadvantage for grassroots sport—for the men, women and children whom we all represent in this Chamber.

The Australian Sports Commission allocated \$120 million to elite sport last year, including \$8 million for swimming, \$6 million for yachting and \$5 million for basketball. Meanwhile, New South Wales negotiated a grant from the commission to go, according to the commission's website, to the delivery of programs and services in "such areas as Indigenous sport, coaching and officiating, junior sport, sport for people with disability, organisational development, club development, harassment-free sport and women in sport". How much did we get for those worthy and socially valuable causes? It was \$235,000. Compare that to the \$120 million allocated to elite sport. Our top-earning basketballer makes more than \$235,000 in a week, and our top-ranking golfer makes only marginally less. Elite golf, by the way, got a 17.7 per cent increase last year from the Australian Sports Commission, pushing it through the magical million-dollar mark.

This is a shameful inequality, and one which must be reversed. It begins with us as State governments—we must demand more funding for grassroots sport and refuse to be part of any agreement which places elite sport at the top of the pile at the expense of the many other participants. As much as we politicians love having our photos taken with footballers and cricketers, our job is to do things that will be of real and meaningful benefit to the people of our State. All the gold medals and all the world cups on Earth will not comfort us if our already worrying levels of obesity, diabetes and heart disease spiral out of control. We need to get our priorities right.

ANZAC YOUTH AMBASSADORS ESSAY COMPETITION

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [7.41 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the Anzac Youth Ambassadors Essay Competition run by the member for Baulkham Hills, David Elliott, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Youth, Homelessness and the Centenary of Anzac. It was an absolutely amazing essay competition. It was open to all Western Sydney high schools. I encouraged all the high schools in my area to enter in the hope that some of their students would win, which would be a real accolade for the Blue

Mountains. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for six students to go on a tour of Gallipoli, the Somme battlefield and Villers-Bretonneux. Students will visit Paris and the Musée de l'Armée, where Napoleon is buried. Their trip will finish with a Remembrance Day service at Westminster Abbey. What an amazing opportunity.

I was privileged to be asked to judge the essay competition, along with the member for Toongabbie, the Hon. Nathan Rees, and others. If the quality of the entries we received is anything to go by, the essay-writing talent of the youth in the Western Sydney area is simply outstanding. We were given about 20 essays to judge, after the finalists had been whittled down. I must say the judging was one of the most difficult things I have ever done. The essays were all of such a high standard. I commend the detail of the research and the thought and consideration that went into the essays. Some of the young people wrote about experiences of their family members—about what happened to their great grandparents in most cases. Some of the entries from the multicultural students talked about how they have come to this new land, embraced the spirit and seen mateship in Australia. They related that back to the Anzac ethos.

The winners were announced by the Premier at the Parramatta RSL Club, with many excited parents, principals and students present, including the six outstanding students who won the competition. I spoke earlier about wanting a student from my electorate to win. Well, I am very proud to say that two students from my electorate won places. Both those students came from St Columba's Catholic College at Springwood—Sam Lewis, a young man in year 10, and Madison Thompson, a young lady in year 12. Their essays were absolutely outstanding. I would like to read parts from their essays to give members an idea of how outstanding these young people are. Sam Lewis is a lovely young man. He is interested history, an interest which was fostered by his grandfather. His essay says:

In conclusion, the ANZAC legend has had a significant impact on Modern Australia, and the recent Centenary has added a clear sense of patriotism in all Australians. The very notion of what it means to be a modern Australian is still deeply rooted in the legend of ANZAC. The ideal Australian today still displays the characteristics that were displayed by the ANZACS—courage, mateship, hard work, larrikinism, questioning of authority and determination. On ANZAC we say 'Lest We Forget': but why should we remember? It's because they displayed characteristics that are still admired today in modern society.

Madison Thompson, an accomplished young woman and a great public speaker—she was interviewed by Alan Jones yesterday—says in her essay:

The ANZAC story holds personal relevance for all Australian servicemen and women, who throughout history have undertaken the model of the ANZAC spirit and who are included in modern commemorations. 100 years on from World War One, Australia faces different challenges and international conflicts. The ANZAC story testifies to the ongoing reality of history, with appropriation in both current conflicts such as war in the Middle East, and future hardship. In an increasingly digitised, commercialised and globalised age, the ANZAC legacy continues to evoke the age-old qualities of bravery, loyalty and camaraderie and reasserts our national identity, unifying modern Australia with the past.

Those are just two examples of the work of these outstanding students. It will be great to see how they go as ambassadors for the Centenary of Anzac.

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order matter of public importance proceeded with.

FOSTER CARERS

Matter of Public Importance

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [7.48 p.m.]: This week, 14 to 20 September, is Foster Care Week. It is an important time to remind everyone of the valuable contribution that foster and kinship carers make to the lives of vulnerable children and young people in New South Wales. Foster carers are truly incredible people doing incredible things day in and day out. I acknowledge the commitment, passion and dedication of foster carers and pay tribute to the hundreds of fostering families in New South Wales, who open their hearts and their homes to our most vulnerable children and young people.

As the Minister for Family and Community Services has previously said, "Opening your door to those in need makes you a saint, and right now we need more saints." I was surprised to learn how flexible the criteria are to become a carer—people can make a commitment of any period and the criteria do not take into account marital status, home ownership or age. Carers just need to be able to help and to have the desire to help children

and young people. With 17,800 children and young people unable to live at home, we always need more carers. I make special mention of the homegrown children in foster families, who share their family, toys and sometimes even their bedroom with a child in care—they are saints too.

I am delighted to inform the House that Minister Upton attended the annual Foster Care Week Picnic Day in Sydney's Western Parklands on Sunday. More than 1,000 carers and children came together to celebrate and to have fun—thanks to the wonderful coordination of the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, which worked closely with agencies and the department to make this day happen. From Ballina to Bega and through to the west, there were picnics, barbecues, family fun days and morning teas taking place to say a special thank you.

I thank caseworkers and staff from agencies, the Department of Family and Community Services, the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, AbSec, Connecting Carers NSW, CREATE Foundation and others for their hard work in making Foster Care Week come to life. Children and young people who experience trauma, abuse and neglect need more than shelter; they need a home. Our local communities quite rightly expect that we, their elected representatives, will work together to protect and care for the most vulnerable people in our society. Throughout Foster Care Week, we need to try to kickstart conversations. By kickstarting conversations we can get more people talking about, thinking about and ultimately becoming carers.

I am proud to say the New South Wales Government is committed to reforms that improve children's lives and how we deliver foster care services. We will continue to focus on the out-of-home care transition to non-government organisations and ensure those children who enter care are mostly placed with a carer with one of the 52 accredited agencies now covering much of the State. We continue to listen hard to those who have already transferred and to take their advice about what makes a good transfer experience so we can keep making the process better for children and carers.

The transition is one part of the New South Wales Government's reforms that aim to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families. The Safe Home for Life reforms include embedding permanency principles into legislation and practice, and promoting restoration, guardianship and open adoption for children in out-of-home care. We want to ensure that community-based child protection and family services are working closely with families to prevent children from entering or escalating in the child protection system and create systemic and lasting change. Nevertheless, there are some children who cannot remain at home. When children enter care we need to make early decisions that help to ensure a stable and more permanent home.

Supporting carers and finding new carers is a priority. The New South Wales Government has funded the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies to continue leading the Fostering NSW campaign to get the word out about fostering. With the transition of foster care to non-government agencies and other reforms, it was important to consider new ways for the carer voice to be heard and to keep working at what works for carers so that we can retain and recruit the carers the children of New South Wales need. I am pleased to advise the House that new carer reference groups have been established across New South Wales. Each is made up of diverse carers, with agency and Family and Community Services staff also at the table. These groups provide a new way for the carer voice to contribute to improving the system.

Foster carers do an incredible job. I encourage members to visit the Fostering NSW website at www.fosteringnsw.com.au and to take five minutes to watch some of the wonderful carer stories and hear firsthand what it is like to foster. When I worked for Technical Aid to the Disabled [TAD], I had the fortunate experience of meeting a family who opened their home to some wonderful boys. Their house is now a home filled with the laughter of these young boys and their daughter. They inspire me every time I think about them. I am thrilled to speak on this matter of public importance to thank the foster carers and kinship carers of New South Wales. On behalf of the people of New South Wales, we all say, "Thank you".

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [7.53 p.m.]: I thank the House for the opportunity to speak about Foster Care Week in New South Wales. First, I share some experiences with the House tonight, particularly based on my mother's upbringing. Secondly, I highlight the importance of the notion of foster care and good education regarding foster care. Thirdly, I highlight the need to seek good parents from within the New South Wales community because we know that foster carers are in short supply around the country and we need more to fill the void. In the twenty-first century it is important that we attract foster carers who are good people from diverse backgrounds. We have evolved from the days of foster carers just being a father and a mother; we are happy to have them, but we are much more evolved in the way we look at care.

I share a personal experience with the House. One of the reasons I was so happy to speak about foster care is that I wondered if the arrangements for my mother's brother and sister had been different, so, too, would have been their upbringing. I have shared with the House that my mother and my aunt and uncle were sent to orphanages because they were from a very dysfunctional family. They were sent to very strict Catholic orphanages, as they were in those days, and the boys and girls were separated. Families were separated at the time and for young children that is very hard because they are a support group for one another. My mother was lucky to have her older sister as her support person. Without talking about history, my mother says she is grateful that she was at Monte Pio Orphanage because at least she had a roof over her head, food to eat and an education, even though it was limited.

However, if my mum, my aunt and my uncle had been fostered together as a unit their lives may have been different. I know from that personal experience the importance of foster caring. I appreciate the fact that we in the twenty-first century do not rate foster carers just as a man and a woman; we are modern enough to realise the importance of having a variety of people from diverse backgrounds as carers—such as single people, heterosexual and same-sex couples, older and retired people, young people, homeowners and renters, students, unemployed people, people in full-time, part-time or unpaid work. When I studied ancient history I always thought it was interesting to learn that many children did not grow up with a mother; they might have grown up with an aunt or a stepmother because women often died young, in childbirth. Children had a range of people who looked after them, so the notion of a man and a woman as carers rarely ever occurred throughout history.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy, who is at the table, and I both understand that it is important for family units and foster carers to be available in country towns as well as in the cities. In towns such as Walgett, where I taught, it is important for Aboriginal people to be willing to look after, care for and love Aboriginal children because that is the most suitable arrangement, where possible. We need foster carers in Aboriginal and other disadvantaged societies more than anywhere else. I support Foster Care Week. I invite anyone from the Maitland or Central Coast areas to attend the Foster Care Picnic on 24 September 2014. On behalf of the House I congratulate all foster carers.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [7.58 p.m.]: I am pleased to join the member for Menai and the member for Wallsend in taking this opportunity to celebrate our foster and kinship carers through Foster Care Week. I am pleased that the member for Wallsend acknowledged it is vital to have a diversity of foster carers and highlighted the importance of foster carers, particularly in remote and regional communities. We all know that one of the most important roles of government—and, indeed, the whole community—is to protect our most vulnerable children and young people. The role that carers play is at the heart of a caring community.

I, too, commend the Hon. Gabrielle Upton, the Minister for Family and Community Services, for taking the time during Foster Care Week—she attended the large event on Sunday—to remind us all of the valuable contribution that foster and kinship carers make to the lives of vulnerable children and young people in New South Wales and for acknowledging the challenging and rewarding job that carers do. I know Minister Upton is seeking to build on Minister Goward's significant achievements in the Family and Community Services portfolio, including realising momentous legislative reforms to strengthen the New South Wales child protection system that will start to take effect from next month. These reforms are designed to support parents, courts and caseworkers to ensure that vulnerable children in New South Wales can have a safe home for life.

The Safe Home for Life reforms are a step towards strengthening a system that better places children and their families at the centre of decision-making. They clearly set out actions to ensure children have a safe home for life whether with their parents or supported to make the changes necessary to keep them safe at home through placement in a stable family, kin or guardianship care, or open adoption. The New South Wales Government is shifting the debate from parental rights to parental obligations and putting children's needs first. Tools such as family group conferencing, parental responsibility contracts and parental incapacity orders will give us a greater flexibility to work with families to address risk factors and enhance their strengths.

I commend the Government for rolling out these new reforms, which will deliver better outcomes for those most in need. The New South Wales Government is committed to continuing to work with its community partners and other agencies to ensure that we approach this incredibly important change in a way that is coordinated and co-designed. As the member for Menai stated, new carer reference groups have been set up across the State that will provide a valuable and unique perspective in shaping out-of-home care policy and supports because it will allow carers' voices to be heard by decision-makers. Foster Care Week has seen the

community, including government and non-government agencies, host some great activities across metropolitan and regional New South Wales. It is a fantastic way to celebrate the amazing job that carers do and give them the opportunity to connect with carers in their local area.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [8.01 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Wallsend and the member for Port Macquarie for their contributions to the discussion tonight. I know from listening to both of them and knowing them personally that this is a topic they truly care about. Their comments come from the heart. I did not know the personal story of the member for Wallsend. It is a sliding doors moment, considering how things could have been different with different circumstances. To have a mother, auntie and uncle who have had to live through difficult times and be separated is challenging. I had a similar thing happen in my family with out-of-home care and it does make one stop and think. It makes one consider one's job, one's role in the community and the decisions one makes a little more earnestly than others might under different circumstances.

The member for Port Macquarie mentioned rural and regional communities and how decisions are made that impact on them. To be honest, foster care is not something I considered would be different in rural and regional communities, but obviously access means that it is handled differently. It is important that the access to children is considered as well. We know the absolute importance of stability and care and the impact that this can have on children, in particular the way they feel valued and their confidence. Raising children is never easy but raising children who have experienced neglect, abuse and trauma comes with its own challenges.

To help raise those children is something special and truly significant. It can turn a child's life around and give him or her a special childhood. I recognise that members on both sides of the House share an obligation to protect our most vulnerable and to ensure that we have the carers available that children and young people need. I pay tribute to the carers of New South Wales who work alongside caseworkers, psychologists, therapists, physios, speech therapists, nurses, teachers, doctors and a whole host of others to care for and support children and young people in foster care so they can have the same opportunities as other children. This year's theme for Foster Care Week, "Caring for Carers", is a timely reminder to the community and the Government of the importance of carers.

As the Minister stated at the launch of Foster Care Week, foster carers are the unsung heroes of our community. The New South Wales Government is committed to a foster care system that supports carers and children equally and enables children to have the same life opportunities as their peers in the community. We need another 450 new foster carers in New South Wales over the next 12 months. As the member for Wallsend stated, there are few barriers to being a carer. I thank the carers we have for what they do and encourage others to become carers so we can give more children happy childhoods.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 8.04 p.m. until
Wednesday 17 September 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**
