

ARBOUR RETIREMENT VILLAGE	885
ASSOCIATION OF MARIA SS DELLE GRAZIE AND SAN VITTORIO MARTIRE.....	887
AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP DAY	880
BIRRONG RAILWAY STATION	895
BLUE EVANS, TENNIS CHAMPION	843
BOB FENWICK MEMORIAL MENTORING GRANTS PROGRAM.....	885
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	822
CABRAMATTA MOON FESTIVAL	897
CENTENARY OF ANZAC ESSAY COMPETITION.....	894
CHINA STRATEGY.....	856
COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION AND THE CRIME COMMISSION.....	847
COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS	882
COOGEE ELECTORATE SCHOOL PRODUCTIONS.....	897
COUNTERTERRORISM MEASURES	854
CRIMINAL RECORDS AMENDMENT (HISTORICAL HOMOSEXUAL OFFENCES) BILL 2014.....	822
EDUCATION WEEK AWARDS	884
ELECTRICITY DEREGULATION.....	863
ENDEAVOUR SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP	886
FRED WILLIAMS AUSTRALIAN WATERSKI AND WAKEBOARD FEDERATION HALL OF FAME	833
GALLIPOLI SCHOOL TOUR 2015.....	892
GEORGES RIVER COLLEGE, PEAKHURST CAMPUS	884
GREAT LAKES COLLEGE FORSTER CAMPUS BAKER SHIELD.....	836
HARRY GIBBONS, CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY.....	884
HUNTER VALLEY TRAINING COMPANY	886
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON LOOSE FILL ASBESTOS INSULATION	851, 866
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS.....	865
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY	865
KURNELL PENINSULA DEVELOPMENT	896
LAO CULTURAL CENTRE	884
LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE.....	847, 849
LOST IN THE WOODS.....	884
MELISSA AND JOCK CAMPBELL, WANDA SURF LIFESAVERS.....	886
MEMBER FOR MACQUARIE FIELDS.....	891
MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH.....	852, 855, 857, 859
NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION AGAINST BULLYING AND VIOLENCE.....	845
NOWRA BRIDGE PROJECT	885
NSW FORENSIC AND ANALYTICAL SCIENCE SERVICE.....	839
NSW POLICE FORCE	858
ORANGE TIGERS AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL CLUB	893
PATRICK INNESS, CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION	883
PETITIONS.....	865
PHILIPPINE NATIONAL DAY BALL 2014	883
PLAYMATES COTTAGE CHILDCARE CENTRE, DUBBO.....	877
PORT MACQUARIE-HASTINGS ROADS	891
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	887
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE DAME MARIE BASHIR, AD, CVO.....	852
PUBLIC TRANSPORT.....	861
QUESTION TIME	852
REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS.....	852
ROAD SAFETY.....	890
SHOALHAVEN DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL	888
ST GEORGES BASIN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE.....	885
SUPERINTENDENT DAVID GRAY, FIRE AND RESCUE NSW	883
SURF LIFE SAVING NSW	886
SUTHERLAND SHIRE NETBALL ASSOCIATION.....	883
SYDNEY INNER-CITY DEVELOPMENT	862
SYDNEY UNIVERSITY SOCCER FOOTBALL CLUB BOYS YOUTH LEAGUE	885

TAFE CHANGES MORATORIUM (SECURE FUTURE FOR PUBLIC PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING) BILL 2014.....	824
TEACHER ACCREDITATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014.....	867
TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT (FEES) BILL 2014..	824
TENNIS NSW SOUTHWEST REGIONAL TENNIS CENTRE PROJECT	889
TONY BARTON, STATE HOCKEY PLAYER	882
VIETNAMESE NURSING HOME PROJECT.....	883
VISITORS	822, 852
WESTCONNEX.....	898
YOUTH HOSTEL ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA	886

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 18 September 2014

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery this morning organisers of the Public Service Association of NSW and three Anna Stewart officers from the NSW Teachers Federation, all guests of the member for Balmain.

CRIMINAL RECORDS AMENDMENT (HISTORICAL HOMOSEXUAL OFFENCES) BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Bruce Notley-Smith, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [10.08 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Until 1984 the Crimes Act 1900 contained a number of so-called "unnatural" offences prohibiting male homosexual activity. These offences applied to both consensual and non-consensual conduct. Some people engaging in homosexual activity were convicted of other offences such as indecent or offensive behaviour offences. In 1984 the Crimes (Amendment) Act 1984 decriminalised consensual male homosexual activity for people over the age of 18 years. Further legislative reform occurred in 2003, when the Crimes Amendment (Sexual Offences) Act lowered the age of consent for male homosexual activity from 18 to 16 years. These amendments to the criminal law demonstrated a well-founded desire on the part of this Parliament to reflect the expectations of the wider community. No longer were homosexual acts between consenting adults seen as requiring the intervention of the criminal law. No longer did the community see homosexual men, or more broadly, members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex [GLBTI] community as lesser members of the Australian community.

While consensual homosexual activity between people over the age of consent is no longer a criminal offence, men who were previously convicted of these offences still deal with the stigma of a criminal conviction for a sex offence. Such a conviction can constrain employment opportunities, volunteering options and overseas travel options. The existence of convictions for these historical offences perpetuates the discrimination suffered by these men, despite the discriminatory laws having been repealed. This bill amends the Criminal Records Act 1991 to permit a person convicted of specified offences to apply for the conviction to be extinguished.

Applications will be able to be made for convictions for offences such as procuring an indecent act with a male and buggery. Applications will also be able to be made for convictions for indecent or offensive behaviour offences for sexual activity with another person of the same sex. Applications will be made to the secretary to the Department of Attorney General and Justice. A conviction will be extinguished if the secretary is satisfied that the other person consented to the sexual activity and was at least the current age of consent. This is 16 years, unless there was a special care relationship where the offender was, for example, the step-parent, schoolteacher or health professional of the other person, in which case the age is 18 years.

Where an application has been made, the secretary will then obtain records about the conviction from public agencies such as the NSW Police Force and the courts, and will make a decision based on the application and the records. If the secretary intends to reject the application on the basis of this information, he or she will give the applicant the opportunity to submit further information. In the event that the decision of the secretary has been unfavourable, an applicant will be able to seek administrative review of a decision by the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. If an application is successful, the conviction will be extinguished and the consequences will be similar to a quashed conviction or a pardon. The person will no longer be required to disclose the conviction, and a public authority will not be able to disclose it.

The Criminal Records Act 1991 already provides for convictions for a relatively minor offence to become spent, and so not be disclosable, if the person completes a period of crime-free behaviour. However, the exceptions that apply to spent convictions in the Criminal Records Act 1991 will not apply. This means, for example, that extinguished convictions will not be disclosable for applications for appointment as a judge, police officer or teacher, or for court proceedings. The new process allowing applications to be made for these convictions to be extinguished will be in addition to the existing spent convictions scheme.

While it was generally men engaging in homosexual activity who were prosecuted for these offences, it is possible that women engaging in homosexual activity were also prosecuted for indecent or offensive behaviour offences. The bill will also allow women and transgender people to apply for convictions to be extinguished. The bill contains a note that it is an offence under the Crimes Act to knowingly provide false or misleading information in an application to a public authority. The bill also provides for the secretary to the Department of Attorney General and Justice to determine that a conviction is no longer extinguished if the application contained false or misleading information.

I acknowledge in the gallery Dr Justin Koonin of the New South Wales Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, who has been of great assistance in the drafting of this bill. I will provide a little more detail at this point on the bill. This amends the Criminal Records Act 1991. New section 19B will enable a person who has been convicted of an eligible homosexual offence to apply to the secretary to the Department of Attorney General and Justice for the conviction to become extinguished. If the convicted person has died, an application may be made on behalf of the person by that person's legal personal representative or a spouse, de facto partner, parent or child of the convicted person, or a person who was in a close personal relationship with the convicted person immediately before the convicted person's death.

New section 19C provides that a conviction for an eligible homosexual offence becomes an extinguished conviction when the secretary decides that he or she is satisfied that the other person involved in the sexual activity constituting the offence consented to the sexual activity and was above the age of 16 years, or if the other person was under the special care of the convicted person within the meaning of section 73 (3) of the Crimes Act 1900; that is, 18 years of age.

Applications will be made to the secretary to the Department of Attorney General and Justice and decisions will be reviewable by the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The consequences of a conviction becoming an extinguished conviction are set out in new section 19F. If a conviction of a person is extinguished that person is not required to disclose to any other person for any purpose information concerning the extinguished conviction, and a question concerning the person's criminal history is taken not to refer to any convictions of the person which are extinguished convictions.

The effect of extinguishment goes further. New section 19G provides that it is an offence for a person who has access to records of convictions kept by or on behalf of a public authority without lawful authority to disclose to any other person any information concerning an extinguished conviction. The offence carries a maximum penalty of 50 penalty units or imprisonment for six months, or both. Additionally, new section 19H makes it an offence for a person fraudulently or dishonestly to obtain or attempt to obtain information concerning an extinguished conviction from records of convictions kept by or on behalf of a public authority. The offence carries a maximum penalty of 50 penalty units or imprisonment for six months or both.

A number of other jurisdictions have already acted to allow convictions for historical homosexual offences to be extinguished. The United Kingdom passed the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 allowing people convicted of an historical offence involving consensual homosexual activity with another person aged at least 16 years to apply to the Home Secretary for the conviction or caution to be disregarded. Subsequently, the South Australian Parliament passed the Spent Convictions (Decriminalised Offences) Act 2013 to allow historical convictions for offences constituted by homosexual acts that are no longer criminal offences to be spent. Applications in that scheme are made to a magistrate and the scheme commenced on 22 December 2013.

In 2014 the Human Rights Law Centre released a report entitled "Righting Historical Wrongs", calling for a legislative scheme to expunge convictions for historical consensual gay sex offences in Victoria. The Victorian Government introduced a bill into Parliament this week to enable the expunging of historical convictions for consensual homosexual acts. This introduces an administrative scheme, similar to the one in the United Kingdom. This will be less costly for both the applicant and the State than requiring an application to be made to a court. Equally importantly, it will also be less stressful for applicants, especially given their previous court experience for the relevant offence. Another advantage of the administrative scheme is that it will allow the secretary to set up administrative processes with the NSW Police Force and the courts for obtaining records going back many decades. Ms Ann Brown of the Human Rights Law Centre has observed:

Legislating to abolish the left-over convictions will start to heal the harm that these discriminatory laws have caused. Sex between consenting adults should never have been criminalised.

No-one should have to continue to suffer the disadvantage of having a criminal conviction for sexual activity with another consenting adult. This bill allows these convictions to be extinguished and delivers a socially just and responsible outcome. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Pursuant to sessional order General Business Orders of the Day (for Bills) proceeded with.

TAFE CHANGES MORATORIUM (SECURE FUTURE FOR PUBLIC PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate called on and adjourned on motion by Ms Noreen Hay, on behalf of Mr Jamie Parker, and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT (FEES) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 11 September 2014.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [10.24 a.m.]: As I said at the outset of my contribution to the debate, I am proud to speak in support of the proposal of the Leader of the Opposition in the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014. In my earlier contribution I condemned this Government for its skulduggery and trickery in trying to deny access to quality education for people who wish to attend educational institutions.

Mr John Williams: Start where you left off.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Murray-Darling is always keen to attack TAFE and students. I do not know why.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Wollongong will address her remarks through the Chair.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Through you, Mr Acting-Speaker, both the member for Drummoyne and the member for Murray-Darling seem to have a problem with supporting TAFE students. It is not new to me to have to deal with that.

Mr John Sidoti: Did you go to TAFE?

Ms NOREEN HAY: I did go to TAFE. I am a very proud product of TAFE and I am proud that there was open access to TAFE for all at affordable rates under the Labor Government. On the other hand, members of this Government who promised not to attack education, not to make it more difficult for students and not to privatise anything, sit in this Chamber and smirk about it although they reneged—

Mr Chris Patterson: At least we are here on time.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Excuse me: I am here on time. No wonder the member for Camden was made the Government Whip.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Wollongong will direct her comments through the Chair.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Mr Acting-Speaker, the interjections from Government members while I am trying to defend TAFE are a disgrace and nothing more than I expect from them. They sit in this Chamber sniggering at what we are seeking to do. In February 2014 I informed Government members that I was concerned about essential services being provided through TAFE. I called on the Government to cease its attack on TAFE colleges and their services. I asked the Government to stop the attack on TAFE education after TAFE Illawarra had decided to cease providing hearing-impaired students with essential note-takers. I also pointed out that this is a further cut to services as Illawarra TAFE was no longer providing students with equal learning opportunities as a result of devastating cuts to education funding under the then O'Farrell Government, which are being continued under the Baird Government.

I raised the skills qualifications that TAFE provides and congratulated the Leader of the Opposition after he visited Wollongong to hold an Illawarra jobs and skills roundtable. In this House I condemned the Government for making it harder for the 6,500 jobless people in the Illawarra to develop the employment skills required to secure a job by increasing the cost of TAFE courses. That was in June 2014, so it is not new for me to be condemning this Government for its attacks on students seeking to gain the required education and skills by increasing TAFE fees. This is an example of supply and demand in reverse. If the Government can put pressure on people so they do not demand places on courses it can justify not supplying courses.

By way of a motion, I noted that under the current Government the cost of a TAFE certificate or diploma is to increase by as much as \$3,000. That would put gaining qualifications out of the financial reach of those who need the most training. It would make it far more difficult for people living in the lower socio-economic areas, such as my electorate, to gain qualifications. I also pointed out that the community is concerned about rising unemployment and the Government's lack of interest. We called on the Government to maintain TAFE services, particularly in regional areas such as Wollongong, and to back away from this constant money grab from those who can least afford it.

It is a shame that there are Government members in this House who purport to represent ordinary working-class battlers but who do everything in their power to ensure that those people cannot access education and other opportunities. There is no excuse; it is disgraceful. I also called on the Government and the Minister for Education to increase the TAFE budget immediately in light of recent reports that there are 37,000 more unemployed people in New South Wales now than there were under the former Labor Government. I reminded this House and the Government that the unemployment rate had increased from 5 per cent to 5.8 per cent. The Government is taking some satisfaction from the fact that it is now 5.7 per cent, which is more than the national average. It is beyond me that the Government would attack the provision of education and skills.

I have also recognised that budget cuts over the past three years have had a detrimental impact on TAFEs across New South Wales, including TAFE Illawarra. The Government has cut 800 teaching jobs and raised TAFE fees by 10 per cent. I do not know how any member of this House can defend those kinds of cuts, especially regional members. Regional members of Parliament are defending TAFE cuts when in many regional and rural areas TAFE offers the only opportunity that young people have to be educated—the only hope they have to get into a trade or to gain a qualification and move up the economic ladder. Some young people have no hope of getting to a university and TAFE offers them another option.

Under the former Labor Government TAFE offered options and choice at a reasonable cost. Now it will be priced out of the reach of many. What are those young people going to do? What about mature people whose jobs have been abolished and who are trying to retrain? What are they going to do? The Government is attacking TAFE, which is the very thing that it promised before the election it would not do. Before the election the Coalition bragged about how it supported TAFE. Let us see those opposite put their words into action and back off on these fee hikes that will make life very difficult for many people.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [10.33 a.m.]: Another great contribution from the member of Wollongong.

Ms Noreen Hay: For Wollongong, thank you.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: For Wollongong.

Ms Noreen Hay: Dope.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: Thank you for that. It sounds like I am at home.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I warn the member for Wollongong that her comments across the table are unparliamentary. The member has made her contribution and she will listen in silence to the member for Murray-Darling.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I am feeling the hurt. This is another stunt by the Leader of the Opposition. There is a song that goes something like, "What a difference a day makes". In Parliament it is not what a difference a day makes, it is what a difference it makes when Labor members are sitting on that side of the House and we are sitting on this side. Suddenly, those opposite are howling and crying and saying how the Government is so bad for doing all these horrible things. I decided to look back through *Hansard*, because debate on this issue rang a bell. When we were in opposition we spoke for TAFE NSW and against the 9 per cent increase in fees driven by the then Labor Government, which was absolutely committed to ensuring that it increased fees for TAFE students.

Where was the member for Wollongong then? She was nodding and agreeing with the Government that fees should be increased by 9 per cent. What a change. She did not care then about all the unemployed people who needed retraining; the Labor Government just wanted the money. A couple of members of the former Labor Government spoke about the increase in fees—one of them that last bastion of the socialist wing, the member for Wallsend. But the member for Wallsend did not speak in the same way that she speaks today; she talked about the importance of the 9 per cent fee increase. I know that I am testing her memory so I will read her contribution relating to the freeze on TAFE course fees. She said:

Members should think about what that would mean to the people of New South Wales. TAFE would be forced to reduce the number of student places.

The member for Wallsend supported the then Labor Government's move to increase TAFE fees by 9 per cent. She went on to say that if the Government did not increase the fees a whole heap of TAFEs would close across the country. She stated:

I do not think that would be acceptable to the people of New South Wales.

Alternatively, we could increase the number of courses offered on a commercial-only basis. This would mean more people would be paying significantly more for their courses. Like other TAFE and training organisations around Australia, TAFE New South Wales charges fees. While the Government makes every effort to keep TAFE fees as low as possible, it needs to ensure that students have access to the most modern and up-to-date industry equipment and facilities.

When those opposite were in government they beat us around the head because we were in Opposition and supporting the battling TAFE students. The then member for Penrith, who was Parliamentary Secretary for Education, also made a contribution to the debate.

Mr Matt Kean: Where is she now?

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: She visited that place—what is it called?—the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. The former member for Penrith did not want to interrupt the ICAC process; she had a car parking spot and a pass. She was a regular performer.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. Discussions about the Independent Commission Against Corruption are not relevant to this debate.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I suggest the member for Wallsend read the standing orders. Standing Order 129 does not apply in this debate. There is no point of order.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: At the time the then member for Penrith said:

As stated earlier, the resultant loss of money to TAFE if this bill were passed would be more than \$57 million, and that is totally unacceptable. The passing of this bill would also require TAFE to spend taxpayers' hard-earned dollars on administrative costs to refund fees to current students. That would be a total waste of money; it would have no benefit. TAFE is supposed to be about training for the people of New South Wales, which is vital in this time of skills shortage.

So \$53 million was a mere bagatelle when Labor was in government; now it is a bleeding ulcer. It is a bleeding ulcer for the Leader of the Opposition, who has looked at the situation as a chance to give himself some relevance. Labor needs some relevance so he has decided to bash the Government's reform agenda. The Government is engaging in a reform agenda; this is now about what members opposite did. The Labor Government left the model half broken and kept jamming up the fees. This Government is about reforming the model so that it works better to enable students to get better outcomes, training and job opportunities. Instead, members opposite—the broken parts of the former Labor Government—left the TAFE model as it was, to trickle along the easy way.

They had no reforms and did not make the hard decisions. They simply put up the fees. The Labor Government gave students the same stuff but it jammed up the fees without worrying about the outcomes and the opportunities created by this type of reform. That is what this legislation is about. It is about the Government not focusing on what Labor did—that is, increasing fees—and it is about the Government reforming the TAFE system. Labor never undertook reforms. The Labor Government did not make the hard decisions. Members opposite were driven by the unions, which told them what they could and could not do. They were the puppets of the unions; they did not have the freedom to make the good, hard decisions that improve opportunities for young people in New South Wales. Another thing that Ms Paluzzano said—

Mr Barry Collier: Karen Paluzzano?

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: She was the member's colleague. Ms Paluzzano said:

... we would be at risk of having a system that did not meet the training needs of industry and the community.

The training system probably did not meet the training needs of industry and the community. However, Labor simply kept a model that needed more money, at the expense of students. Members opposite never understood how the TAFE system works. Ms Paluzzano further said:

If this bill were passed the skills crisis would be even more severe. Under the bill only the more prosperous people would be able to afford some TAFE courses because they could only be offered on a commercial basis to make up for the income forgone.

According to members opposite, the Government can retain the broken model and keep propping up the fees. We are engaging in true reforms that will improve the outcomes for TAFE students in New South Wales. When the mob opposite were in office they could not run TAFE; they operated with a broken model and kept dragging fees from students. Now they have come up with this stunt.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [10.43 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak in debate on the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to freeze the 2014 level of maximum fees chargeable by TAFE for its courses, subject to indexation and inflation, and preserve existing fee waivers, exemptions and concessions. That makes good sense. When it comes down to it, our future is at stake. If the Government cuts budgets, fails to support TAFE, fails to develop skills or look after teachers, and fails to follow structured courses led by experienced teachers—with industry experience—we will live to regret it. People in Sydney, across the State and across the nation will live to regret it.

I was interested to read the contribution of the member for Cronulla. He said that 94 per cent of people say that TAFE makes a valuable contribution to training people for business and industry. No doubt TAFE does a good job. So why should the system be changed? The member said that we should be more flexible. What does that have to do with the budget? We have a structured system that people in industries across the State rely on and respect; they know the value of it. But he says we must be more flexible and cut our budget. How will that improve the quality of skills and training, and the quality of students—the tradesmen and tradeswomen? It will not. This seems to be simply another case of Government members bleating like something out of *Animal Farm*—private good, public bad. Therefore, we must get rid of the public. It is not that at all.

This morning I spoke to a lady who was doing a certificate III course in retail. Last year that course cost \$450; this year it costs \$2,500. A person working in the building industry—and working with tradesmen—said that more tradesmen are coming into the firm and saying that they are not employing apprentices. Why? It is because it costs them too much. That should not be so. Businesses are not employing apprentices or developing skills. The long-term future looks pretty bleak. We are dumbing down our skills. It should not be done. TAFE offers structured courses with first-class teachers—I will talk about them in a moment—but the Government is closing facilities.

GyMEA TAFE in my electorate is a large campus with a highly skilled staff. It has been in the TAFE game for about 40 years. The teachers are people from industry who know their subject and skills and are well respected. GyMEA has cut out Higher School Certificate courses for students, and arts and ceramic students must now pay the full fee—there are no concessions. Hairdressing teachers have lost their jobs—I will come back to that later. Commercial cookery teachers at Loftus TAFE have lost their jobs. Teachers of information technology [IT], basic adult education, numeracy and literacy, and business administration have lost their jobs or are facing redundancy. Time and time again Government members point to us and say that Labor did nothing for 16 years. I will tell them what the Labor Government did for GyMEA TAFE during my time in office before the 2011 election.

In the 2013 Miranda by-election cuts to TAFE was a major issue. It cost the Government a swing of 27 per cent. Do not doubt it. At present the feeling in the community against the Government over TAFE cuts is palpable. During my time in office, when Labor is supposed to have done nothing—which is insulting to the people of New South Wales—we provided \$1.9 million to GyMEA TAFE for a carpentry and joinery upgrade, \$1.5 million for a hairdressing and beauty therapy upgrade, a further \$500,000 to upgrade the air conditioning, \$499,000 for a business training centre, and \$500,000 for a trade school in the shire. But what happened? Many of those facilities, particularly hairdressing and the business centre, have been closed. The Labor Government spent \$1.6 million on the hairdressing and beauty therapy upgrade. The facilities included two hairdressing salons, a beauty therapy salon and a flexible learning centre complete with reception and client waiting rooms. I attended the opening of that facility.

Industry suppliers were talking about the state-of-the-art equipment, innovative design of the new facilities, giving students an excellent learning environment. But that has closed. When the new facility was opened the number of hairdressing enrolments at GyMEA TAFE jumped by 17 per cent. That shows how attractive those facilities were. These days it is impossible to think of any shopping centre without a hairdressing salon or beauty therapy services. What happened? Those TAFE courses have closed and the training has been outsourced. Apparently, as a result of outsourcing, apprentices are now stuck in shops. The only time shop owners can provide apprentices with on-the-job training is between serving his or her clients. That did not happen at TAFE.

At TAFE the training was provided by experts in the field and focused on bringing in industry suppliers and experts, and keeping up to date. Students would return to their salons and take their ideas, new skills and talents with them. But that is gone. The business training centre has gone. Sadly, the member for Heathcote is not in the Chamber, although he was here earlier. On my reading of the electoral data, Heathcote has the largest proportion of tradespeople of any electorate in the State. We will lose much in the shire if carpentry and joinery courses are dumbed down and we lose tradesmen and tradeswomen.

Local high school principals know the value of TAFE. They talk about the kids who fall through the cracks at school and who go to TAFE and blossom and bloom. They did not blossom or bloom at school. It is important to appreciate that school is not for everybody, as I have seen many times throughout my career. I have a lot of time for TAFE because, I suppose, in many ways I am a creature of TAFE. I left school in year 10, worked in hopeless jobs that were going nowhere and then went to TAFE, where I completed my Higher School Certificate. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: You just remember that generosity.

Mr BARRY COLLIER: What do I say? I left school in year 10 basically because I wanted to be a surfer, and worked in hopeless jobs until the penny finally dropped: I had to get my Higher School Certificate because I was going nowhere. I left school against the advice of my parents and my teachers. I had a great time surfing but the penny finally dropped. So I went to TAFE, undertook a full-time day matriculation course and got my Higher School Certificate. It was a long time ago now, but recently I reflected upon it and remembered the first-class teachers I had in English, history, mathematics, science and economics—which I took up for the first time. I had to get passes in all those five subjects—there were no assessment tasks throughout the year; it was pass or fail. I won a scholarship, went to university and studied economics—and the rest is history. I taught for 17 years before getting a law degree and being elected to this place. I trace my ascent, if you like, to this House from TAFE, when I came to the understanding that I had to get my Higher School Certificate and the best place to obtain it was TAFE.

Last week in this Chamber the Treasurer held up the second edition of the textbook I published, entitled *Introducing Economics*. The member for Drummoyne told me he passed three-unit economics using my

textbook. In fact, at the time that paper was set I was chairman of the Higher School Certificate examination committee. All my achievements can be traced back to TAFE. I hope the Treasurer takes the time to read my book, rather than looking at cartoons as he did in the House last week. It also contains a very important section on human capital, which is what we are dealing with in this bill. It is important to develop skills that will benefit society and the nation further down the track. Buildings and facilities are very important, but so are the skills they teach at TAFE.

TAFE gives people a second chance. I remember when I was at TAFE there were two groups: those who had failed their Higher School Certificate and were having another go, perhaps because they should not have failed or their parents wanted them to try again because it was the passport to university; and those who, like me, had jobs but decided they wanted to change careers. The students in my group were not all 18 like me, some were in their twenties, thirties and even forties. They did well because they were committed and had first-class teachers. Recently a student told me he found calculus hard, but in 1968 I did not because I had a first-class maths teacher. That was one of the best things about TAFE. TAFE was very important in my life and made a big difference. I often receive notes from former TAFE teachers, one of whom taught for some 37 years. He complained about the dumbing down of courses, and said:

We, as Teachers, are NO LONGER allowed to make comments on a student's report anymore.

Does the Government not realise a few cuts at the top end of Management could mean NO cuts at the bottom end, thus not affecting the high standards that TAFE has set over the years?

Australia has always had an enviable reputation world wide. Our tradespersons were able to take up work with ease in any part of the World, because of the training that TAFE provided, together with their employer. This will change over time, when they begin to see how our standards and quality of workmanship, has severely dropped.

Of course, if money is not being invested in TAFE and if people are priced out of the market and discouraged from going to TAFE, its standards will drop. We are losing that potential investment in human capital, which will make a difference to this great State of ours. We depend on that base. I thank the House and the Minister for Primary Industries for allowing me extra time. I close by saying that this is a very important bill. We need to encourage people to go to TAFE, to gain skills and to contribute to our society. If we do not, at the end of the day the citizens of New South Wales will be the losers. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [10.55 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak to the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014. I am somewhat surprised, or intrigued, by some of the comments from those opposite who seem to suggest that the Government does not support vocational education or TAFE. Of course, it does. Opposition members are distorting this debate. The great irony of the proposed legislation is its potentially negative effect on TAFE and vocational education in New South Wales. The Government opposes the bill—which the Leader of the Opposition spoke about at length—because it is destructive to an appropriate vocational education and TAFE system in New South Wales. It reduces flexibility, choice and the potential autonomy of TAFE.

I will refer to the Government's commitment to vocational education and training and then to the important area of employment and employment generation. Certainly vocational education and training should be geared towards employment generation as the primary objective. I will also refer to particular concerns about the bill as proposed and, finally, I will pay particular attention to the vocational education movement in my immediate constituency. In relation to TAFE educational reform of late, the Government's approach under Smart and Skilled is to reform the New South Wales vocational education and training system. It will give people the chance to gain the skills they need to get a job and advance their careers.

The Minister for Education has clearly indicated that TAFE institutes will be guaranteed a basic level of operational funding but will need to compete for any additional student entitlements. To ensure the bar is raised for all providers, I understand that quality standards will apply to prevent providers from charging lower fees and packing too many students into each class. The Minister has stated that he is confident TAFE will continue to be the substantial provider of choice, but in a more competitive environment where others can offer different options. The Minister has done a good job. He has said:

Everybody is going to have to lift their game for the benefit of the people who are going to use the entitlement.

Smart and Skilled is being implemented this year, with an entitlement to government-subsidised training commencing from 1 January 2015. I note that in further support of TAFE yesterday the Minister issued a release with great news that TAFE NSW is making it easier for people to learn anywhere, anytime. The Minister

launched a range of online courses available on mobile devices and highlighted how TAFE NSW Online was proof that TAFE was responding to industry and customer needs. TAFE NSW Online will help people gain the skills they need to get jobs and manage their study program to suit. This is an example of innovation and change that—dare I suggest—has been engendered in part by a potentially more competitive environment.

Where there is change, positive steps are taken by TAFE NSW, with undeniable pressures from other providers that competitively provide similar services; it is a good environment where positive steps are being taken. It is what we want to see. In his contribution the Leader of the Opposition said that the first job of any Premier is to ensure that the people of New South Wales have jobs. I agree it is a key function of any Premier and any government to ensure that those who want to work in the State are able to find meaningful employment and certainly vocational education and training [VET] is important in that regard.

The New South Wales Government is committed to preparing young people to move into the workforce and further their training at the same time. One of our key educational priorities has been to increase the proportion of students completing year 12 or recognised vocational education and training. Indeed, vocational education and training in high schools has grown dramatically in recent years as the New South Wales Government has expanded opportunities for students in year 11 and year 12. This means that Higher School Certificate [HSC] and VET students can work towards both a nationally recognised qualification and the HSC while at the same time maintaining their eligibility for university entrance.

In this way young people can get a taste of what interests them and meets their aptitude, making it easier for them to transition into the workforce. I understand that one-third of year 11 or year 12 students in New South Wales complete a vocational education and training course as part of their HSC—again providing flexibility that was not available when I undertook my HSC. As VET has come under the spotlight at both the State and national level, the Australian Government has made a commitment to ensure that industry has the skilled workforce and operating environment required to boost productivity and increase our international competitiveness. It has consulted with stakeholders to help formulate strategies to ensure that it is recognised as a valid pathway for all secondary school students.

As a consequence, more people are moving into jobs. I note that only last week Treasurer Constance announced that the New South Wales unemployment rate figures had dropped further, down to 5.7 per cent in August, the second lowest in the nation and well below the national average. The Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force figures showed that our unemployment rate had decreased by 0.2 per cent, with New South Wales contributing more than one-third of the jobs created nationally in August; and some of this is attributable to a great vocational education system. Those figures also highlighted the strength of the New South Wales economy, with more than 45,000 jobs created in August. As I said, the unemployment rate has been below the national average for a while, in fact, for nine consecutive months. Since coming to office the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has created more than 165,000 jobs, which is fantastic.

Being mindful of the comments from the Leader of the Opposition, it is important to remember that for a decade under the former Labor Government New South Wales had the lowest employment growth of any State in Australia, so by the Leader of the Opposition's own standards, former Labor Premiers in government and indeed he, as a Minister of the previous Labor Government, failed dismally at what he would say was their most important job of creating jobs for others. On that basic measure, members of the union movement, people who want education through TAFE, or other vocational education providers or institutions, should remember that under this Government they have more opportunity; there are more jobs. I will now touch on particular concerns with this bill because it is not simplistic; it is not a question of whether we support TAFE or not. It is a question of doing so sensibly. This is a start and it has been recognised as being so by a number of people, including The Greens, and I note that the member for Balmain will speak. John Kaye from The Greens has criticised the bill. He said:

Mr Robertson made a nice speech but his bill comprehensively fails to live up to the hype ...

Mr Robertson must be hoping that nobody reads the details in his bill ...

Mr Robertson just wants to have his name in a good news story for TAFE without doing the hard yards ...

The Greens have their own ideas and we can debate those in time, but today we are debating a bill from the Leader of the Opposition and that bill is inadequate, inappropriate and it should be opposed. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I will now touch on five specific concerns with the bill. First, the bill jeopardises the Government's reform of the New South Wales VET system by potentially resulting in a reduction in the number of government-subsidised students and slowing the agreed national reforms. As has been stated, it would put at risk up to \$408.41 million in national partnership Commonwealth payments for New South Wales over the next three years. Secondly, the bill is contrary to the New South Wales Government's response to the advice of the Independent Regulatory and Pricing Tribunal for implementing efficient prices through government subsidies for approved training and for regulated student fees. Thirdly, it creates differential student pricing for government-subsidised VET in New South Wales, with TAFE NSW institutes potentially charging students different, usually lower, fees than the approved Smart and Skilled private registered training organisations. This would extend further a reasonably complicated pricing system than currently applies and would add unnecessary complexity.

Pricing is now done on a whole qualification basis not on an annual basis. I note that the member for Blue Mountains mentioned to me that one of her staff members has a son who recently was erroneously, if not mischievously, quoted a price of \$2,000 for a course that he was led to believe was an annual fee rather than a total qualification fee. In fact, it was the latter. That is an important distinction. I hope people are not spreading misinformation about fees because it seems that members opposite want to spread misinformation about other things. Fourthly, the bill will undermine TAFE NSW financial viability, which received a separate budget for 2014-15 based on the implementation of the Smart and Skilled rules around base qualification prices, student and course eligibility, and student fees. It would force institutes to cross-subsidise to compensate for reduced revenue or seek significant additional funding from the Government. We do need to have change in TAFE, with appropriate measures for promoting choice and flexibility.

Fifthly, the bill would conflict with the New South Wales Government's public sector reforms that require TAFE NSW to operate efficiently and increasingly as a financially sustainable business, less reliant upon government funding. The New South Wales Government has every confidence that TAFE can be successful in a more contestable environment, particularly in light of Smart and Skilled. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to freeze fees, why does he not facilitate the freezing of union membership fees or indeed stop taking the hard-earned money of workers, without them consenting directly, for political donation campaigns that Labor benefits from. Let us see them put their money where their mouth is or at least leave the workers' money where their mouths are fed and stop being hypocrites.

Finally, I acknowledge TAFE locally, and the Northern Sydney Institute in particular. I acknowledge the contributions made by the former director of the Northern Sydney Institute, Kevin Harris, and Alison Wood, who was appointed director earlier this year. I have met with both of them and had productive discussions with them. I note that Northern Sydney TAFE leads by example by offering international students a wide range of vocational courses leading to exceptional career opportunities. This means technical, skills-based or hands-on training is delivered.

Northern Sydney TAFE provides practical work experience, skills to enter the workforce in Australia or elsewhere, improves employment opportunities by teaching new skills, sets new career paths, and helps gain credit towards university. I note that the Governor of Guangdong will be in the Parliament tomorrow. I was delighted to hear the Premier indicate last week that TAFE-related agreements had been signed with universities in Guangdong Province, demonstrating that TAFE paths and opportunities are very real for youths and others in New South Wales. The Government opposes the bill.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [11.10 a.m.]: I support the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014, which will cap the rate of increases for TAFE fees at the 2014 level and provide for increases only in line with the consumer price index [CPI]. I am speaking on this bill because it is a bill worth supporting. It goes to the very heart of what the Labor Party stands for and is a clear enunciation of the values that underpin the philosophy and principles of the Australian Labor Party. In my inaugural speech I outlined to this House my firm view that education should be the State's first and highest priority. In that speech I stated:

The people of Lakemba—like people all over New South Wales—have dreams and hopes and aspirations. They want the future to be a better place for all of us. They want the opportunity to share in the benefits of a cohesive society. And it is my view that the best way to build a safer, healthier and more cohesive society is through education.

If there is one portfolio area that can level the playing field for disadvantaged families and give them and their children a chance to work towards a rewarding and fulfilling career, it is education. With a better education we have a better standard of living, we are healthier and arguably more fulfilled. Our educational institutions, both public and private, are our best chance of building real opportunity for families and young people in New South Wales. And for disadvantaged families, like many in the electorate of Lakemba, we must make education the State's number one priority.

That remains my view today and the decision by the New South Wales Liberal Government to put a further financial barrier in the way of developing a smarter, more educated and employable society will disadvantage thousands of young people who want to have the chance to improve their job suitability and employment and income prospects. This bill seeks to right that wrong. I recognise that in government decisions need to be made with consideration given to our finite financial resources. That is, we do not have the luxury of simply throwing money at everything we want. Decisions have to be made on how much we spend and where we spend it within our long-term capacity. The basis of these decisions should have regard to our values as a society, our goal of building equity and opportunity, and where possible maximising our income and reducing our expenditure. In this context, it is a well-accepted maxim that prevention is better than cure, and is usually much less expensive.

In the context of funding for education, including our TAFEs, surely making vocational training and tertiary education accessible and affordable achieves this goal. Making it affordable for people to make themselves job-ready and employable ensures they have the chance to make a productive contribution to our economy and society. It gives them capacity to move beyond low wage jobs and out of the ranks of the unemployed. It reduces the likelihood of social and economic isolation, which is linked to long-term unemployment, and is an effective buffer against antisocial behaviour, depression and criminal activity.

In fact, education in all its forms is the best investment a Government can make to build a stronger society. And whatever the economic circumstances of our State there is no excuse, none at all, for making education less accessible and less affordable. Sadly, the record of this Government should have been a warning that reducing opportunity and equity for working families is part of its objectives. We need only look at the decision to introduce fees for government preschools, serving the needs of the most disadvantaged families in the State; the decision to cut \$1.7 billion from the education budget; the decision to cut funding for English as a second language [ESL] support teachers, resulting in the loss of 31 positions in the Department of Education and Communities; and, of course, cutting \$800 million from TAFE and sacking 1,100 teachers.

These decisions show a stark distinction between the Liberal-Nationals Coalition and the values of the Australian Labor Party. This bill is a tangible reminder that Labor will always stand up for strengthening our society by building hope, opportunity and equity through a fair and well-funded TAFE system. The failure of those opposite to support this bill will not only condemn them in their electorates but will condemn thousands of hopeful school leavers, mature age students, redundant employees seeking training opportunities and others who simply want a chance to better themselves and provide for their families. That is why I support this bill.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.15 a.m.]: I address the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014 on behalf of The Greens. This bill is positive in the very small step it takes, but it is sadly lacking when it comes to meeting the challenges facing the future of TAFE in this State. It fails to secure the affordable, high-quality skills training that TAFE has such a fantastic record of providing. The proposed legislation freezes maximum fees chargeable by TAFE at 2014 levels, plus inflation, and retains other exemptions for disadvantaged students. It fails to address the critical issue, which is that real dollars are needed to make TAFE affordable. It fails to cut off the damaging impact of competition that is being introduced by this Government and that we have also seen at a Federal level.

It is important to recognise that while Labor is proposing this bill it has failed to say what model it supports. Smart and Skilled will not be supported by Labor. That, of course, is welcomed, but how much money does Labor support being diverted from TAFE to private providers? We know that federally the competitive funding model pushed by Federal Labor has had damaging impacts on TAFE and public providers of vocational education around the country. I call on New South Wales Labor to convince its Federal colleagues to abandon its support for the competitive training market.

Whilst this bill seeks to tinker at the edges, the heart of TAFE is under threat; the heart of TAFE is in real trouble. Let us look first at the record of Labor before we discuss the record of this Government. While New South Wales Labor was in office the State's annual recurrent contribution for TAFE fell by 48 per cent. I encourage people to look at those calculations. You can examine The Greens submission to the Senate inquiry into the role of the Technical and Further Education system and its operation for a detailed analysis of how those figures are arrived at. Put simply, the New South Wales Government would have spent \$962 million more in 2010 than it did in 1997 if the TAFE funding in 2010 was as it was in 1997.

Put another way, if we take the funding for TAFE from 1997 and simply expand it out to 2010, more than 13 years later, \$962 million more funding would have been provided in 2010. That is remarkable. That represents a 48 per cent cut over those 13 years. The Commonwealth would have spent \$120 million more and

that represents a 16.6 per cent cut. Students in the higher education sector, as in TAFE, have contributed \$62 million more and that is an increase of 15 per cent. That is the vocational public education story under Labor. Under Labor we saw massive cuts to TAFE. As the mayor of the local council and a candidate for the electorate of Balmain, I was very involved in the incredibly protracted and damaging industrial dispute by TAFE teachers and supporters under the former Labor Government. The former member for Balmain was the Minister for Education and Training at the time. "Where on earth is Verity Firth?" was the call from dozens of teachers who rallied regularly outside her office.

While this bill is positive and this small step puts the Opposition ahead of the Coalition because it retains exemptions for the disadvantaged, it fails to restore TAFE funding and abolish this so-called competitive market. We know that that competitive market, which the Coalition is so fond of, will not deliver the future that TAFE needs. It will not deliver the reforms that will support students, teachers and other TAFE staff. In fact, the underlying assumption that private providers will deliver equivalent or better individual outcomes or societal outcomes is false when compared to TAFE. There are a few reasons that that approach is comprehensively wrong. While private providers can operate at a lower internal cost per qualification granted, how do they do it? They do it by reducing the pay, qualifications and working conditions of teachers and educators. A lowly paid, poor quality and demoralised skills training workforce is unlikely to deliver the societal benefits that TAFE has traditionally provided.

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

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

FRED WILLIAMS AUSTRALIAN WATERSKI AND WAKEBOARD FEDERATION HALL OF FAME

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [11.21 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that Fred Williams of Forster, considered to be the Father of Australian waterskiing, has been inducted into the Australian Waterski and Wakeboard Federation Hall of Fame in recognition of his contributions to the industry over a period of sixty years.
- (2) Congratulates Fred Williams Water Skis on its dedication and innovation in the waterski industry by being the first business to manufacture waterskis in Australia.
- (3) Notes that from modest beginnings Fred Williams Water Skis has won the prestigious Vapour Trail award for the best international waterski manufacturer.

Fred Williams lives in Forster and is a great Australian. He is the father of Australian waterskiing and was inducted into the Australian Waterski and Wakeboard Federation Hall of Fame in Melbourne in March this year. He is recognised for various contributions during his more than 60 years in the water sports industry. Fred began his working life as a carpenter and joiner, and began an apprenticeship with Arthur Davis Constructions in Newcastle before relocating with the business to Taree. With a bit of encouragement from a couple of friends, Fred made an aquaplane out of an old garage door that he found near the Russell Court Guest House, which was more commonly known then as "Breesies". Soon after that, Fred persuaded a local man, Bert Tickner, who had an old power boat in need of repair, to let him fix the boat and in return to have Bert tow him on the door behind it. Tickner agreed and the pair hooked up a towline and took to the water. As the boat gained speed, so did Williams and he quickly stood up.

That was the first wakeboard manufactured in Australia. Williams was immediately hooked on the adrenaline of the sport, and used his trade as a carpenter and joiner to create the first set of skis, which he made out of discarded verandah posts. Fred and Alf Jensen later made two skis using tallow wood. He used boiling water to bend them and left them overnight. He then attached two sandshoes and painted a bull's eye in the middle. He said that it was hilarious. Members can imagine Fred Williams waterskiing on the mighty Wallamba River and Wallis Lake using two tallow wood skis with sandshoes nailed to them. Fred was hooked on waterskiing and went on to create his business Ski-Ace, which became the first waterski manufacturing business in Australia. From humble beginnings out of an old bakehouse in Little Street, Williams and his wife, Bettie, moved the business to Sydney in 1962 to make skis for sporting goods retailer Mick Simmons.

Mr Geoff Provest: Mick Simmons?

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The famous sports store. The move gave the brand more exposure and Williams soon became a household name. With dozens of champion skiers using his product, he was the largest waterski producer in Australia and the third largest in the world. In 1981 the company won the prestigious Vapour Trail award as the best waterski manufacturer internationally. During his career, Williams also trained and taught good friend Graham Barclay, who went on to become an Australian waterski champion. They are still friends today. I often go to the club and I will bump into Fred and Graham. Of course, Graham was also a good rugby league player in his youth, when he played for Canterbury Rugby League Club. He also started Barclay Marine, a renowned supplier of boats and other water sports equipment, and Barclay's Oysters, which is the largest producer of oysters in the Wallis Lake area. Wallis Lake supplies about one-third of Australia's Sydney rock oysters, which are the premium oysters in Australia.

When looking back, Fred Williams said that the Australian Waterski and Wakeboard Federation Hall of Fame induction was the icing on the cake for what has been a tremendous career. He said that his star sign is Aquarius, so it was only natural that he always loved the water. He was happy that he had achieved something and the recognition was very special. Fred came from humble beginnings as a carpenter and joiner who moved to regional New South Wales, where so many great Australians get their start in life. From there he built the third-largest waterski manufacturing business in the world and trained some of the great waterski champions. His contribution to the industry has been recognised, and he is now featured in the hall of fame. I cannot think of a more deserving person to be so honoured in the waterskiing sports arena.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.28 a.m.]: It is a pleasure to support the motion moved by my good colleague the member for Myall Lakes, recognising one of the legends of waterskiing. When one talks of the history of waterski racing in Australia, the name Fred Williams is constantly mentioned. Fred's involvement in the sport for some 31 years has contributed to his being one of the best-known personalities in the waterskiing world. Fred Williams was born at Forster and spent his early years in the building trade, where his talents with timber turned him towards making waterskis in his spare time.

Fred joined his local surf club when he was about nine or 10. He was a surf swimmer, and won a lot of belt races up and down the coast. Being a leading surfer and captain of the local surf club resulted in Fred winning the Australian Junior Open Belt Championship in 1949. He nearly drowned once—out at Black Head. Believe it or not, that is when Betty, his wife, saw him for the first time, although they did not meet until later. He must have made an impression even in a desperate time. They were dragging him up the beach, and she was in the crowd watching the commotion and probably thinking, "Look at that poor bugger!"

If one were to ask Fred, "How did you make your first set of skis?" he would answer, "With gelignite" because "Gelignite" Jack Murray was a friend of his. Fred and his mates were messing around with old planks on the water, and were encouraged to give it a try. Although they thought they would make something similar to an aquaplane they made it out of an old garage door. He also read in an American magazine about a bloke by the name of Waller who had made a set of long skis. They got two pieces of beech and hung them over the verandah with two house bricks tied to the end and then poured boiling water over them to make them bend. They left them overnight and then attached two sandshoes and painted a bullseye in the middle—and that was his first set of skis.

Next, they decided to make a mould. The pub in Forster was being renovated, and the old verandah posts were big, solid blocks of tallowwood. He took one of these posts to local boat builder Alf Jensen. He drew the shape of the mould on the block, and Jensen cut it out on his bandsaw. He used this mould up until the time he started to use steam to bend the wood and used veneers on his skis. In 1955 Fred and a few friends started the Forster Aquatic Ski Club. Graham Barclay and Fred established a slalom course in Pipers Creek. He taught Graham to ski, became a successful competitor and ultimately Australian champion, and came third in the world championships. The club would put on shows and spectacles, and Fred's skis began to get noticed.

In 1962, when they decided to move the manufacturing business from Forster to Burwood, they branched out into designing wetsuits, vests and other gear. In 1972, the business having grown so much, they relocated to Gateshead in Newcastle. Throughout the ensuing years the name of Fred Williams, as owner and driver, has been linked with many famous racing boats such as *Ron-Also*, *Goldfinger*, *Goldfinger II*, *Buster*, in conjunction with lifetime friend Keith Singh, culminating in *Rage IV* winning the Jack Rushton Memorial Trophy for Australian unlimited displacement speedboats in 1979, and also the coveted 50-year-old Stuart Doyle Gold Cup.

With the ski manufacturing business progressing rapidly, Fred with his wife, Betty, son, Gary, "Perc" and Debbie, moved to Sydney to set up the Ski Ace factory and open a marine dealership in Burwood which was then called Ashfield. Even with the problems and pressures associated with business, Fred's total

involvement and support increased twofold. He proved himself to be a popular show-skier and competitor; team manager; official tournament driver at numerous State and Australian championships; instigator of the first lane and circuit racing at Cabarita—speed ski-racing as we know it today—and NSW Water Ski Federation councillor, vice president and then president in a voluntary capacity for 15 years. He also became a major sponsor of water ski events. In particular, he started the now internationally acclaimed Bridge to Bridge Water Ski Classic.

Over the years Fred and his family have toured the world with Australia's leading skiers. During these trips many hours have been spent with the skiers and crews developing and designing new skis and equipment to suit their needs and increase performance. This assistance has been extended to not only Australian skiers but also many overseas skiers. In 1964 visiting world champion Chuck Stearns was instrumental in designing the first Fred Williams "Concave". In 1978 Europe's leading skiers visited Australia and were quick to take advantage of the superiority of the Fred Williams racing ski, further proven in 1979 with Australian skiers Bronwyn Wright and Wayne Ritchie becoming the first World Water Ski Racing champions. Robbie Woods was at the time the only man in the world to win the USA Nationals twice.

The marine division of Fred Williams is not to be forgotten. In addition to supplying official tournament boats for championship events, major sponsorship and support was allocated to motorbike racing and speedway. In 1969 the Fred Williams Marine Speedway Team was successful in winning the New South Wales Sidecar Championship Trophy, coupled with Graham Young winning the Australian Sidecar Championship on the Fred Williams-sponsored bike. The call of the North proved too strong for the Williams family and Fred returned to Belmont, Newcastle, opening a new factory at Gateshead. With the beautiful Lake Macquarie at his doorstep it was only a matter of time before Fred would be involved in yet another water sport—this time it was sailing. These days it is not uncommon to see Fred and the staff racing their 30-foot diamond-class keel boat *Mistress Kate* around the lake, resulting in them winning the Lake Macquarie Yacht Club line honours and club point score many times.

This hyperactive man, through good fortune and bad, has never failed to give a helping hand to all who have come in contact with him. Their names are too numerous to mention but we all thank Fred sincerely for his dedication, which has made our sport what it is today, and for contributing to Australia's rating as a leading nation in the world of waterskiing today. My first set of skis was made by Fred Williams. They did me proud, although I fell off them quite a few times and it took me a long time to get up on a single ski. I support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes which recognises Fred Williams as an iconic Australian.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [11.35 a.m.]: The motion by the member for Myall Lakes notes that Fred Williams has been inducted into the Australian Waterski and Wakeboard Federation Hall of Fame in recognition of his contribution to the industry over more than 60 years. We congratulate Mr Williams on his achievement as set out in the second paragraph of the motion. The third paragraph of the motion notes that Mr Williams came from modest beginnings and won the prestigious Vapour Trail award for the best international waterski manufacturer.

We often lament the fact that many of our manufacturing industries go offshore, so this is a worthwhile motion recognising local manufacturing and showing that some industry leaders and local champions are making sure manufacturing remains in Australia. I cannot add to this debate by relating my experiences of waterskiing, as the member for Tweed did. The closest I came to waterskiing was walking past waterskis in a shop window and that was scary enough. I think any picture of me on waterskis would be horrifying. Fred Williams would have his job cut out trying to make me learn to waterski on his products. The Opposition acknowledges the motion of the member for Myall Lakes about one of Australia's champions and supports putting this motion on the parliamentary record. We acknowledge the recognition of one of our leading local manufacturers.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [11.37 a.m.], in reply: Fred Williams is an outstanding Australian. Members of both sides of the Chamber have spoken about his contribution to the sport, to manufacturing and to employment in this country. He made a contribution over more than 60 years, which is a fantastic accomplishment. He is also the leading person in his field in Australia and is ranked the third-largest ski manufacturer in the world. This is a true accomplishment. As the member for Mount Druitt said, this accomplishment deserves to be acknowledged on the record. I wish Fred and Betty all the very best for the future.

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

Motion agreed to.

GREAT LAKES COLLEGE FORSTER CAMPUS BAKER SHIELD

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [11.39 a.m.]: I move:

That the House:

- (1) Congratulates the team of students from Great Lakes College, Forster Campus, on winning the under 14s 2013 Baker Shield competition, defeating the Newcastle High School team in the final.
- (2) Acknowledges the work of the team manager and coach, John Thomson, and sports coordinator, Christina Whitbread, who have wholeheartedly supported cricket at Great Lakes College.
- (3) Congratulates the team members: Craig Lewis, Lleyton Blissett, Liam Ryan, Zac Hender, Adam Lewis, Adam Koch, Dylan Mauger, Mitchell Lewis, Sam Whitbread, James McBride, Curtis Landers, Lachlan Fuller, Ryan Atkinson and Aaron Hill.
- (4) Congratulates the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, on encouraging cricket and other sports in New South Wales public and high schools.

Throughout the history of the Great Lakes College Forster Campus it has competed in an annual cricket competition, for boys 14 years and under, called the Baker Shield. The Baker Shield is a 70-over competition contested between 32 public school teams from the Hunter, Manning and Great Lakes areas. After coming close to victory against Newcastle High School in 2012, Forster Campus finally prevailed, again playing against Newcastle High School, to take out the final of the 2013 competition.

In the early rounds of the competition the boys from Forster campus defeated Great Lakes College Tuncurry Campus, Taree High School and Singleton High School in 2013 and Merewether High School earlier this year. The 2013 competition takes place in summer and it is played in the last part of 2013 and the early part of 2014. The final was played at the picturesque Robbins Oval in Maitland on 24 February. Forster won the toss and sent Newcastle in to bat. The team performed particularly well in the field, taking all catches offered, completing a run out and generally maintaining steady pressure on the opposition batters.

Opener Adam Lewis bowled accurately, taking four of the first five wickets, and finished with the excellent figures of 4/18 from seven overs. Sam Whitbread and Lleyton Blissett contributed with a wicket each and Mitchell Lewis bowled well to clean up the tail, taking three late wickets. Newcastle was bowled out in 34 overs for a respectable total of 120 runs. Despite an early run out, Forster's innings began steadily. In the sixth over the second wicket fell and the team was 2/18. At this point, James McBride and Curtis Landers began their match-winning partnership, spanning 17 overs and yielding 60 runs, taking the team to 85 before James was dismissed in the twenty-third over for 60 runs, including eight fours.

Curtis batted on for another four overs to compile 60 runs. At 4/102 spectators and teachers were becoming nervous; however, Sam Whitbread, Adam Lewis and Adam Koch steadied the ship, making useful contributions before Lachlan Fuller hit the winning runs in the thirty-second over. The win was particularly satisfying for team manager and coach, John Thomson, and sports coordinator, Christina Whitbread, who have been hardworking supporters of cricket at Forster Campus. Throughout the competition contributions were made by all participating students, with excellent fielding, bowling or batting. The team was supported well by their families.

Members may recognise one of the names of the team members I mentioned. Curtis Landers was in the partnership that turned the match around in Forster's favour. He was the young fellow who, while playing rugby league for the Forster-Tuncurry Hawks at Port Macquarie, broke his neck. He was taken to Royal North Shore Hospital where he was in intensive care and he was operated on. Early on things looked very grim: He was on life support and a ventilator and he had no movement and no feeling. The community got behind him and there was fundraising for Curtis and his family, and *The Footy Show* also helped to raise money.

I am pleased that the doctors have said that what has happened now to Curtis is a miracle. Curtis is still using a neck brace but he is walking and he is back at school. Against all the odds, he never gave up. I visited him in hospital when he had just come out of intensive care. The ventilator had just been removed that morning and it was shocking to see the pain and discomfort he was in. But everybody's prayers were answered and he has come good. It is obvious that Curtis is a good cricket player and he is a good rugby league player. He is only 14 or 15 years of age. I hope he recovers to the point where he is able to play cricket in the future. I do not know whether he will be able to play rugby league again, considering his injuries, but the good thing is that he survived and he is walking again. I do not want to take anything away from the other members of the cricket team: all the players were extremely good. It is a real feat for a small school like Great Lakes College to take on some of the strong, large schools from the Hunter and to win the championship. I commend the boys and the coaches.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [11.46 a.m.]: It is my pleasure to support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes. In the famous lyrics of 10CC, "I don't like cricket, oh no, I love it." I think I just woke up the Parliamentary Secretary. Those words are from the song by 10CC entitled *Dreadlock Holiday*. Whilst I know that Bob Marley is alive and well, I could have done with a bit of support from the wailers on the other side. They do a lot of wailing, especially on Thursdays. Unfortunately, there is no-one on the Opposition benches to provide any backup vocals, except for the member for Cabramatta, but I think he comes from a different era.

We are all cricket tragics. There is nothing better than waking up on Boxing Day and looking forward to the Boxing Day test in Melbourne. We have all grown up with that in Australia; it is an iconic thing to do to watch the test match over the Christmas break. Whilst I may have been just an ordinary cricketer—I was a number 10 batsman and I used to field at long on and they used to make me change every end—my son was a pretty good cricketer. I travelled across New South Wales with him taking him to games. It was terrific to do that because cricket is such a great game, especially for kids. My son was fortunate to be coached by Stan Gilchrist, the father of Adam Gilchrist, who we like to claim as ours in the northern rivers region and in the Deputy-Speaker's seat of Lismore. Stan Gilchrist is a terrific guy and coach and he is responsible for coaching a number of kids in the northern rivers region, notably young Tom Cooper, who played with my son in a few representative games.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Another Lismore boy.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: He is; he is a terrific kid. I remember watching him play in a New South Wales Primary Schools Sports Association [PSSA] school competition against my son and his side. Tom was only about eight and the other kids were about 11. Tom played every shot through the V and even at the age of eight he looked like Greg Chappell—he had a flowing style and one could see he was going to be a champion, which he is today. The other young fellow with whom my son played was Phil Hughes from Macksville, Nambucca. Phil Hughes has gone on to play for Australia and has made a name for himself in cricket.

Earlier this year the cricket legends came to Casino, which is the Deputy-Speaker's old home town and stomping ground, not only to play an exhibition game against a Casino side but also to attend a dinner. The cricket legends were led by Mo Matthews and included Monty Panesar, Greg Blewett, Michael Bevan, Andy Bichel, Jimmy Maher, Wayne Holdsworth and Wayne Phillips. It was a terrific weekend of cricket and laughter. They told a few stories. Mo Matthews tried to pick up every unmarried woman in the club on the Saturday night—and the married ones, including my wife and my personal assistant. He was not successful.

The legends played against a young Casino team in a T20 match at Queen Elizabeth Park on the Sunday. The legends finished at 4/164, and the Casino youngsters took the game to the pros. The young fellows played a terrific game. Isaac Goodwin scored 22 and Isaac Murphy scored 14. They got the youngsters off to a terrific start, but the experience of the legends proved too much for the young Casino side. They were all teenagers; I think the youngest was 13 years old. The Casino side also comprised Elliot Nance, Alex McKee, Jacob Wood, Nick Ensby, Brendon Dwyer, Tom Carlton, Jordan Williams, Jacob Graham and Nick Armstrong.

It was a terrific weekend of cricket. The young Casino players attended both the dinner and the game the next day. They were able to mix with their heroes and get a few tips. Of course, it inspired them to play in their regular weekend competition. That shows that cricket is alive and well in this country. It is a fabulous sport. We should be encouraging our kids to play one of our iconic sports. Kids should get out of the computer room, put down the smartphone, and become fit and healthy. They should put on a pair of pads, get a cricket ball in the nets and enjoy a terrific game that is loved by all in this country. I started with *Dreadlock Holiday* and the cricket season is due to begin shortly. I will not sing the rest of the song, but I hope all members will be singing it in their heads throughout the day.

Mr Nick Lalich: Point of order: I think it would be appropriate if the member for Clarence finished his contribution with a song as he started with a song.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: To the point of order: I will withdraw the motion if that happens.

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

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: I am glad I inject a little humour because cricket is about humour. The game is enjoyed because it has humour. I support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.53 a.m.]: It would be remiss of me if I did not support my good colleagues the member for Myall Lakes and the member for Clarence with regard to the Great Lakes College Forster Campus cricket team that won the under 14s in 2013, the Baker Shield, by defeating Newcastle High School. Encouraging youth in sport must be applauded. The member for Myall Lakes has had a long and illustrious career in cricket—I am reliably informed that he was considered an all-rounder, which usually meant he filled in for the stumps at either end—and he is a talented rugby union player. More importantly, we are cricket fans. It is great to see young people out in summer not only exercising and learning good game skills but also socialising and benefiting from the gamesmanship that is gained from being in a great team.

It is pertinent, particularly for The Nationals, to see people from regional and rural areas coming to the big smoke and beating other teams. As we know, the great State of New South Wales is home to many legendary sportspeople. It is also home to many legendary administrators of the game. Most members have had to sacrifice a Saturday or Sunday to drive their kids, with boots, a cricket bat or whatever racquet, to sports; they then sit on the sidelines or court side and participate. That usually extended to attending training on Tuesday or Thursday nights which is great. I can inform the House that recently a cricket legend moved into my great electorate of Tweed.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Name him.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: It is Greg Ritchie. Unlike the member for Clarence, I will not do an impersonation of his Mahatma Cote, for which he is legendary; he continues to use it around the media traps on a regular basis. Greg's wife, Rachel Hetherington, was one of the first Australians to play professional golf in the PGA in America. Now she runs a successful golf driving range and a small golf course within the Tweed. Greg is a big supporter of sport. He came from a humble working-class background—I believe his father was a butcher. Greg took up cricket against all odds. Recently at a luncheon he told us about the first two or three times he played for Australia. On the first two times he played he got a duck, and he made one run on the next occasion. But he fought on to become a legendary Australian. He is active in supporting the youth in my area. I believe he travels up and down the great State of New South Wales and encourages people, like the students at Great Lakes College at Forster. I fully endorse the member for Myall Lakes and the member for Clarence in supporting junior sport, and the great game of cricket in particular.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [11.57 a.m.], in reply: I state at the outset that many members are watching the monitors in their offices as we speak in this Chamber. Currently the Lions Club is holding a barbecue to raise money for charity, as is the garage sale. I encourage those who are watching the monitors to proceed to the Speaker's Garden where they can do some good for people who need help—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Providing they are not on House duty.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: —providing they are not on House duty. Cricket is a big part of Australian culture and part of the fabric of Australian life. I am sure many people can brag about cricket legends who came from their areas. It would be remiss of me if I did not refer to one of the great legends of cricket who came from the Manning Valley, Johnny Martin. Johnny Martin was a renowned cricketer, a tough man, a nuggetty man who could hit a six from almost everywhere. When he was facing bouncers and head-highs he stood his ground; he played a great part in Australian cricket. He is a legend of the game. He lives at Burrell Creek, which is a little farming area outside Taree in the Manning Valley. He went on from those humble beginnings to play for Australia during a time when Australia had many great players, including Don Bradman. I congratulate the Minister for Education on encouraging cricket and other sports in schools. Cricket brings so many things. It brings team work—playing for a team, not just for the individual—and it has great pathways to higher honours. It is great to see the Government also encourage cricket.

The member for Clarence spoke about some of the great players, including Monty Panesar and Greg Matthews, who are touring and bringing cricket to regional New South Wales. The Australian cricket development squads are also in the regions to help develop cricket there. Another great player from the Manning is Aaron Bird, who played for the SpeedBlitz Blues. There are many other players from the Great Lakes and the Manning Valley who are playing grade cricket throughout the Sydney metropolitan area and also at home in their regional areas. I congratulate the Great Lakes College Forster Campus on its team winning the Baker Shield competition by defeating the team from Newcastle High, a much bigger school that has a big catchment area for talent. I wish the team well, and once again wish Curtis Landers all the very best in his recovery.

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

Motion agreed to.

NSW FORENSIC AND ANALYTICAL SCIENCE SERVICE

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [12.02 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that reports indicate that there is only one person currently qualified and employed by the NSW Forensic Analytical and Science Service to perform the analysis required on drug-related seizures by police.
- (2) Notes that this is contributing to delays, by more than 12 months in some cases, in court cases involving illicit drugs.
- (3) Urges the Minister for Police to provide additional resources to increase staffing levels to ensure analysis of illicit drugs seized by police is processed more expeditiously.

The NSW Forensic Analytical and Science Service, or FASS, is in crisis. The service is critically understaffed, under-resourced and mismanaged. This crisis is caused by the Government's obsession with cutting services, cutting jobs and outsourcing to the private sector. FASS is a critically important group of science laboratories based in Lidcombe that carries out testing for police and other authorities across the State, including forensic DNA, toxicology, drugs and driving, food—importantly—water and physical evidence, to name a few. The delays in criminal proceedings caused by the understaffing at FASS is of great concern to me as the member for Wallsend as it affects the hardworking police and legal professionals in my electorate whose work is impeded by these delays.

Furthermore, as shadow Minister for Science and Medical Research, I have serious concerns about the imminent closure of the food safety laboratories, which poses a public health risk not only to residents of the Hunter but also across the State. William Gladstone, nineteenth century Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, is often quoted as saying "Justice delayed is justice denied." In February the *Newcastle Herald* reported that a Newcastle magistrate had criticised the lengthy delays that had beset a case he was trying. Twelve months after serious allegations of drug manufacturing in the Warners Bay area were first brought before the courts, forensic analysis of the material in question still had not been completed. This delay is clearly unacceptable. The magistrate said in open court:

It is a matter which, for the purposes of obtaining justice and the speedy and quick resolution of matters, is causing huge delays, which ultimately comes back to the courts as a criticism as to why the courts are not dealing with matters expeditiously.

The *Newcastle Herald* reported that there was just one scientist currently qualified and employed by the Government to perform the type of analysis required. Because of this, other matters were being delayed. A spokeswoman for the NSW Forensic Analytical and Science Service said at the time that increased demand and "several large police seizures had put pressure on processing times". A technical officer currently working at FASS spoke with my office and wanted to make clear just how serious the current situation is. The officer said:

For last few years we have been losing staff from public health areas and they've decided to close the food lab. In the drugs area, they're trying to restructure the workforce to make it more of a production line.

Goodness me—a production line. The officer continued:

We have all these amazing people with degrees and years of knowledge and they're being told that their work will be sitting down and doing one thing for a two week period and then move on. All their knowledge and skills are basically being ignored. Accuracy and precision is being lost to throughput. Rather than employ more staff, rather than look at what's needed, what they're doing is trying to come up with new methods. Which is fine and reasonable, but not at the expense of the quality of the work which is what is happening at the moment. They look at turnaround time, and rather than saying lets hire staff, they say if you don't improve productivity we'll outsource this work. The director told the drug labs if you don't improve productivity by September we will outsource.

They've recently employed six technical officers and six hospital scientists but not long term, instead just on six month contract; a short term fix. When that contract is up we'll have the same problems. The same thing will go around in circles.

In August 2013 we were told there would be a restructure of what remains of public health labs, we were happy to go with this to help improve productivity, then in April of this year we were instead told the food lab is going to be totally cut and private laboratories will be testing food in NSW instead.

Our understanding is we will be the only state in Australia without the government testing food in some capacity. It's not okay. The mission seems to be to slash and burn as much as they can, I would not be surprised to see the complete closure of this laboratory within the next three to five years. There's a constant push to reduce spending and it is absolutely to the detriment of quality and safety.

The place is falling apart, morale is really low. I've never seen morale so low, I believe it's coming from above, from the Government. It's all focused on throughput rather than any sort of quality result which is what we were created for.

That message comes directly from a worker on the front line who is experiencing this Government's negligence in adequately funding our vital FASS services. It is not okay. I call on the Government to immediately put in motion steps to rectify the absolute mess that it has created.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.09 p.m.]: This motion refers to the analysis that the NSW Forensic Analytical and Science Service is required to perform on drug-related seizures by the police, to the delays in court cases involving illicit drugs and the analysis of illicit drugs seized by police. I acknowledge that there is a backlog in analytical procedures. The Government has recognised that for some time. It behoves governments everywhere to deliver value for money by incorporating the latest scientific technology. Technology is improving in leaps and bounds, and we are seeing medical and analytical breakthroughs virtually on a weekly basis. Governments must be responsive to this because at the end of the day it is about delivering services to the people of New South Wales.

The Government has already implemented a number of measures to reduce the existing backlog in drug testing and analysis, and those measures are working. Late last year police and the courts commenced a trial of new procedures to discourage defendants in matters involving small quantities of drugs from putting at issue the nature of those drug—that is, as part of their defence refuting that the substance seized by police was a drug. This is relevant because a significant number of drug arrests on the North Coast, in particular, are often very small quantities of illicit substances. The trial procedures involve NSW Health and police conducting a preliminary test of the drug. The preliminary test, while not conclusive, gives a strong indication of the type of drug—for example, whether it is heroin or amphetamines.

In most cases the preliminary result is sufficient to encourage defendants to change their defence or plea, and as a result NSW Health does not need to fully analyse the drug. In cases where a substance turns out to be benign, police can discontinue proceedings rather than undertake expensive testing. That is a crucial point. It has always been my opinion that justice should be done, and done expediently. When the trial began in September 2013 there was a backlog of around 2,500 analysis cases, or the equivalent of six months work. I am pleased to say that the backlog is now down to around 700 cases and the success of the trial has meant the procedure has now become standard. Just because something was done a certain way 10 years ago does not mean it cannot be improved.

I have also been advised that significant consultation has been undertaken with staff at all levels to ensure that integrity is maintained and efficiencies are monitored. I praise the work of the staff in those testing laboratories. I had the opportunity to visit a number of laboratories in Sydney and I have also visited the police evidence drug locker in Surry Hills, so I understand the procedures and practices. I praise the staff for their diligence and commitment. Earlier this year, while trialling new and evolving technology, police used a handheld testing device that permits them to conduct preliminary analysis of suspected drugs in the field. The device uses a type of laser technology. Police point the device at a drug sample and can then identify, in a matter of seconds and to a high degree of accuracy, the substances it comprises. The device incorporates an on-board library of 83 illicit drugs, 41 precursors and 68 cutting agents. It can be used to analyse solid or powder samples and can identify drugs while they are inside clear plastic bags or containers.

Only this week a significant amount of amphetamines was found in frozen fish confiscated in a joint operation involving the Australian Federal Police, the NSW Police Force and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. Indeed, in my local area 500 grams of amphetamines were confiscated from a vehicle that had been pursued by the highway patrol. The men and women of the NSW Police Force are working in conjunction with other agencies to achieve significant results. Andrew Scipione said the large amount of drugs taken from the frozen fish gives an indication of what organised crime is all about. He praised the men and women of the NSW Police Force, as do I. This new device means that police will not even need to take the substance out of the bag to identify the drug.

Finally, I am further advised that the NSW Police Force and NSW Health have committed nearly \$500,000 to recruit additional analysts on a temporary basis to reduce the analysis backlog. I applaud the excellent cooperative and collaborative relationship between the Police Force and NSW Health, which runs the analytical laboratories. Both are committed to supporting the staff. We acknowledge that there is a backlog. But we are using the latest technology to clear it, and we have increased the budget. This backlog did not just happen in the past three years; there was a significant backlog for four or five years under the previous Government, as any coroner or police prosecutor will verify. We are working collectively with the agencies involved to reduce the backlog. In light of that, the Government will not oppose the motion.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [12.16 p.m.]: I support this important motion. The NSW Forensic Analytical and Science Service [FASS]—once called the New South Wales Division of Analytical Laboratories—has a record of excellence going back 120 years. The service was a branch of NSW Health Pathology, although it has recently been moved to the NSW Food Authority. The underfunding of the NSW Forensic Analytical and Science Service and later its transfer to either the NSW Food Authority or the private sector is yet another example of the Liberal Government saying one thing and doing another—underfunding or privatising the service that protects public safety, whether it be through drug detection or measurement of food and water quality. But, then again, this is what happens when \$3 billion is cut from the health system.

The motion refers to illicit drugs. However, the NSW Forensic Analytical and Science Service is vital to all aspects of public health. For many years this magnificent organisation has protected the health and safety of the public by ensuring accurate and timely assessments of environmental health factors such as food, water quality and safety. The loss of this service or its transfer to the private sector as part of the \$3 billion cuts will certainly damage the public good. Members may not remember that it is only 20 years since there were problems with cryptosporidium in the water, and for many years water-borne infections such as giardia were extremely common.

Those infections are much less common now, largely due to improvements in water safety driven by appropriate and timely measurement of contamination of drinking water. We used to see many cases of a condition called haemolytic uraemic syndrome in children. This was due to contamination of processed meat; we have not seen a case for many years. This devastating condition, if not fatal, often led to permanent kidney damage. During the estimates process the responses of the Minister for Health to questions about FASS were revealing. The Hon. Greg Donnelly asked:

Has the cost-benefit analysis report that was done with respect to the decision taken by the Government been placed in the public domain?

The Minister answered:

This service is one that has been purchased by the New South Wales Food Authority, so it is outside my portfolio area. What that authority has advised is that it is working with FASS as it transitions testing to other providers.

The Minister for Health is denying responsibility for one of the most important aspects of public health. It speaks volumes about what the New South Wales Government really thinks of the capacity of the New South Wales health system to deliver high-quality expertise. The Minister will not even allow NSW Health to tender for the service. This means that many years of important analysis of what we eat, drink and breathe is to be outsourced to the private sector without giving NSW Health the opportunity to contest the tender. NSW Health and the FASS have the faith of the community.

This service, which commenced as the New South Wales Division of Analytical Laboratories, has provided brilliant service for more than 100 years. These scientists have specialised expertise that is irreplaceable and not available in the private sector. NSW Health is only being refused the right to tender for one reason: Government ideology that the private sector can magically replicate at lower cost everything the public sector has done over many years. This has never happened. There is no evidence that any aspect of health care is provided more cost-effectively or more cheaply in either sector. The blind faith of this Government in the capacity of the private sector to deliver superior results at lower cost is simply ideology, not common sense. History will judge this Minister harshly for her wilful blindness in allowing this to happen. [*Time expired.*]

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [12.19 p.m.]: I serve with the member for Wallsend on the Legal Affairs Committee, which examined the issue of synthetic drugs that had become a scourge on our community. As a result of recommendations from the committee, immediate action was taken to address the scourge of synthetic drugs that were causing such pain in the Hunter and other places. It shows what this Government can do. I note that the member for Macquarie Fields spoke about health issues and was critical of the New South Wales health system. I note also that at the recent NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association conference he said the New South Wales health system is one of the best in the world—I suppose it depends on which forum one speaks at.

The New South Wales Government takes drug enforcement extremely seriously. As a 27-year veteran of the NSW Police Force it has been my privilege and honour to work with police and the analytical staff who test substances to see whether they are prohibited drugs. The Government takes this issue seriously. That is why, as the member for Tweed has said, we have implemented a number of measures to reduce the existing backlog

of drug testing and analysis. This trial started in September 2013, when there was a backlog of 2,500 jobs for analysis—or the equivalent of six months work. That backlog is now down to 700 cases, which is a pleasing result.

As the member for Tweed noted, the NSW Police Force has started using new handheld testing devices that enable police to conduct preliminary analysis of suspected drugs in the field. When we consider the vast array of prohibited and illicit substances and cutting agents available, we appreciate that this device will assist police who search people on the street, in a car or while executing a search warrant to identify what drugs they have. They will not have to wonder whether it is baking soda or something else. The laser referred to by the member for Tweed is far more advanced than anything I used during my service. It is a laser with an on-board library that can detect 83 illicit drugs, 41 precursors and 68 cutting agents. It is a big advantage for police. Officers will not need to take the substance out of the bag to determine what type of drug it is, which is important for their safety.

I note that the NSW Police Force and NSW Health have committed nearly \$500,000 to recruit additional analysts on a temporary basis to further reduce the backlog resulting from great policing. I take this opportunity to congratulate our police and the staff involved in drugs testing. I note that every major police station processes exhibits. It is not the most exciting of duties. It is sometimes like Hansard, as they carefully record the words of wisdom spoken in the Chamber. Exhibit officers must record and protect evidence, and make sure it is processed through the proper analytical laboratories and ultimately destroyed. In that regard, our justices of the peace do a great job as independent witnesses to the destruction of drugs. I am pleased to support the motion.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.22 p.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Tweed, Macquarie Fields and Campbelltown for their contribution to this discussion. I thank the Government for supporting the motion; it is important to our health and safety in New South Wales. I thank our hardworking New South Wales police officers. I must admit I nodded off during the contribution by the member for Tweed. The ministerial bureaucrats who wrote the member's speech need to spice it up a little.

Mr Geoff Provest: That is the second time you have said that to me. I listen to yours.

Ms SONIA HORNER: I listen to yours too. I like the member for Tweed. I acknowledge there is a backlog in analytical procedures, and I thank him for acknowledging that. The member for Tweed talked about obtaining best value for money. With this Government that is code for cost-cutting, and we do not need quantity over quality. Quality is what it is all about. I agree with the member for Tweed that justice should be expedient, so why are magistrates complaining about such lengthy delays? I ask the member for Tweed: How do we ensure that forensic testing is of the best standard when the Government is cutting staff?

The member for Macquarie Fields spoke about the record of excellence of the NSW Forensic Analytical and Science Service [FASS] and how it is renowned for its expertise and skilled staff. We know that. The member for Macquarie Fields pointed out that the Government was saying one thing but doing another, which is sad. He spoke of the impact of the \$3 billion cut to Health. The member noted the cost of the transfer of the water and food testing laboratories but said that it will be great for the Hunter and New South Wales community. It is something we need to keep our eye on. The member referred to a question put to the Minister for Health about a cost-benefit analysis on outsourcing, which unfortunately the Minister decided not to answer. That is important. If we are going to outsource, as the Government is wont to do, we need to undertake a cost-benefit analysis to ensure that the community is receiving the best value for money.

The member for Campbelltown noted that the Government takes drug enforcement seriously. I understand it does but that does not answer the question as to why the backlog is so great or the fact that we need to address it. The backlog exists because there are not enough skilled and expert staff employed permanently at FASS. That is why there is a backlog. Ultimately, I thank the Government for supporting this motion. I appreciate that the Government acknowledges there is a backlog that must be addressed. I ask the Government to provide additional services and resources in the future to ensure increased staffing levels for the analysis of illicit drugs seized by police. They must be processed expeditiously—not just for the next six months but into the future—for the benefit and safety of the Hunter community. I thank the Government for supporting this motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that the barbeque and garage sale to raise funds for worthwhile causes is being held in the Speaker's Garden. Your support of both those functions would be greatly appreciated.

BLUE EVANS, TENNIS CHAMPION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.28 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 14-year-old tennis player Blue Evans of Forster on his remarkable tennis achievements.
- (2) Notes that Blue, a member of the Forster Tennis Club, plays in the elite squad, weekly in the men's competition and in the adults' social tennis group.
- (3) Notes that Blue:
 - (a) was the 2013 Group Champion at the Tuncurry Club Championships;
 - (b) was a 2013 Diocese tennis representative;
 - (c) competed at the New South Wales Medibank Junior Redevelopment Series; and
 - (d) was invited to play in the Champion of Champions tournament in Grafton and Inverell as a representative of the lower North East Region.
- (4) Notes Blue was invited to compete at the Medibank New South Wales State Finals.
- (5) Congratulates the Government for funding the Community Building Partnership program which enabled the Forster Tennis Club to apply for and receive a grant of \$4,000 to assist tennis players like Blue Evans to continue to be locally trained and coached.

Blue is currently in year 8 at St Clares High School in Taree. He lives at Forster and travels to Taree to attend school. Blue loves enjoys surfing and mountain bike riding. He is a very active, friendly, funny and popular boy who enjoys the outdoor and school life. I have referred to some of Blue's achievements, but he has achieved even more since I gave notice of this motion in March. He is a member of the Forster Tennis Club Elite Squad and plays in the men's competition and in adult social tennis matches. He has competed in the Medibank Junior Development Series, and regularly travels up and down the east coast to play in tournaments. He was invited to play in the Champion of Champions competition in Grafton, representing the lower east region and the Champion of Champions competition in Inverell, representing the upper and lower east region this month. He was selected to represent the north east lower region at the 2014 Medibank Junior Development Series event and was invited to compete in the Junior State Championships at Sydney Olympic Park this month.

Blue won in his age group at the 2014 New South Wales Country Closed Silver Junior Championships and was the group champion in the Twin Towns Tennis Club Championships at Tuncurry. He was also the diocese tennis representative for Catholic schools in Newcastle in 2014 and was the overall division winner, which covers years 7, 8 and 9. Blue is obviously a very talented boy. He is very well liked in the community and is achieving great things. To achieve these things requires the support of one's family and others. Blue's family are great supporters of his tennis endeavours. His local club has coached and trained him. The Forster Tennis Club does a fantastic job; it has great facilities. It often hosts championships that attract competitors from throughout the country. Of course, the club and the community cannot achieve what they do by themselves.

The Forster Tennis Club received funding through the Community Building Partnership Program. For every dollar given to a local organisation three dollars are generated through in-kind donations, volunteer labour and other efforts. Much more than the dollar amount is generated. The Government has also assisted other groups in my electorate, including Kimbriki Tennis Club, which received funding through the Community Building Partnership Program to resurface its tennis courts and to install solar panels. Nabitac Tennis Club and Wingham Tennis Club have also received funding. This is another example of the Government supporting not only metropolitan and big regional centres but also small towns. Kimbriki has a population of only 1,000, but it has a very active tennis club, as do many small towns.

Tennis clubs are often the community and social focal point. Nabitac, which is on the highway, also has an active tennis club. Wingham Tennis Club is a grand old club. Recently I was shown the paling fencing that needs to be replaced. The timber paling fencing that is a feature of Wingham is the result of the generosity of John Machin of Machin's Sawmill. John has been a great Wingham supporter. He is a third-generation Machin.

Friday this week is the centenary of the mill's establishment, which is a fantastic accomplishment. There has been a dramatic reduction in timber mills on the coast, but Machin's is still producing timber under the stewardship of John's nephew, Ralph Blenkin.

Mr Andrew Gee: It's great quality timber.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: It certainly is. The timber industry was decimated by the Labor Government. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [12.35 p.m.]: I join the member for Myall Lakes in paying tribute to Blue Evans, a young country champion, and I thank the member for moving this motion. He is a champion for country communities. Today he spoke in this place about tennis, waterskiing and cricket. Most members would agree that he is at his best when he is hitting long hoppers back over the Victor Richardson gates bowled by members opposite. What a great champion he is for his community. The motion is about a young champion, Blue Evans of Forster, and his remarkable achievements. I echo the sentiments of the member for Myall Lakes in congratulating Blue on all that he has achieved. I also pay tribute to everyone involved in coaching and mentoring him. They have obviously played an important role in his development. I imagine that his friends and family also play a significant role in his development. Congratulations to everyone associated with Blue and to him.

We are looking forward to hearing about his great achievements in the future. It is wonderful to see such young country champions being developed and supported by the New South Wales Government. The Government has played an important role in fostering sport, including tennis and cricket, throughout country New South Wales. I refer in particular to the Mudgee District Tennis Club. The first tennis courts at the club were laid in 1889, but its tarred surface was unsuccessful and was ultimately replaced with antbed courts. The club is undergoing something of a revitalisation. Over the past two years it has refurbished the courts because they were looking a little weary and overused. They have been able to bring them back to life with the Government's help through a much-needed \$25,000 Participation and Facility Grant.

As the member for Myall Lakes knows, it did not stop there. He is nodding knowingly. The club also made an application for a Public Reserves Management Fund grant through which it received a further \$40,000. This was a wonderful achievement. The whole upgrade cost \$180,000, which includes redeveloping two standard-size tennis courts into four junior courts and one standard hard court. The smaller courts are also known as Hot Shots courts. They are approximately a quarter of the size of a standard court. Smaller rackets and low-compression balls make learning tennis easy and fun for a new generation of players.

I have been to those courts many times, including with the former Minister for Sport and Recreation and member for Miranda, who did a wonderful job—he is passionate about sport. These courts look a picture. I pay tribute to the committee of the tennis club at Mudgee. The head coach is Nathan Wilkins; the president is Andrew Kearins, who does a wonderful job; the senior vice-president is Judy Charter; the junior vice-president is Cameron Anderson, the treasurer is Lissie James; the secretary is Caron Reynolds; the publicity and records officer is Kathy Brazier; and members are Angus Macdonald, Babs Beh, Edwina Gordon, Fiona Pinder, Luke Spencer and Sara-Jane Swords. Another member of the board is Rebecca George, who has worked closely on these projects. I congratulate members of the Mudgee District Tennis Club for all their hard work. They are bringing tennis to a new generation of country Australians in the heartland of New South Wales. Tennis legend Ken Rosewall visited the club in March this year to officially open the redevelopment. It was quite an occasion for all concerned.

Country New South Wales has a strong sporting history. One of our young tennis stars is Ceejay Ah-See, who recently moved from Orange to Wyong to attend the International Tennis School in Kariong. He wants to further his tennis skills and will compete in the Auckland Junior Open, his first overseas tournament. Other young competitors in the Orange area are Megan Neville and Tommy Dews, who competed in Newcastle at the Polding athletics trials. Orange Indoor Tennis Centre coach Chris Besgrove is impressed with the development of these juniors. The Orange Ex-Services Club has put on new coaching staff in a bid to rejuvenate sport in Orange. That coaching team includes Chrissie Kjoller, Stuart Thompson, Alison Seib and Darren Gersback. I congratulate all associated with the development of tennis in the Central West, and Blue Evans.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.42 p.m.], in reply: It was good to listen to the member for Orange, a great local champion who works tirelessly for his local community. The redevelopment of the courts at the Mudgee District Tennis Club was through a \$180,000 grant secured for the club by the

member for Orange. This is another wonderful achievement for his electorate since he came to office. The Forster Tennis Club is in a good position because of people like Kay Barclay and her husband, Graham, who is a great friend of waterskiing champion Fred Williams. Graham and Kay Barclay are very involved in Forster Tennis Club and are great contributors to the club's outstanding facilities.

Peter Binstead also plays at the club. He is a builder involved in building public facilities for local organisations at no cost or for just the cost of materials. He built the Forster netball amenities, using the Community Building Partnership grant to have the office extended and other works undertaken. Peter was also involved in building the amenities and clubhouse for the Forster Tuncurry Rugby Union Club, the Dolphins. That facility is 42 metres long and 12 metres wide. It is valued at about \$700,000. Peter was the project manager-builder for that project and there was no charge for it. That was a fantastic contribution to sport and to the community.

Earlier this year the Forster Tennis Club was proud to host the great John Alexander. John Alexander was a great Davis Cup tennis player and is now a great Federal member of Parliament in the electorate of Bennelong. He is doing an outstanding job for the Liberal Party. Even though he is a Liberal we allowed him to play tennis in regional New South Wales. He is a great ambassador for tennis. The member for Orange mentioned that Ken "Muscles" Rosewall attended the opening of the Mudgee District Tennis Club. He was also a great tennis player. I commend this motion to the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): I support the member's comments on both of the tennis players.

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

Motion agreed to.

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION AGAINST BULLYING AND VIOLENCE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.47 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that Friday 21 March 2014 is the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence and congratulates the Government and the Minister for Local Government on their leadership and support.
- (2) Notes reports that one in five persons, which equates to almost 5 million Australians, are subject to cyberbullying.
- (3) Notes that the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence is an annual event held since 2011 and is an initiative that aims to raise awareness of how young people, schools, parents and communities can make a stand against bullying and violence.
- (4) Notes that further to the Day of Action, the Bully Zero Australia Foundation has established the Digital Detox program for a "Safer Nation for Every Generation".
- (5) Notes that many organisations including schools, workplaces, sporting clubs and community groups have an opportunity to participate in various activities to reinforce the message to end bullying.
- (6) Invites all New South Wales citizens to wear the Bully Zero Australia pin to show their support by taking the pledge to "take a break" from social networking for the 48 hours from 9.00 a.m. Friday 21 March to 9.00 a.m. Sunday 23 March 2014.

Some people might think it strange that in September I am speaking about a National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence that took place in March. But notice of this motion was given prior to Friday 21 March and it has taken some months for it to come before the House. Bullying is a matter of concern in our society today. I thought about whether this motion should be brought on today considering the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence has long passed. But I think it is an opportunity to speak about what we can do about bullying in the workplace, in schools and in our everyday life.

I mentioned some facts about bullying in the motion but there are other facts about bullying that people may not be aware of. Approximately one in four year 4 to year 9 Australian students—27 per cent—report being bullied every few weeks or more, often during the last term of school. Children as young as eight and 10 years of age report being bullied. It is horrendous that children so young feel bullied and are concerned about it.

Frequent school bullying was highest among year 5 students at 32 per cent and year 8 students at 29 per cent. Eighty-three per cent of students who bully others online also bully others offline. Eighty-four per cent of students who were bullied online were also bullied offline.

Peers are present as onlookers in 87 per cent of bullying interactions and play a central role in the bullying process. That means 87 per cent of the time other children are watching on and the bully, in their mind, think they look big and tough in front of their peers, and their peers are not stepping in to help the victim. I remember there was bullying when I was at school. Often when bullying or a fight was going on you would hear the chant from some part of the school, "Fight, fight, fight", and everybody would run to that area to cheer on the protagonists. There was certainly no-one stepping in to help them. That scenario continues today and it appears that it is growing at an alarming rate.

Current statistics show that hurtful teasing was the most prevalent of all bullying behaviours experienced by students, followed by hurtful lies being told about them. Cyberbullying appears to be related to age, or access to technology, with older students more likely to engage in cyberbullying than are younger students. The overwhelming majority of children and young people are not involved in violence as either victims or perpetrators. While often perceived primarily as perpetrators of violence, young people are, in fact, at greatest risk of being victims. Young people are concerned about their own personal safety, with about one quarter of young people aged 18 to 24 years feeling unsafe or very unsafe when walking alone in their local area after dark, and around one in 10 feeling unsafe in their homes at night. That there are young children in our society who do not feel safe in their own home, another shocking statistic we should all be very concerned about. Sixty-one per cent of 16 to 17 year olds accept "friend" requests from people they do not know offline.

Seventy-eight per cent of 16 to 17 year olds claim to have personal information, such as a photograph of themselves, on their social networking profile pages, compared with 48 per cent of eight to nine year olds. It has been said often how careful we all must be, particularly with young people, about what they put on their social networking sites, because once it goes on there it is there forever. More and more predators and others are trolling those social media sites looking for victims. Later on, when the young people apply for employment, employers often look back at what the person has put on their social media site. It is extremely important, not only from a safety perspective but also for their future, that young people are very careful about what photographs and other information they put online. School should be a place where children can be safe; it should be a friendly environment where they can enjoy the experience, enjoy their education and enjoy time with friends. They should not have to put up with bullying. I commend the motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.55 p.m.]: I am delighted to support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes. The motion was originally to note the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence on 21 March 2014. I note that the next National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence will be on 20 March 2015 and already a great deal of work has been undertaken, particularly on the internet, in relation to the *Bullying No Way* website that provides a mountain of information to schools and community groups to support the day. It also highlights the many corporate sponsors and community organisations that helped to sponsor the 2014 National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

The website provides a large amount of material for schools to utilise in some of the programs that they develop to deal firsthand with bullying that takes place in schools. The Department of Education and Communities, and schools, whether private, public, Catholic or run by other religious organisations, have made serious attempts to deal with bullying for a number of years and they should be commended for doing so. There is no doubt that as a community, whether it is through the Parliament, the Government or through good corporate citizenship, we can deal with this issue and what is a growing problem.

We hear so much about cyberbullying and, as the member for Myall Lakes said, it is certainly prevalent and it has claimed lives. People have suffered serious depression as a result of cyber bullying and some of those people have been very young. It is always very sad and tragic to see that people at a very young age have become victims of any bullying but particularly cyberbullying. Knowing that you can be bullied in your own home when you are on a computer is very disturbing, particularly when everybody now has access to iPads, iPhones and tablets. I think about my own children who are nine, six and four years of age; they love to jump on iPads and tablets. Parents need to be vigilant about the type of access to the internet they allow their children.

The motion mentions some of the campaigns that have been undertaken. Earlier in the year people were encouraged to wear a Bully Zero Australia pin and various events took place in workplaces. Unfortunately, from

time to time there has always been some element of bullying in the workplace. I know that many organisations, including unions, have had to deal with unfair practices in workplaces that often have led to bullying. It is important for the Government to be vigilant in that area to ensure that people in workplaces are not subject to bullying and any type of bullying practices. It is our role as parliamentarians to ensure that legislation we enact is considerate and mindful of the fact that bullying can resonate in any workplace, and there must be procedures in place and opportunities for employees to seek redress in those instances.

I note that the next National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence will be in March next year. I hope to work with some of my local schools to develop a campaign that highlights some of the serious concerns and detrimental health impacts of bullying on young people and what that may mean for those individuals later in life. I raise the issue of workplace bullying because often victims of bullying at school can end up being victims of bullying in the workplace as well. It is important that as much research as possible is undertaken to teach the perpetrators of bullying at a school level what it may mean for them later in life if they continue to bully other students. That is an important element about this day and this campaign. It is important that we stop the perpetrators of bullying and try to rehabilitate those individuals, particularly at a school level. Again, I congratulate the member for Myall Lakes on moving this motion today.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [1.01 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to debate on the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence. I draw the attention of members to the great work of 900 Canobolas Rural Technology High School students who took part in the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence. The theme was "Taking a Stand Against Bullying and Violence." The program was implemented by school welfare coordinator Gabriel Lindsay. A group of anti-bullying ambassadors were selected to promote the message throughout the school. They included Zali Petit, Rebecca Blandford, Rheiss Kasjan and Jess Whan. I congratulate Principal Chad Bliss, Deputy Principal Stuart Riles and Kate Wootten on their great work. Other teachers doing important work at Canobolas Rural Technology High School include Vince Lovecchio, who recently organised the Orange Youth Arts Festival; Robert Brown, who does great work on the Wiradjuri language; and Andrew Hetherington and Tim Bennett, who have done great work with their students.

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

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

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

Report: 2014 General Meetings

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

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 60/55

Debate resumed from 11 September 2014.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.04 p.m.]: When debating this matter on a previous occasion I was discussing the committee's concerns relating to the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill. The committee further expressed its view that any extension of the election reforms to other councils may be more appropriately handled by a subsequent bill to enable proper scrutiny by the Parliament. Ultimately, that part was removed from the bill by amendment. Lastly, the committee considered the Protection of the Environment Amendment Bill. The committee referred to Parliament matters that it considered may be oppressive official powers, in particular with respect to the ability of the Environment Protection Authority to enter a private property without a warrant and its ability to enforce an undertaking that a person entered into on the understanding that compliance was voluntary.

The committee noted that a couple of provisions will take effect retrospectively. In particular, an amendment to allow courts to make restorative justice orders or certain additional orders in respect of an offence can be made in respect of proceedings that commenced prior to the amendment taking effect. The committee also commented on some provisions that it considered may constitute an undue punishment, particularly the trebling of maximum penalties for the offence of failing to report certain contaminations, as well as provisions to allow the court to impose monetary penalties for offences additional to any other penalty imposed for the offence. Further comments on the Protection of the Environment Amendment Bill can be found in the digest. Once again, the digest is provided to members to ensure that debates taking place in Parliament are informed and engaging. A full appraisal of all recent legislation can be found in the digest. I thank the staff for their diligence and preparation of the draft digest.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.06 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Opposition on Legislation Review Digest No. 60. As always, I commend the committee staff for preparing these digests, and I commend my fellow committee members. The committee considered six bills in the digest, including the Bail Amendment Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to amend the Bail Act 2013 by requiring the provision of bail for certain serious offences to be refused unless the accused can prove why his or her detention is not justified. The committee made several comments regarding this legislation with respect to the presumption of innocence and general right to be at liberty. The committee said:

In removing a requirement that the bail authority gives regard to the presumption of innocence and the general right of liberty when making bail decisions, the Bill impacts these rights.

The committee referred these matters to Parliament for further consideration. The committee made the following remarks regarding those aspects of the bill that are retrospective:

The Committee notes that the amendments made by the Bill extend to offences committed or alleged to have been committed, or that were charged, before the commencement of the amendments. The Committee is generally concerned where provisions are drafted to have retrospective effect. This is because such provisions are contrary to the rule of law which allows people knowledge of what laws they are subject to at any given time. The Committee refers this matter to Parliament for further consideration.

The committee also considered the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014. The object of the bill introduced by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Blacktown, is to freeze the maximum fees chargeable for TAFE courses at a 2014 level, subject to indexation and inflation, and to preserve existing fee waivers, exemptions and concessions. The bill proposes the preservation of key fee exemptions, including complete exemption for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with a disability who applied in 2014. The bill also makes provision for the indexation of fees where applicable having regard to changes in the Sydney Education Group Index recorded by the Australian Statistician. The Legislation Review Committee did not comment on the bill—a noteworthy point for members opposite, who continued to object to the bill this morning.

Another bill reviewed was the Protection of the Environment Amendment Bill 2014, which seeks to increase the penalties for various breaches of the Contaminated Land Management Act to bring them into line with penalties for other environmental offences. The bill proposes to increase the penalties for offences in the Contaminated Land Management Act and to amend the Contaminated Land Management Act and the Radiation Control Act to allow higher penalties for repeat offenders, as in other environmental protection legislation. Other amendments in the bill include enabling the Environment Protection Authority to require GPS systems to be fitted on vehicles of possible illegal dumpers; the reporting of toxic odours; and a legislative requirement for industry to minimise fugitive air emissions. Lastly, the Legislation Review Committee reviewed the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014, which was sadly passed in this House late last night. The committee made the following two noteworthy comments:

The Committee is concerned that in enabling corporations, rate-paying lessees and occupiers of rateable land to nominate two people to be enrolled as electors, these electors may be granted a disproportionate influence on the election of councillors and mayor when compared to the voting rights of residential voters. The Committee refers this matter to Parliament for its further consideration.

Sadly, that comment was ignored by the Government last night when it passed this legislation.

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

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 61/55****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.10 p.m.]: I thank members for giving me an opportunity to update the House on the comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in its recent digest, which was tabled on 16 September—the sixty-first digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. Seven bills were introduced in the sitting week commencing 9 September and the Committee made comments on five, which I will deal with briefly.

On the Animal Welfare (Population Control Programs) Bill 2014 the committee noted that the regulation-making power of the bill enables participants in a sponsored animal control program to be exempt from the application of a specified requirement or prohibition under any Act. In this respect, the committee noted that the bill will enable the subordinate legislation of one Act to take precedence over the primary legislation of a second Act. The committee recognised the potential confusion, given the possible lack of clarity, and determined that the provision may be an inappropriately delegated legislative power.

With respect to the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Amendment Bill 2014, the committee noted that there was a substantial increase to the maximum penalty applicable for a breach of a supervision order, from the current maximum penalty of two years imprisonment to five years. The committee considered that this may be deemed an excessive punishment, disproportionate to the offence committed. The committee also commented on a new division that would enable the Supreme Court to grant emergency detention orders in relation to an offender who is the subject of an extended supervision order or an interim supervision order. This division also provides that an emergency detention order could be provided *ex parte*, that is, in the absence of the offender concerned.

The committee noted that the provision of such orders in the absence of the individual trespass on the individual's right to a fair trial and general right to liberty. Although it recognised the existence of certain safeguards, the committee referred this matter to Parliament for its further consideration. A further provision of the bill would enable agencies to share information in relation to offenders and any other information that may be prescribed by the regulations, without the consent of the person concerned. On this matter, the committee expressed its concern about possible impacts on privacy. Finally, the amendments proposed by this bill will relate to offences committed before the date of commencement. The committee noted that the bill introduces measures that impact on the rights and liberties of individuals, including punishment, *ex parte* emergency detention orders and privacy-related issues.

The committee considered that the application of this bill retrospectively may further impact on individual rights and liberties, and refers this matter to Parliament for its further consideration. I turn now to the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, the purpose of which is to make miscellaneous amendments to criminal legislation as part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program. The committee noted the retrospective authorisation of certain forensic procedures carried out by a police officer with appropriate training, and the retrospective reclassification of indictable offences as summary offences. Given that the former corrects a technical oversight and the latter lowers the level of criminality attached to a certain offence, the committee did not find the retrospective application of matters a concern in those circumstances.

The committee also expressed its concern with respect to potential restraints on access to justice in proposed changes to the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act—in particular, a provision that will prevent the disclosure of certain communications made between a detained person and the detained person's lawyer. A person who is detained under a preventative detention order is entitled to consult a lawyer, but only about certain matters relating to that order. The communication that is permitted is protected information. Given these restraints on access to legal advice, the committee referred this matter to Parliament. The committee also made minor comments with respect to the extension of time afforded to commencing certain legal proceedings, and the onus of proof in another proceeding.

In relation to the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, proposed changes include allowing for the transfer of a member of staff without a request or the consent of the member of staff concerned, which includes

providing that a member of staff be transferred to any workplace location in the State. The committee noted that despite possible impacts on employment rights, these changes merely restore arrangements that had previously been in place, and made no further comment.

Lastly, in relation to the Summary Offences (Full-face Coverings Prohibition) Bill 2014, the committee noted that the bill makes it an offence with a maximum penalty of a \$550 fine for a person, without reasonable excuse, to wear a face covering while in a public place, and that a person's religious or cultural belief does not constitute a reasonable excuse for the purposes of the proposed offence. As such, the bill may impact on the right to freedom of expression, and freedom of religion and cultural practice. The committee referred the matter to Parliament for consideration.

The committee also noted that in proceedings for the proposed offence of wearing a face covering while in a public place, the onus of providing a reasonable excuse lies with the defendant. By reversing the onus of proof that traditionally requires the prosecution to prove all elements of an offence, the bill may impact on the presumption of innocence. However, once the prosecution has proven elements of the offence it is reasonable for the defendant to provide a reasonable excuse. Therefore, the committee made no further comment on this point. The digest is prepared for members as an authoritative resource to rely on during parliamentary debates. Each bill report provides a useful summary of the bill's primary objectives. I thank members of the committee and also the staff for preparing the draft digest and note that they had to do so within a very short time frame between sitting weeks.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.16 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I speak in debate on the report of the Legislation Review Committee—Legislation Review Digest No. 61 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. As the member for Myall Lakes stated, the committee reviewed seven bills and, as always, I commend the chair, the member for Myall Lakes; the member for Swansea; the member for Rockdale; the member for Parramatta; our colleagues in the Legislative Council, Mr David Shoebridge, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps and the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane; and the committee staff. As the member for Myall Lakes said, it was a busy two weeks of sitting and no doubt it was difficult to put this digest together, but the committee staff did a great job. The committee considered the Summary Offences Amendment (Full-face Coverings Prohibition) Bill 2014 to which the member for Myall Lakes referred. The bill will amend the Summary Offences Act to make it a criminal offence to wear a face covering while in a public place. The committee made several comments regarding this legislation, one of which is as follows:

The bill makes it an offence to wear a face covering in a public place without reasonable excuse, and provides that a person's religious or cultural belief does not constitute a reasonable excuse. The bill may impact on the right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion and cultural practice. The Committee refers the matter to Parliament for consideration.

I argue strongly that it impacts on an individual's right to freedom of expression and freedom of religious and cultural practice. The committee also made the following remarks regarding the impact of the bill on the onus of proof:

The Committee notes that schedule 1of the bill also provides that in proceedings for the proposed offence of wearing a face covering while in a public place, the onus of proving reasonable excuse lies on the defendant. By reversing the onus of proof that traditionally requires the prosecution to prove all elements of an offence, the bill may impact on the presumption of innocence.

This bill is intentionally and unfairly aimed at religious face coverings worn by members of the Islamic community so members should not be surprised by the comments in the committee's report. The committee also considered the Animal Control Bill 2014 which has as its object to facilitate programs for the control of the population of stray, abandoned or wild cats or other non-native animals by providing participants with immunity from civil liability and exemptions from licensing and other requirements. The committee made the following remarks with respect to the inappropriate delegation of legislative powers:

The Committee notes that the bill will enable the subordinate legislation of one Act to take precedence over the primary legislation of a second Act. The Committee recognises the potential confusion given the possible lack of clarity and that the provision may be an inappropriately delegated legislative power.

The committee also considered the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Amendment Bill 2014. The bill amends the scheme for the supervision and detention of high-risk sex offenders and high-risk violent offenders. The bill will allow the Supreme Court to make ex parte emergency orders where altered circumstances result in the provision of inadequate supervision to existing orders. The bill will also expand the non-exhaustive list of conditions that may be imposed on an extended supervision order and will increase penalties for the failure to comply with orders. Furthermore, the bill will establish a High Risk Offenders Assessment Committee and will require

involved agencies to cooperate with and provide assistance to the assessment committee. The other bills reviewed by the committee this week were: the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 and the State Revenue Legislation Amendment (Electronic Transactions) Bill 2014. I commend the digest to the House.

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

Report noted.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON LOOSE FILL ASBESTOS INSULATION

Establishment

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

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

- (1) That a joint select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on loose fill asbestos insulation, also referred to as "Mr Fluffy" insulation, in homes in New South Wales, and in particular:
 - (a) the number and location of homes affected by loose fill asbestos insulation;
 - (b) the actions taken by governments to deal with loose fill asbestos insulation in other jurisdictions;
 - (c) the role of State and local governments to advise and assist home owners and occupiers to reduce the risks posed by loose fill asbestos insulation;
 - (d) the requirements for property owners to notify potential buyers, renters, tradespeople and emergency service officers regarding the presence of loose fill asbestos insulation in their property; and
 - (e) any other related matter.
- (2) That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders of either House, the committee consist of seven members comprising:
 - (a) five members of the Legislative Council, of whom:
 - (i) one must be a Government member, being Mr Niall Blair;
 - (ii) two must be Opposition members, being Mr Mick Veitch and Mr Steve Whan;
 - (iii) two must be crossbench members, being Dr John Kaye and Rev Mr Fred Nile; and
 - (b) two Government members of the Legislative Assembly.
- (3) That Revd Mr Nile be Chair of the committee.
- (4) That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders, at any meeting of the committee, any four members of the committee will constitute a quorum.
- (5) That a committee member who is unable to attend a deliberative meeting in person may participate by electronic communication and may move any motion and be counted for the purpose of any quorum or division, provided that:
 - (a) the Chair is present in the meeting room;
 - (b) all members are able to speak and hear each other at all times; and
 - (c) members may not participate by electronic communication in a meeting to consider a draft report.
- (6) That the committee report by 16 February 2015.
- (7) That this House requests the Legislative Assembly to agree to a similar resolution and name the time and place for the first meeting.

Legislative Council
18 September 2014

TREVOR KHAN
Deputy President

Consideration of message set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

[Acting-Speaking (Ms Noreen Hay) left the chair at 1.23 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Order! Welcome to all of our guests in the gallery. In particular, I extend a special welcome to members of the 2014 Taiwan International Youth Ambassador's delegation, guests of the Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State.

I make a special mention of Mr Tim James, chief of staff to the Minister for Resources and Energy and Special Minister of State. Mr James is leaving the Government after three and a half years to take up the role of chief executive officer of Medicines Australia. Welcome to question time and congratulations.

I welcome to the gallery Councillor Ben Shields, Annette Priest, Christine Castlehouse and Roz Burns, guests of the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. I welcome to question time this afternoon 46 students and their teachers from Stanford University as part of a Queensland students program.

I welcome to the gallery 14 members of the Red Cross Shoalhaven Heads branch, guests of the member for Kiama. I welcome Tony Pun, Maggi Wu, Jackie Seow and Sally Chu from the Australian Chinese Community Association, guests of the member for Oatley. Finally, I welcome Kate Fenwick from Orange, guest of the member for Wollondilly.

PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE DAME MARIE BASHIR, AD, CVO

The SPEAKER: Order! As members are aware, on Wednesday 1 October 2014 Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Dame Marie Bashir, AD, CVO, completes her term as Governor of New South Wales after 13½ years of service. I invite all members and staff who may be at Parliament House on that day to gather on the veranda shortly after 3.00 p.m. to farewell Governor Bashir and Sir Nicholas who will be travelling in a motorcade up Macquarie Street. The motorcade will depart Government House at 3.00 p.m.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I advise members that the Minister for Finance and Services will answer questions in the absence of the Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.20 p.m.]

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Last week the Minister updated her pecuniary interests and told the House she received a single free helicopter flight in 2010. Today it has been reported a government staffer has told the Premier's office that the Minister also accepted a helicopter flight from Buildev in 2007 or 2008. Will the Minister confirm this is correct and that she misled the House and failed to declare a second free joy flight?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am extremely pleased to make it clear. As I said to the journalist in question I took a single unsolicited one-way flight on a helicopter when I was in opposition.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition asked the question; Opposition members should listen to the answer.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: You were correct I did not say in my disclosure that it was "in 2010", I said "about 2010" and I have corrected the record further to say, "or it could have been even earlier." It was a single flight, unsolicited.

Mr John Robertson: From whom?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I do not recall, as I have told you many times.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Members opposite should be asking about health. This is nonsense, it is going nowhere and the Opposition knows it. Members opposite should be worried about the health of the people of New South Wales.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has been relevant throughout her answer.

Mr John Robertson: The Minister seems to remember every detail except who paid for the flight.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: That is the nonsense we have to put up with from someone who was offered a \$3 million bribe and did not report it. Members opposite do not care about anyone's health because they never ask any questions about health. Yesterday I took the opportunity to talk about the investment that this Government is making in our hospitals and the extra doctors, nurses and paramedics we are employing. I will take this opportunity to tell the House about something that is worth knowing. Professor Michelle Haber, who won the Outstanding Cancer Researcher of the Year Award, is an amazing woman who has done internationally recognised work on improving treatments for children diagnosed with—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the member's point of order relate to Standing Order 129 and relevance? The Minister has answered the question and she continues to be relevant.

Dr Andrew McDonald: It was about helicopters.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has answered the question. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the first time. Question time will not be the same today as it was yesterday.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I do not believe it. The member for Macquarie Fields wants to be the Minister for Health, but instead of asking about health he is asking about helicopters. I have answered the question about helicopters. There is nothing in it; there was nothing untoward about accepting a ride in a helicopter. What is absolutely disgusting is that members opposite do not listen to my answers and they are not in the slightest bit interested in health issues or our wonderful medical researchers. Michelle Haber is just one of many such people and her work is special because it helps children with cancers such as leukaemia, which a few years ago was a death sentence. Now because of the work done by people like her we have cures. About 80 per cent of children who suffer with leukaemia are cured. Dr McDonald is a paediatrician, so one would think he would be interested in this. He has not asked a single question about it since March.

Many other wonderful researchers were also honoured, including Professor Georgina Long from the Melanoma Institute, which is in my electorate. She has done amazing work over the past couple of years looking at a gene mutation that is strongly associated with the poor survival rate of people with melanoma. Melanoma kills more people under the age of 26 than any other cancer. It is an Australian cancer because of our exposure to the sun. Professor Long developed an understanding of a particular mutation in a gene that has led to improved cancer outcomes. We should all be celebrating that achievement. I am pleased to have the unexpected opportunity to tell the House about her wonderful work.

A good Opposition would ask questions about these things. Members opposite should want to know what advances are being made to improve the health of people not only in this State but across the world. The work of these researchers assists people throughout the world. They are now internationally recognised and their work is being celebrated overseas. Many of them are approached by headhunters because they are doing so well. New South Wales is back on the front foot with research not only into cancer but also across the medical field because of this Government's major investments in research and the marvellous work people are doing throughout the health system.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: That is no thanks at all to members opposite.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn members that, unlike yesterday, I will not tolerate interjections this afternoon. Members will be ejected from the Chamber after three calls to order, and not only for an hour or two. If they are removed from the Chamber today they will not return until the next sitting day.

Mr Ron Hoenig: That means we won't have to come here tomorrow.

The SPEAKER: Order! Yes, that is what it means. The member for Heffron can take leave for three weeks if he wishes. The behaviour of members in this Chamber yesterday was unacceptable and it will not be tolerated today. I remind members that yesterday numerous members from both sides of the Chamber were on three calls to order and that one Government member was ejected from the Chamber.

COUNTERTERRORISM MEASURES

Mr MARK COURE: I address my question to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the efforts of the NSW Police Force in the terrorism raids carried out this morning?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question and for his interest in serving his community and in having a safe community. We all want safe communities across this great State. Obviously we want to respond to what happened this morning. A major operation was conducted by authorities across the city this morning. It was the largest of its kind and involved more than 800 officers in the early hours. A simple and clear message comes out of that: If people want to bring overseas conflicts here and threaten our safety, the authorities will hunt them down. We must support these actions and our authorities did an amazing job this morning in ensuring that our community is safe. Many people think they can operate in dark corners and that nobody is watching their activities, conversations, thoughts and processes. We have a message for them: they are being watched and the authorities have them in their sights. They might think they are getting away with it, but as we shine a light on these activities we will do everything possible to ensure that the community is safe.

The police commissioner this morning announced the NSW Police Force is enacting Operation Hammerhead. It will be a statewide operation focusing on high-visibility policing with an increased presence in public places and public transport hubs. Police will be on the streets wearing high-visibility clothing and so will be easy to identify. No-one should be alarmed by their presence but rather acknowledge the work they are doing. At times this police operation might require the public to be patient so we ask the community to be patient. Ultimately we want everyone to continue their day-to-day lives. The authorities are watching and acting. We should feel we are free to go about our lives in safety while being conscious of the work the police are doing.

I thank the hardworking NSW Police Force, the Australian Federal Police and the intelligence agencies for doing an amazing job. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services and I have worked alongside these agencies in the past few days and we have nothing but admiration for them. They show diligence and professionalism in what they are doing. They are keeping the community safe by ensuring that these horrific plans did not come to fruition, and for that we are grateful. Today's operation reflects the reality of the threat we face and also the strength and capability of the counterterrorism agencies, both State and Federal.

I want to reinforce the police commissioner's comments highlighting the exemplary efforts of those involved in this operation to protect all members of our community. The operation demonstrates the strong, well-developed and coordinated national counterterrorism arrangements we have in place for the protection of our community. These arrangements continue to work and protect the people of New South Wales and Australia. I thank the many community leaders who have been working with authorities to ensure the community will be safe because the authorities will have all the intelligence they need to ensure that is true. This certainly is not a time for panic; it is a time for calm. Be alert but also be assured—those are the two messages the community should heed. Everything possible is being done to ensure there are no breaches of the peace.

Today's events show that we need to be vigilant. We call on everyone in the community to play their part. If someone sees anything suspicious or out of the ordinary that they think might warrant investigation, we urge them to call the National Security Hotline or CrimeStoppers. If those numbers are not available they can call triple-0 because we want to be sure that any activity that warrants investigation is investigated. I ask the people of New South Wales to show their appreciation for the actions the authorities are taking. They are doing

everything possible to protect us. Often we do not do enough to thank them, but today we should thank them for the work they do, the work they have done and the work they will do. Together they are doing everything they can to ensure we are safe. We should not take that for granted but rather we should thank them for their efforts.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. I refer to the Minister's previous answer. How does the Minister categorically remember it was a single, unsolicited, one-way helicopter flight and yet have absolutely no recollection of who paid for it, who organised it, what year it was and why she was in Newcastle in the first place?

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I have answered this question. Those opposite are on a hiding to nothing, but this gives me a good opportunity to talk about some other things we have been doing in Health. Yesterday I talked about hospital redevelopments and today I will give more detail of the new renal services in Monaro. I was with the member for Monaro for the opening in Cooma.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order on relevance: Monaro is a long way from Newcastle.

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the distance from Monaro to Newcastle a point of order? There is no point of order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Those opposite are talking nonsense. We should provide answers to questions on serious matters of state, such as health services, education, roads, transport or the economy. All these things are being handled very well by members on this side of the Chamber. Those opposite come up with nothing worth considering. Although I have answered this question, those opposite say I have not. I am now going to provide additional information about some marvellous services we have opened in Monaro. I worked for these services when I was in opposition. I was joined in this effort by the member for Monaro when he was a candidate raising awareness of the need for a renal service in his electorate. His predecessor did absolutely nothing. The people at the opening were very pleased—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order on relevance: If the Minister refuses to answer the question she should sit down. This is as far away from helicopters as you can get.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has answered the question. There is no point of order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Those opposite would like me to sit down, but if they ask stupid questions I will make the most of the opportunity to tell this Parliament about something worth knowing. The Monaro community has worked very hard to get a renal dialysis service. At the opening there were people in wheelchairs and people who had been sent in ambulances—

Mr John Barilaro: Rosie.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Rosie and Barbara were there. For years many of them had been sent by ambulance, at great cost, three times a week from Cooma to Canberra for renal dialysis.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The irony was that one of the nurses treating them in Canberra lived in Cooma. They were all travelling to Canberra for this treatment. It was nonsense.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order on relevance: The Minister needs to be reminded this is question time and therefore answers must be provided.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Minister knows that this is question time. There is no point of order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I could go on but I will leave the remaining time for serious questions to be asked instead of this nonsense from the Opposition.

CHINA STRATEGY

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Minister for Tourism and Local Events, Minister for Small Business, and Minister for the North Coast. How is the Government strengthening ties with China?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I say "xie xie ni" to the member for Ku-ring-gai for a very good question. The member for Ku-ring-gai has worked very hard for the State of New South Wales to strengthen its wonderful relationship with China, a strong and growing economic and cultural relationship. Not only is China our largest trading partner but it is our most valuable tourism market, our greatest source of international students and an increasingly important source of investment into our great State. This relationship cannot be understated and is one this Government, through its international engagement and its recently released China strategy, is determined to strengthen. Earlier this month, prior to the Premier's first trade mission to China as Premier, he launched the New South Wales Government's China strategy.

The key to the strategy is both the target of doubling the value of Chinese tourism to New South Wales by 2020 and making Sydney an offshore trading hub for the Chinese currency renminbi. China recently surpassed New Zealand as New South Wales' number one source of inbound international tourists. Last year more than 400,000 Chinese tourists visited New South Wales—a growth rate of more than 15 per cent over the previous year. It is a spectacular result for Chinese tourism and the spend it brings to our great State. With this Government's strong plans—including Destination NSW offices in China in places like Chengdu, Shanghai and Hong Kong, and Trade and Investment offices in Guangzhou and Shanghai—we think that growth will continue each year.

China is New South Wales' largest international trading partner, with two-way trade between New South Wales and China valued last year at approximately \$30 billion per annum, and it is growing at an annual rate of between 10 per cent and 15 per cent. Over the past five years the growth in two-way trade has been an amazing 48 per cent. Importantly, that trade is evolving from the traditional Australian resources and Chinese manufactures into more sophisticated sectors in which New South Wales is particularly well placed, including professional services such as finance, health, education, research and agribusiness. We are also seeing an increased interest in investment into New South Wales from China across many sectors. A recent example was the Greenland Centre, which is currently under construction on the corner of Pitt and Bathurst streets. That is a \$500 million investment in the New South Wales economy, bringing thousands of jobs.

It is well established that finance follows trade, which is why over the past three years the Premier and I have lobbied strongly for Sydney to become an offshore trading hub for the renminbi. If we have a more direct form of trade without transaction fees and taking time with those transactions we will see an increased rate of trade between the two economies. We have pursued this through forums, including the annual Sydney-Shanghai Finance Symposium. Sydney is Australia's financial hub, being the location of 60 out of 64 foreign banks in Australia, including the five largest Chinese commercial banks as well as the People's Bank of China and China Union Pay. We intend to grow these economic ties and we are ready to take advantage of a future free trade agreement between Australia and China.

Our relationship with China is strong and it is getting stronger by the day. This is no better illustrated than by the sister-state relationship between China's largest economic province, Guangdong, and Australia's largest economy, New South Wales. It was the first sister-state relationship between Australia and China. This year marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of this fruitful relationship. To mark the occasion, this evening His Excellency Mr Zhu Xiaodan, the Governor of Guangdong, will arrive in Sydney. His visit shows the esteem in which the Guangdong Provincial Government holds its relationship with New South Wales. The importance is borne out by the economic data.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Again, xie xie ni to the member for Ku-ring-gai. Guangdong is one province in China among the world's 15 largest economies, with a gross domestic product of more than \$AU1 trillion. In 2013 two-way trade between Australia and Guangdong was worth \$US14.4 billion.

Guangdong accounted for about 11 per cent of Australia's total merchandise trade with China. While in Sydney, Mr Zhu will meet with Government leaders and attend the Joint Economic Meeting here tomorrow, when we hope to finalise a joint economic statement.

The meeting will focus on innovation and technology, industries in which both New South Wales and Guangdong have strengths and complementarity. Mr Zhu will also address this Parliament, becoming the first Chinese Governor to do so. As China now powers towards becoming the world's largest economy, our sister-state relationship with its largest province, Guangdong, is a strong foundation from which both economies will prosper into the future. I look forward to the visit of the Governor and his accompanying delegation, and I look forward to continuing to build upon our strong sister-state relationship.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier show some leadership and demand that his health Minister answer the most rudimentary of questions, such as: Who paid for her helicopter transport benefit? Who organised it? Who was on the helicopter with her? What was the full extent of her contact with Buildev, including any benefits that Buildev has received from the Health portfolio in the past 3½ years?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Minister has answered these questions. Those on the other side can only dream of a health Minister of the quality we have.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Opposition does not like the incredible job the health Minister is doing, from one end of the State to the other. The Minister has spoken in the House about what is going on in her portfolio and we are incredibly proud of the work she has done, whether it is the performance indicators that are going to the moon—they are improving day after day—or the record capital works program she has going across this great State. The Opposition should be thanking her for the work she is doing.

It does not surprise me that the Opposition is not asking questions about policy because, let us face it, policy is not its strength. We heard yesterday about the Opposition's new policy for the Hunter. Members opposite said, "We are against the lease of the Port of Newcastle but let's spend the money"—because that is what they do; they have no principles. First, they said they were going to give all the proceeds of the lease back to the city of Newcastle and then they said they were going to give half of it back. But what they did not tell the people of Sydney is that they now have a problem because they have committed funds to other projects. It does not take too much to work out how the shadow Cabinet works—it does not meet.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Oatley will come to order. The Premier does not need his assistance.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Just a tip for the Opposition: When you make a promise you have got to have funds to go with it. That is the only advice I will give members opposite.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Perhaps the Premier might use some of his wit and wisdom to direct the health Minister to answer a little question—just one.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I was considering ruling the member's question out of order, but I allowed it. The Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: If the Opposition had read the budget papers the shadow Treasurer would have told the shadow Cabinet, "By the way, if you are going to the Restart Fund, it is fully allocated; that is what it says in the budget—it is all assigned." The Leader of the Opposition should then be asked: What projects are going? Will a Labor government withdraw the WestConnex project because there is money going there? Will a Labor government withdraw the NorthConnex project? Will a Labor government withdraw the Western Sydney roads around the new airport?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. I call the member to Oatley to order for the first time. What is the member's point of order?

Dr Andrew McDonald: I refer to Standing Order 129. The question was about the health Minister, not roads.

The SPEAKER: Order! I know what the question was about. The Premier remains relevant to the question. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What has the Opposition got against the Parramatta light rail? It is clear that the Opposition does not support it. Then it starts to get very interesting. The Pacific Highway—will a Labor government take money from that? Labor has got form in that area, as we know: The former Labor Government was happy to cut the funding and slow down the upgrades—a very different approach from this side of the House.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Will a Labor government take funding from the Princes Highway? The Opposition should answer those sorts of questions.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Water Security for Regions? The Opposition seems to be against the Queanbeyan bypass.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Monaro will come to order. He is not assisting the Premier.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: If the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk policy—and members opposite should be talking policy—in the lead-up to the election and if he wants to make commitments, he needs to explain where they are funded. That is one thing the Coalition has done incredibly well; we understand that. Any project that is announced needs funding to go with it. We have delivered that, particularly in the Health portfolio. The Minister for Health has done an outstanding job of delivering infrastructure from one part of the State to another. She is doing a fantastic job, supported by the community and supported strongly by the Government.

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

NSW POLICE FORCE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. How is the Government delivering on its policing commitments across New South Wales to help keep people safe?

Mr STUART AYRES: I thank the member for Cronulla for his timely question. We are fortunate to have an incredibly effective police force in New South Wales. Only this morning we saw evidence of these qualities at what is, without doubt, a trying time for the people of New South Wales. Today we saw the largest joint counterterrorism operation in the nation's history. This is a reminder that our police are working tirelessly—often behind the scenes—along with other State and Federal agencies, to ensure that the safety of our people is always paramount. Today's operation follows the Joint Counter Terrorism Team investigation of a group of people located in various places throughout Australia who are alleged to have the intention to carry out random attacks in our community.

Australia has always been a free society, and it remains a free society. Let me send this clear message to those who intend to attack the Australian way of life: We are not afraid of you. We do not fear you. We will not change the way we live and we will not forgo our freedoms. This morning's terrorism raids demonstrate that no matter where you hide, what evil you want to peddle or what your intent is, if you want to hurt us we will hunt you down. Today's raids are also backed up by a new operation, Operation Hammerhead, which will focus on transport hubs, places where people gather in large numbers, iconic locations and critical infrastructure. Police will continue to work with the wealth of resources and expertise that we have at hand to prevent any attacks. We will leave no stone unturned in order to protect our way of life.

This morning's actions have brought to the country's attention the work of the NSW Police Force. It is important to remember that it is only one example of the excellent work police do day to day, keeping our

families, our homes and our streets safe and secure. The recent crime statistics released by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research show these figures clearly. The report shows that the figures for 17 major crime categories either fell or remained stable in the two years to June 2014. The categories that have fallen include robbery without a weapon, down 18.7 per cent; break and enter a dwelling, down 10.5 per cent; break and enter non-dwelling, down 14.6 per cent; steal from a motor vehicle, down 5.2 per cent; motor vehicle theft, down 11.5 per cent; steal from a person, down 14.7 per cent; and malicious damage, down 11.6 per cent. This is the first time in the bureau's history that there has been no increase in a major crime category over its 25 years of reporting across these 17 major categories.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will come to order. He will resume his seat. The member for Auburn will come to order.

Mr STUART AYRES: It is an outstanding and unprecedented result.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: I thank and congratulate the police commissioner and the men and women of the NSW Police Force, whose work is incredibly hard and who work incredibly hard every day to prevent and investigate crime across our State. These results are testament to the impressive work they do. The New South Wales Government made a commitment to boost the authorised strength of the NSW Police Force by 859 police officers to reach a record strength of 16,665. I can report to the House that we are well on track to achieve that. Some 590 of these additional positions have been brought online since December 2011. Our police numbers are growing and will continue to grow to reach record highs.

The police are also doing a fantastic job of fighting gun crime, taking thousands of guns off our streets in the past financial year, including hundreds of handguns—the firearms that are most risky to our community. Between them, Strike Force Raptor and Operation Talon have arrested more than 3,000 people and seized more than 800 firearms. The people of New South Wales can be assured that their safety is a key priority for this Government. We will ensure that people feel safe in their homes and on the streets. I am incredibly proud to be the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and I know members are incredibly proud of the work that the NSW Police Force does to protect our community.

MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AND MINISTER FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My question is directed to the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Macquarie Fields will be heard in silence.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The Minister for Health has received undeclared helicopter flights from prohibited donor and property developer Buldev. Will the Premier conduct an independent review into three contracts worth more than \$500,000 awarded to Buldev by the Department of Health?

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: The member is making assertions in his question, which he is not entitled to do.

The SPEAKER: Order! Earlier I warned the member for Maroubra that I was considering ruling his question out of order. I will allow the question of the member for Macquarie Fields as I am sure the Premier can handle it.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I can handle it. As the Minister for Education said, the question contains allegations that are completely denied. The health Minister has made her comments on this matter. If the member for Macquarie Fields is talking about tenders in the health department, he knows that they were done at arm's length as part of the usual business of government. He can try to smear the Minister, but those are the facts. Is it any wonder the Leader of the Opposition is in such trouble if these are the games that members opposite play? They are not interested in talking about policy across the State. It is no wonder members on the Opposition front bench are embarrassed by what the Leader of the Opposition is doing.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Government believes strongly that members opposite need some policy work. I was surprised by a document that was brought to my attention recently.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I do not often have a lot in common with the left of the Labor Party but it looks like there might be one thing. A document put together by Community Labor has come to my attention. It contains pictures of the deputy leader and Luke Foley. It is magnificent stuff.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: This is a protection racket.

The SPEAKER: Order! What is a protection racket?

Dr Andrew McDonald: The protection racket is allowing the Premier, under Standing Order 129, not to answer the question, which was about health contracts and Buildev.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question from the member for Macquarie Fields should have been ruled out of order as it contained imputations and inferences. He is lucky that I allowed it. He should check the standing orders. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Leader of the Opposition told the member for Macquarie Fields to interrupt because they do not want to hear this. I am sure Community Labor's document can be found on the web. Community Labor produced a report card on the Labor Party. There are green boxes that state "on track" and there are items that need work.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: There is only one report card, and they are sitting on the crossbench.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. The member will resume her seat. I advise members against coming to the microphone without any pretence of taking a point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Talking about trips, we all remember the member's trip to the Cannes Film Festival.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: She was representing the State at the Cannes Film Festival, and I thank her for that. The report card says—

Dr Andrew McDonald: It's "Cannes" not "Cairns".

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Cannes, sorry—I haven't been there. He knows how to pronounce it—red carpet, champagne and knows the name. Returning to the reform report card, it will surprise members to learn that they need to strengthen Labor's relationship with the unions. I thought it was already there.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was about the relationship with—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have not yet called the member for Macquarie Fields. I am thinking about it. I call the member for Macquarie Fields.

Dr Andrew McDonald: The question was about the health Minister's relationship with Buildev, not about the relationship with the unions.

The SPEAKER: Order! Was it?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Yes, the relationship with Buildev.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think there is some relevance in the Premier's answer.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I think all of us were surprised. We thought that relationship was pretty strong but they want it to be stronger; they want more influence. What really comes to mind when we look at their policy effort—their three-point plan to fix up the State? What was it? I cannot remember: a Higher School Certificate advice line, a jobs commissioner—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. At least Jaymes Diaz could not remember six; you can't remember three.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not even remotely close to a point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is surprising that the report card of Labor Left said, "Labor's policy development needs work". Finally—it is about time; it has been centuries—we have something sensible out of Labor's Left. We are proud of the work we are doing. Those opposite need to work on their policies because that is what a responsible Opposition should be doing.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mrs ROZA SAGE: My question is addressed to the very competent Minister for Transport. How is the Government delivering improved public transport services to the people of New South Wales?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I note the outstanding work that the member for Blue Mountains is doing in her community. Today I am pleased to update the House that it is official: New South Wales has fallen in love with the Opal card. The latest figures show that 880,000 Opal cards have now been issued to public transport customers across Sydney, Western Sydney, the Hunter, South Coast and Blue Mountains. The Opposition will even be pleased to know that thousands of customers are tapping on with Opal in their communities, whether it is in Blacktown, Canterbury, Wollongong or even on buses in Maroubra. Customers are speaking with their cards. It should not come as any surprise that hundreds of thousands of customers are switching to Opal—as well as cheaper fares there are millions of free trips on the Opal system.

Thanks to Labor's incompetence, the people of New South Wales had to wait for far too long. Those opposite did nothing for 16 years. What a disgrace. They should be embarrassed to utter the words "electronic ticketing", which they announced, cancelled and promised. They wasted \$100 million on the T-card project. So it was very interesting recently when the Leader of the Opposition said, "Everyone wants to see the successful rollout of the Opal card". Yes, we know that but, of course, people in New South Wales had to wait for far too long. Recently I attended a national transport summit at which all States were represented. The other States told us when their electronic systems were introduced. We were embarrassed—because of Labor's incompetence over 16 long years.

Government members: Sixteen years!

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will go through the records of other jurisdictions. Perth introduced SmartRider in 2007, Brisbane had Go Card in 2008, Melbourne had the myki in 2009, Adelaide had the Metrocard in 2012, Canberra had the MyWay in 2011 and even Hobart had the Greencard in 2009. If nothing else, the Opal card demonstrates what can be done when those on this side of the House are in government. It also demonstrates that when Labor is in charge our State gets left behind, and it certainly got left behind in relation to public transport.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know those opposite are embarrassed about their record.

Ms Sonia Horner: Point of order: It is relevance, under Standing Order 129. Why do people have to travel more than 100 kilometres to get an Opal card in the upper Hunter?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wallsend used taking a point of order as an opportunity to argue, which is most unlike her. She knows that was not a point of order. The Minister has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The interjection demonstrates Labor's embarrassment about this issue. It is not just places like Hong Kong, Paris and London that have had electronic ticketing for so long. Because of

Labor's incompetence, our State was left behind the rest of the world. Even Mendoza in Argentina had smart card ticketing in 2006, Panama City had it 2012, Tehran had it 2002, Santiago had it 2007—and even the New Zealanders had it before we did. But those long years of embarrassment are over.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will come to order. I cannot hear the Minister. I will wait until the ridiculous comments cease. I call the member for Fairfield to order for the first time.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: Thankfully, the Liberal-Nationals Government has made sure it has delivered the Opal system to 880,000 customers and that all the trains and ferries are online. I can now confirm we have more than 3,000 buses online as well. We said we would complete all 5,000 buses by the end of the year, and we are well on the way to doing that. Unlike the Labor Party, when the Coalition says it will do something it does it, especially in relation to public transport. I am pleased to say that, even though they will not admit it, I know many members opposite use the Opal card because they have complimented me on how good it is. It takes this Government to deliver good public transport but, importantly, to deliver the day-to-day things that make a difference to the good people of New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Sydney.

SYDNEY INNER-CITY DEVELOPMENT

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: Madam Speaker—

Mr John Barilaro: What's Clover want today?

Mr Nathan Rees: What do the Shooters and Fishers want today?

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: My question is not about your obsession with Clover Moore, do not worry.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. The member for Sydney has not yet asked his question. He will be heard in silence.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. With the inner city focus on urban growth, will the Government ensure that future development provides social infrastructure, including child care, high schools, open space and affordable housing for the projected and existing adjacent populations?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for Sydney for his question. Finally it is a question about planning, which is music to my ears. After five months in the job I have not had a single question from the Labor Party so I very much welcome the question from the member. Regrettably, the member misunderstood the Government's priority. The premise of the question is that the Sydney central business district [CBD] is the focus of the Government's urban renewal program. I guess, as all good members do, the member for Sydney thinks that the Sydney CBD is the centre of the universe.

Those caught up in the inner-city lefty political vortex believe the world begins and ends with Sydney, but to his credit we know that the member for Sydney and his friend the Lord Mayor are passionate about all issues great and small—like urban cat colonies, as we heard on 11 September, and stopping businesses having a vote in council elections. We were here until all hours last night ensuring that businesses do have a say. Of course we know that the member cares about issues great and small, like the sale of animals in pet shops; we hear it frequently from the Clerk.

Mr Alex Greenwich: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was not, surprisingly, about pet shops or Clover; it was about social infrastructure and planning in the inner city. It was quite clear.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to return to the leave of the question. The point of order is upheld.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The question about urban renewal really is not just about Sydney, but about the whole of the metropolitan area. Members will remember that I was joined by the Premier in front of the iconic White Bay power station to announce the beginning of The Bays Precinct Urban Renewal Program. We will transform The Bays Precinct 2.6 kilometres of waterfront land to create new housing, new recreation, and new retail and tourism in Sydney's inner west. That is the biggest urban renewal program since the 2000 Olympics. We then have the Central to Eveleigh initiative, which has the potential to transform the southern end of the Sydney CBD and make a significant contribution to meeting the future needs of Sydney's residents, including child care and businesses.

Just around the corner at North Eveleigh the Government has recently delivered 88 affordable housing units through UrbanGrowth and City West Housing. This is the result of the \$32 million received from the redevelopment of the Carlton United Brewery site. But the Government is not focused just on Sydney; that would be foolish. The Government is focused on rebuilding the entire State. After 16 very long years of Labor neglect and incompetence New South Wales is finally on track again. We are transforming New South Wales by planning for the future for major centres outside the Sydney CBD to take pressure off the CBD.

We are recognising Parramatta's destiny as Sydney's second CBD. With an outstanding local member, Geoff Lee, we are building Parramatta into an economic and residential centre and powerhouse by breathing new life into that city. I give the example of the transformative urban renewal project at Parramatta North, a groundbreaking project that will put heritage and homes side by side, and open up to the community access to some of Australia's most exciting urban heritage assets. We are a Government that is planning for the future, a future of extensive population growth, and the recent announcements of the urban activation precincts at Kellyville, Bella Vista and Showground in Castle Hill are a part of that—precincts that could support 19,000 additional jobs and 12,000 new homes with a mix of housing types, including townhouses, detached homes and apartments.

The current program of urban activation precincts has the potential to provide more than 54,000 new homes, jobs and infrastructure—54,000 new homes near jobs, 54,000 new homes near transport links, 54,000 new homes to add to the 100,000 new homes that have been built since we came to office. This is a Government cleaning up the mess and the failure to plan for Sydney by a Labor Party that had no solutions. The member for Sydney can see from this answer that there is a world beyond the cycleways and cat colonies. [*Time expired.*]

ELECTRICITY DEREGULATION

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy. How is the deregulation of retail electricity prices delivering benefits for New South Wales households and businesses, and other related matters?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for her question and commitment to lowering electricity prices for New South Wales households and businesses. The Baird-Stoner Government is continuing to deliver downward pressure on electricity prices for the people of New South Wales. This is despite the Labor and The Greens' unholy alliance in the other place on Tuesday night in arrogantly attempting to block lower prices for New South Wales consumers. We made a commitment to ease the price pressures that Labor dumped on New South Wales customers. Despite consistent attempts by those opposite to prevent price reductions, we are delivering on that commitment. Since coming to office the Liberal-Nationals Government has undertaken major reforms to make our electricity sector more efficient, accountable and affordable for New South Wales customers. We are undoing the damage and hurt that Labor and its bosses in the Electrical Trade Union [ETU] have caused. We are ensuring that families and businesses can benefit from a competitive and effective electricity market.

This landmark reform means more competition, more choice and more power for New South Wales customers. At the time of this announcement some 60 per cent of New South Wales electricity customers had already switched from the regulated price to a competitive market offer. I am delighted to remind the House that since that time a further 165,000 households across this great State have taken advantage of a competitive marketplace and have switched to a better deal. St Vincent de Paul recently released a report indicating that an average New South Wales household could save hundreds of dollars a year by taking advantage of this Government's deregulated marketplace reforms. Indeed, the report suggested that customers in the Ausgrid distribution area, which includes Upper Hunter and the Central Coast, could save as much as \$560 from a typical annual bill by switching retailers and getting off the standard offer.

It further suggested that customers in the Endeavour Energy area, which includes Western Sydney and the Illawarra, could save up to \$565, while those in rural and regional New South Wales under the Essential Energy distribution area could save up to \$710. What did Labor members do? They opposed these reforms. Why? It was because their ETU bosses told them to. The benefits of a deregulated marketplace are clear for all to see. I know that many Opposition members have already changed sides and have already switched. I ask those who have jumped ship to raise their hands—they should not make me name them, but I will. I should clarify that statement: When I said fess up to jumping ship, I did not mean to Luke Foley and I did not mean to the Sussex Street chosen one, Chris Minns either. Members have heard that for the first time here. As the member for Baulkham Hills said, the ALP recruiting from Harvard is like us recruiting from the CFMEU.

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

The SPEAKER: Order! The question included "and related matters". There is no point of order.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Under those opposite, electricity prices rose by more than 20 per cent—not five, 10 or 15 but 20 per cent. Those days are long gone, and customers and consumers can rest assured that this Government is taking every step to deliver lower electricity prices. It gives me no pleasure to inform the House that while we have been delivering more than \$5.4 billion in network savings—savings that have been passed on to consumers in the form of lower power bills—we have uncovered some of the interesting arrangements that Labor has with its union bosses. It is no wonder prices were so high. We know now that the Leader of the Opposition allowed these costs to soar out of control because he was using the Robertson express credit card and we know who was paying for it—the hardworking families, pensioners and businesses right across this State.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: It relates to the use of props.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will not use the prop.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: This is a novelty credit card. I am happy to table it at a later stage. We all know who was paying for it: the hardworking families, pensioners and businesses across the State.

Ms Linda Burney: An absolute grub.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The member is correct, he was an absolute grub, but she should not call her leader that.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Members can picture it: The Electrical Trades Union [ETU] boss says, "Every union member gets a card", zip, "here are the keys."

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: If the Minister wants to behave like a clown he should go outside.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr Michael Daley: The use of props is disorderly.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have told the Minister to refrain from using props.

Mr Michael Daley: The Minister is flouting your ruling.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will not use the prop.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Standing Order 73 prevents the Minister from making personal reflections against members of this place. He has been doing that for 60 seconds now.

The SPEAKER: Order! At this stage there is no point of order.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 128. What is in the box?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Who was to pay for this? Labor said, "Let the pensioners pay for it." The ETU boss says to take extended leave, travel Australia and use the company car. While you are there use the corporate credit card to top up the fuel, swipe the credit card. Who is going to pay for it? It is the men and women of Western Sydney and their families. Labor kept jacking up electricity prices to keep those rorts flowing.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question included the words "and related matters".

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: This is why this Government is taking the necessary action to put downward pressure on electricity prices.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: The use of props, unless the Liberal Party has switched to—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Members, consider Robertson's rort card cancelled.

Question time concluded at 3.21 p.m.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who wish to have private conversations will leave the Chamber.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

Government Response to Report

The Clerk announced the receipt of the Government's response to report No. 3/55, entitled "Report on Non-Registered Motorised Vehicles", received on 17 September 2014.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

Reference: Inquiry into Preparations for the 2015 New South Wales State Election

Mr GARETH WARD: Pursuant to Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has received a referral from the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Western Sydney to conduct an inquiry into preparations for the 2015 New South Wales State election, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

PETITIONS

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

Pymont and Ultimo Bus Services

Petition requesting the improvement and expansion of bus services to Pymont and Ultimo, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Edgecliff Interchange

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

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Harris Street Walkway

Petition requesting the reinstatement of the Harris Street walkway connection to the central business district and the upgrade of lighting on Darling Harbour walkways, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Same-sex Marriage

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

Inner-city Social Housing

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

Pet Shops

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

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

Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Laws

Petition requesting the Government protect Aboriginal culture and heritage laws, and reform the legislative consultation process, received from **Ms Linda Burney**.

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

Women's Refuges

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

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, 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. Gabrielle Upton—Women's Refuges—lodged 12 August 2014 (Mr John Robertson)

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—St George Public Hospital—lodged 14 August 2014 (Mr Anthony Roberts)

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON LOOSE FILL ASBESTOS INSULATION

Appointment and Membership

Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

- (1) This House agrees with the Legislative Council's resolution relating to the appointment of a Joint Select Committee on Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation.
- (2) Mr John Barilaro and Mr Daryl Maguire be appointed to serve on such a committee as members of the Legislative Assembly.
- (3) Thursday 18 September 2014 at 4.15 p.m. in the Legislative Council Members Lounge be fixed as the time and place for the first meeting.
- (4) A message be sent informing the Legislative Council accordingly.

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

TEACHER ACCREDITATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 10 September 2014.**

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [3.26 p.m.]: On behalf of the shadow Minister for Education I make a contribution to the Teacher Accreditation Amendment Bill 2014. I note the object of this bill is to amend the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 to enable reforms agreed as part of the Government's Great Teaching, Inspired Learning package and builds on the reforms introduced in this area by the previous Labor Government. Under the bill New South Wales will now be brought in line with other jurisdictions throughout Australia concerning the mandatory accreditation of all school teachers within New South Wales.

This significant change will ensure that all teachers who teach within a school or an early childhood setting become accredited. These changes, however, will not commence until a date has been proclaimed following further consultation with key stakeholders concerning transitional arrangements. Up until now only teachers who commenced teaching after 1 October 2004 or those having taken a break from teaching for a period of five years or more are required to be accredited. Provisions include the mandatory requirement that all new and existing teachers who are to be accredited hold a Working With Children Check clearance. This is a common-sense approach and will ensure that any teacher who receives accreditation will have been cleared to work with children, a change that will help bring the standards within New South Wales in line with all other jurisdictions.

The aim is to have all school and early childhood teachers accredited by the end of July 2017. Further provisions will make it an offence for any person to teach in a school or early childhood centre unless that person is accredited. Presently it is only the person's employer who commits the offence if an employee is not accredited. Additionally, the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES] will be able to accredit teachers at a provisional or conditional level and it will be able to provisionally reaccredit a person whose accreditation has ceased or been revoked. Granted, such accreditations are still subject to an individual holding a Working With Children Check clearance. I understand the shadow Minister for Education and Training and member for Keira, Ryan Park, has been in discussion with the Independent Education Union [IEU], which is supportive of the bill but has raised concerns regarding a number of issues relating to its particular sector and its members.

I understand that these issues and others have been given to the Minister's office on behalf of the Independent Education Union for advice and clarification. The union has raised concerns about the need to have appropriate safeguards in place, given the fact that under the legislation individual schools within the independent education sector will be teacher accreditation authorities [TAA]. The IEU is keen to ensure that personality or other non-performance related disputes do not result in teachers losing not only their position in a school but also their accreditation and therefore their ability to teach. The IEU is also keen to seek clarification from the Minister about what is involved in the one-off process for initially accrediting pre-2004 teachers at the level of proficient.

The IEU has asked the Minister to clarify issues concerning voluntary accreditation, in particular, for former classroom teachers who perhaps now work in a union or other education support area and who may not have a direct teaching role that would impact on students in a classroom but who may be providing professional development in other programs for classroom teachers. The IEU would also like to know how former classroom teachers in such roles may remain or become accredited, given their extensive teaching experience. This bill introduces a number of sensible changes, which the NSW Teachers Federation, the NSW Primary Principals' Association, the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council and the Independent Education Association support. There have been calls for further consultation about some sections of this bill, and I trust that they will yield great outcomes for our hardworking teachers in New South Wales. The Opposition supports the bill.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.31 p.m.]: I support the Teacher Accreditation Amendment Bill 2014. This Government is committed to the provision of high-quality schooling for all New South Wales students and to the education reform and improvement necessary for ensuring the future social and economic success of New South Wales. Members will remember that the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES] is a new agency formed by the merger of the former New South Wales Board of Studies and the former New South Wales Institute of Teachers. Its purpose is to support the

high standards of New South Wales schooling and to help lead the continuing improvement of educational standards in New South Wales schools, regardless of whether they are in the government, Catholic or independent sector.

The amendments to the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 will require the accreditation of all teachers across New South Wales. All teachers who take classes and all teachers such as principals who have oversight of the delivery of curriculum in schools will be accredited. Currently, only those teachers who began teaching on or after 1 October 2004 or those teachers who take a break from teaching for five years or more need to be accredited. This change will provide the parents of school students and the community with the assurance that all teachers meet the Australian professional standards for teachers. The standards were developed by the teaching profession and they set out what all teachers should know and be able to do.

When the Government launched the Great Teaching, Inspired Learning—a Blueprint for Action, it included a firm commitment that all teachers in all New South Wales schools would be accredited. This bill will fulfil that commitment, which is warmly accepted by the sector. The evidence is clear that quality teaching is the biggest in-school influence on student outcomes. It is therefore appropriate that all teachers can show that they meet the professional standards. Classroom teachers, head teachers, deputy principals and principals will all be able to show that they meet the standards. The BOSTES will recognise the experience and the professional standing of those teachers not currently required to be accredited and will accredit them accordingly. Experienced classroom teachers and school executive teachers have proven their capacity, and that should be recognised as they are brought into the accreditation system.

Amendments to the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 to accredit teachers working in early childhood centres will provide greater recognition for the important work done by qualified teachers in early childhood settings. Quality education during a child's early years is critical to establishing the capacity to learn, self-esteem and resilience, which in turn lead to better health, education and employment outcomes later in life. The bill establishes a requirement for accreditation for all qualified teachers working in early childhood centres. The sector has been asking for this for years. I am delighted that the Minister for Education is delivering on this important recognition and accreditation of their profession.

The Great Teaching, Inspired Learning reforms began a process of consultation with early childhood stakeholders to determine interest within the sector for the accreditation of early childhood teachers. I am pleased to say that the sector supports the amendments. The Quality Teaching Council represents education stakeholders and provides advice to the BOSTES in relation to education policy. The bill will increase the membership of that council to allow representation of the early childhood education sector. The expansion of the accreditation system to include all teachers working in schools and early childhood centres provides the assurance that parents and the community expect of all teachers.

I take this opportunity to address concerns raised by the Independent Education Union [IEU] about the Teacher Accreditation Amendment Bill. The first concern relates to BOSTES overruling individual teacher accreditation authority [TAA] decisions. Neither the current Act nor this bill gives BOSTES the power to overrule individual TAA refusal of accreditation or revocation of accreditation decisions. Such a power would subvert the existing appeal provisions against such decisions under the Administrative Decisions Review Act 1997. Instead, the bill provides that BOSTES may accredit teachers of its own volition and reaccredit teachers who have had their accreditation revoked. Amendments to the Teacher Accreditation Act, enacted when BOSTES was established, provide BOSTES with greater regulatory powers to ensure that TAA decisions are in keeping with the Teacher Accreditation Act.

The second concern relates to revocation of accreditation. The provisions of the bill cited in relation to offences, dismissal and misconduct are reformulations of the provisions of the Act that clarify what a serious offence is and the grounds for a finding of misconduct. Such clarification reduces the risk of harsh, broad and subjective revocation of accreditation decisions. The reference in the notes to providing notice of an intention to suspend or to revoke accreditation relates to the current provisions of the Act and not to this bill. The Act already contains safeguards, notice and appeal provisions. The bill strengthens those by providing that BOSTES has the power to make rules that prescribe how such decisions are made by TAAs.

The third concern relates to mandatory accreditation. The issue of an early childhood teacher inadvertently committing an offence by being unaware of the requirement to be accredited does not apply to existing early childhood teachers, given the deeming provisions in the bill relating to such teachers. For new early childhood teachers the period of transition to apply to their accreditation will provide ample time for

these arrangements to be well understood by early childhood teaching professionals. The accreditation process for pre-2004 school teachers is the subject of continuing consultation with key stakeholders, including the IEU.

These arrangements will be finalised and well understood by the end of 2017, when pre-2004 teachers will be required to be accredited. The fourth IEU concern relates to conditional accreditation. The rules that will apply to conditional accreditation, including the meaning of "completion of a substantial part of an approved course", will be subject to consultation with key stakeholders, including the IEU, which was advised of that next phase of consultation during the consultation process on the bill. The fifth area of concern is the accreditation of teachers at proficient level.

The use of the discretionary term "may" rather than the mandatory "must" or "shall" is a common feature of both the Teacher Accreditation Act currently and other statutes that require administrative decision-makers to exercise judgement. Administrative case law is replete with precedents about how such discretion is not to be exercised unreasonably, capriciously or improperly. The obligation to provide reasons, grounds and appeal mechanisms is already prescribed by the Administrative Decisions Review Act. The Teacher Accreditation Act already provides that accreditation decisions are subject to the Administrative Decisions Review Act in that regard and the bill does not amend those arrangements. Indeed, the bill allows the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES] to make rules about how teacher accreditation authorities [TAAs] apply those provisions, such as in relation to ensuring procedural fairness.

The next area of concern expressed by the Independent Education Union [IEU] related to provisional reaccreditation. The criteria, period and rules that will apply to provisional reaccreditation will be subject to consultation with key stakeholders, including the IEU. The IEU was advised of that next phase of consultation during the consultation process around the bill. The next area of concern was voluntary accreditation of certain qualified persons. The definition of "non-school based teacher" may cover persons working for the teacher unions. The period that a person will be required to have taught in a school is not conducive to a one-size-fits-all approach. The BOSTES rules will prescribe the kind of work that is applicable to working in such a capacity and the period a person is required to have taught in a school for this purpose. The rules that will apply will be subject to consultation with key stakeholders, including the IEU, and the IEU was advised of that next phase of consultation during the consultation process around the bill. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The next area of IEU concern related to the board being notified about certain decisions. The purpose of the notifications is to allow the board to monitor in a better way the consistent application of the provisions of the Teacher Accreditation Act by TAAs and to ensure that the list of accredited teachers is up to date. The BOSTES rules will require TAAs to advise the affected person that the notification has been made. Notifications would only result in the person's removal from the list of accredited teachers if the revocation of the person's accreditation was upheld by the appeal processes already provided by the Administrative Decisions Review Act. Notifications would apply in relation to all schools, not just non-government schools.

To conclude, the bill encompasses a number of express provisions lacking in the current Act around mandatory and voluntary accreditation, conditional and provisional accreditation, revocation of accreditation and reaccreditation. These provisions provide greater clarity around the professional teaching standards that apply to New South Wales teachers and enhance the rigour and fairness that must be key features in any accreditation process. These provisions and the elaboration of the BOSTES requirements, as expressed in the BOSTES rules, will be the subject of full consultation with key stakeholders and the teaching profession more broadly leading up to the commencement of the various provisions of this bill. The Government thanks the IEU for raising these matters and trusts that these clarifications dispel the IEU's concerns. For the reasons I have given, I commend this bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.42 p.m.]: The Teacher Accreditation Amendment Bill 2014 arose as part of a journey that began more than a decade ago as governments and the teaching profession considered how best to address the status of teachers and the effectiveness of teaching in classrooms across Australia, in particular in New South Wales. An accreditation model was developed and commenced in 2004. It was an express attempt to work collaboratively for the betterment of the profession and students. I believe it has contributed a great deal to raising the professional capacity of teachers and the esteem with which they are held, as well as improving the standard of teaching and student outcomes, which we all want.

This bill extends the reach of accreditation beyond the new scheme teachers, those who commenced after 1 October 2004, to all existing teachers. As a teacher working in the field when the legislation came into

effect, there was a common question from existing scheme teachers: When will this process affect us? It is now a decade later and perhaps an appropriate time to roll out the model to all teachers as the new model has been embedded and a substantial proportion of the teacher workforce is accredited. I agree with the member for Cronulla that there has been constructive engagement with the Independent Education Union [IEU]. The IEU has raised sensible matters that can be addressed with goodwill on both sides to ensure that the best process is adopted.

I am pleased that the commencement date of the scheme will be left for some time to allow the consultation process to occur, so that implementation issues and bugs can be addressed. I worked in education administration when the original scheme was introduced and it occurred to me that one group may have concerns about the effects of these processes. That group is casual teachers, particularly those transitioning to retirement. They have left full-time teaching but they want to keep their hand in and schools find it useful to have a pool of such people on their books. These teachers may be deterred by impediments to their accreditation and they may be reluctant to attempt accreditation. We do not want to discourage people with valuable teaching expertise and have a lot to contribute but who do not want to work full time or undertake an arduous process to get accredited. I believe this is not the intention of the legislation, but I flag this issue. I hope it will be considered during the transition process so we retain access to a pool of good casual teachers to assist the work of schools.

The bill sets out a number of clarifications in the process that have emerged from the experience of 10 years of the accreditation scheme being in place. These clarifications address some grey areas that emerged during those years and can now be embedded more clearly in this stage of the legislation. Some of those involve a "stop the clock" provision for people progressing towards accreditation who need some time away from the process to start a family, to take an overseas holiday, because of illness, or for whatever reason. In these circumstances they want to stop the clock on the accreditation process and later return to it and restart the clock. This process is clarified in this bill, and I think it is helpful. This is a logical progression of a process with real benefits for students and standards of education in New South Wales. It builds on work that has already been done and is part of a national process consistent with where other States and Territories are progressing. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [3.48 p.m.]: I support this important legislation, the Teacher Accreditation Amendment Bill 2014, which represents the ongoing commitment of this Government to improving the standards of education in this State. As the member for Drummoyne I am particularly impressed with the Government's investment in education in my electorate. Since coming to office in 2011 I am proud to say there will be no fewer than four new primary schools for the area over coming years. One is at Wentworth Point—

Mrs Barbara Perry: What is your area?

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I said "for the area" but these new schools will have an intake from Rhodes, which is in my area but in the member for Auburn's electorate. Catholic schools will be built at Mortlake and at north Strathfield and another primary school will be built at Powells Creek. This is great news for my area because the Labor Government allowed unfettered development across the electorate and forgot about transport, infrastructure and education. This Government has also invested heavily in special education needs and has announced in the budget a total rebuild of the Lucas Gardens School in Five Dock, which is great news for that school.

This bill builds on the Government's impressive record in education. Under this legislation, 75,000 New South Wales schoolteachers will be accredited under national standards and will be required to undertake ongoing professional development. It brings New South Wales into line with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers—a national initiative. It is envisaged that by the end of 2017 all teachers in New South Wales will be accredited as this bill will make it mandatory. As such, it is no different from many other professions including law, accounting and architecture. But it is of the utmost importance that children being educated from the early childhood stage through to secondary school are given the best possible schooling.

I point out at this time that up until now only those teachers who began their profession after October 2004 or who had a break from teaching of five years or more have needed to become accredited. For the more experienced teachers who began teaching before October 2004, the accreditation process will recognise their extensive experience and length of service. This bill is the result of an extensive consultation process with the

former NSW Institute of Teachers. In 2012 the institute issued a discussion paper, engaged in stakeholder consultation and published a consultation report. As a result, a number of changes were made and now we see the culmination of that process—this legislation being debated today.

Currently, more than 60,000 New South Wales teachers are accredited with the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES] under the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Changes to the Teacher Accreditation Act will mean 5,000 early childhood teachers will also be accredited for the first time. It is expected that school principals and other senior staff who may not have a teaching role will be accredited, as will qualified teachers who work in educational roles outside schools. New South Wales is currently the only State that does not require accreditation of all teachers. Until the introduction of this legislation, only teachers working in schools could be accredited.

Naturally, there is widespread support among the teaching fraternity for full accreditation. It will provide greater employment mobility for teachers who are qualified to work in both schools and early childhood centres. This is a government with a strong record on education, and this initiative will only serve to strengthen that record. I take this opportunity to look at the Government's record on education reforms. Like this legislation, changes have been the result of extensive consultation. In 2012 the Great Teaching, Inspired Learning discussion paper was released, which addressed issues relating to the quality of teaching and learning in New South Wales schools. Teacher accreditation is one of the improvements in that area. In March 2013 the Government released the Great Teaching, Inspired Learning Blueprint for Action—a plan that outlines a far-reaching reform agenda for improving the quality of teaching and learning in New South Wales schools.

Under the bill the language of the levels of teacher accreditation will be more consistent with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The bill contains further provisions to allow teachers to place their accreditation on hold—for example, while taking maternity leave. In relation to the accreditation of teachers in the early childhood setting, provisions in the bill set out the requirement that a teacher hold a Working With Children Check clearance before being accredited. In 2011 all education Ministers reached agreement to implement nationally consistent teacher registration. The Working With Children Check clearance is part of that and will enhance interstate teacher mobility.

In relation to teachers working in schools, the requirement to be accredited will apply only to those who take classes or teach individual students, as well as those who have active oversight of and responsibility for the delivery of the curriculum in a school and the assessment of students. Other amendments to the Act provide that the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards will be the only teacher accreditation authority with the capacity to grant provisional and conditional accreditation. The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards has the expertise to assess qualifications for the purpose of accreditation, especially overseas qualifications. The bill further provides that it will be the responsibility of the individual teacher to obtain accreditation and not the responsibility of his or her employer. I am proud to be a member of a government that has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the improvement of education in this State. I congratulate the Minister on introducing this legislation and I commend the bill to the House.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [3.55 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Teacher Accreditation Amendment Bill 2014 which has as its object to amend the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 to enable reforms agreed to as part of the Great Teaching, Inspired Learning Blueprint for Action reforms and those resulting from consultations undertaken by the former NSW Institute of Teachers. This is an important bill because the proposed reforms will look at the mandatory accreditation of all schoolteachers in New South Wales. The bill will require the accreditation of all teachers in early childhood education centres, as defined under the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW) and Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Act 2011 and regulations. The bill also addresses the voluntary accreditation of qualified teachers who work in educational roles outside schools.

I note that there has been significant consultation with the Department of Education and Communities and the Association of Independent Schools NSW, the Catholic Education Commission and early childhood stakeholders, as well as relevant unions. It is great to see that there has been broad support for the scope of these reforms. The member for Riverstone clearly outlined why this bill is so important. I note that the member for Riverstone has an excellent background in education and I commend him for the work he does with the Parramatta diocese and Catholic education.

Teachers are important to our school system. I do not say that because I am a former teacher. Research shows that 30 per cent of student outcomes are dependent on their teachers. We must encourage our teachers to

inspire their students and to instil in them a sense of lifelong learning in order to gain skills. I have had the privilege over the past three years of visiting many of the primary and secondary schools in the Parramatta area and I have witnessed firsthand the good work being done in those schools. Recently I was at the Melrose Park Public School to help celebrate Truck Week 2014. I commend Principal Clare Kristensen for her great work in putting together this annual event for the school. I also commend the Australian Truck Association for promoting road safety and the work of the trucking industry—an important industry because, for example, every grocery item in supermarkets is transported there by truck. The kids certainly enjoyed the day.

Another school I visited where I observed great work being done is Our Lady of Mount Carmel Primary School under the leadership of Principal Steven Jones. The students came to the New South Wales Parliament and had a tour of the "bear pit". They were able to ask me questions about it and saw where important decisions are made. I again commend Brother Patrick Howlett, who is no stranger to us. I support Brother Patrick Howlett's vision and leadership in problem-based learning and group skills, teaching students and inspiring them to do a little extra.

Mrs Barbara Perry: A great educator.

Dr GEOFF LEE: The member for Auburn acknowledges that Brother Pat is a great educator. He has received numerous awards for his achievements. Indeed, I have put those achievements on the record when I have spoken previously about Brother Pat. I congratulate Jack Jeffries from Parramatta Marist High School who was a recipient of the Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship. Together with other award winners, Jack will travel to Gallipoli in November as part of the Anzac centenary commemorations. I thank the member for Baulkham Hills, who championed the trip and, together with ClubsNSW and the Premier, organised these Anzac memorial scholarships to enable our young people, our future leaders, to travel to Gallipoli in November.

I was impressed when I attended St Patricks recently. I commend Bishop Anthony Fisher, Bishop of the Parramatta diocese. The presentation of the Bishop of Parramatta Awards for Student Excellence was held at St Patricks. I congratulate Casey, Steven, Joseph and Shirley, students from Catholic schools in my area, who received the bishop's award in recognition of their outstanding contribution scholastically and their contribution to their school and community through pastoral care and community service. These annual awards, which are presented by the bishop, bring the community together. Importantly, they pay due recognition to excellence at school and to excellence in community service. It was great to visit Our Lady of Mount Carmel Primary School and I commend Principal Steven Jones for his leadership.

Ms Melanie Gibbons: A good leader.

Dr GEOFF LEE: He is an excellent leader. It was interesting to sit in front of year 5 students and to answer their in-depth questions. The questions, which were tough, demonstrated the students' thought processes and outstanding knowledge. Not only are they studying; they take everything to heart and understand it. It was a fantastic opportunity to spend time with young people who do so much good work in the community. Several weeks ago I had the privilege of visiting Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta. The students were showcasing their artistic skill and talent in an art exhibition. Many of the exhibits were part of year 12 works. Students presented their works as their major Higher School Certificate project. I commend Principal Stephen Walsh for his fine leadership. The school is well recognised for its academic achievements. Every year I visit the school and meet the students, many of whom exceed the 99-plus Australian tertiary admission rank [ATAR] results, which is testament to the dedication of teachers, the parents and friends group and Principal Stephen Walsh, as well as his strong leadership.

Last week I was delighted to visit the Parramatta courts with students from Parramatta High School to learn firsthand about our legal system. Under the great leadership of Principal Domonique Splatt we took a group of year 10 students to listen to a real case. The magistrate, who was generous with her time, explained what happened in the courtroom and with some of her considerations. It was a privilege to listen to the Attorney General, who answered questions, explain how the courts run and refer to important things concerning our legal system. Finally, I pay tribute to all teachers not only in the wonderful electorate of Parramatta but also across New South Wales. Ultimately, they inspire students, they create a desire and they shape our future leaders. I know members will commend teachers for their dedication, resilience and hard work in educating young people in the community.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [4.05 p.m.]: I support the Teacher Accreditation Bill 2014. The bill makes a range of long overdue but significant improvements to the accreditation process of teachers and

introduces changes that are required to implement the Government's Great Teaching, Inspired Learning Blueprint for Action reforms. I was pleased to hear that by 2017 all education professionals in New South Wales will be accredited. This includes early childhood teachers as well as those who teach secondary education. Currently, New South Wales is the only Australian jurisdiction that does not require accreditation of all teachers. I was surprised to learn that until now only teachers working in schools could be accredited, not those who worked in the early childhood sector. I was surprised that there were different layers of accreditation for the two sectors. The status of teachers is interesting.

To me, a teacher is a teacher. They are important people. They look after the special children of mums and dads. They are entrusted to take on that role and to look after children for many hours a day, teaching and shaping them into well-rounded, well-educated citizens. It is important that teachers are respected and accredited, as are lawyers, accountants, architects, psychologists and many other professionals that require accreditation. It is appropriate that teachers are treated in the same manner and with high regard and due respect. The bill came about after consultation with the early childhood sector conducted by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES]. That consultation showed that there was widespread support for this change. It is important that the change comes with the agreement and wont of the teaching community. The professionals want this change and they want the Government to help them achieve it.

This bill follows on from the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards Bill 2013, which saw the amalgamation of the Board of Studies NSW and the NSW Institute of Teachers. This bill has come about after a great deal of consultation and discussion with some highly regarded people who wanted to contribute to the bill. The President of the New South Wales branch of Early Childhood Australia was involved, as was Tonya Goddard of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Gabby Holden from Uniting Children's Services and the Chief Executive Officer of the Community Childcare Cooperative, Leanne Gibbs. I also mention Christine Legg, the Chief Executive Officer of KU Children's Services. Representatives of KU are regularly in my office telling me about upcoming events for the kids in Hammondville. It is good to see them involved in the consultation process. Jan Faulkner from the Catholic Education Commission was involved, as was Ross Hughes, Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Early Childhood Support and Learning Inc. and Dr Peter Whiteman, the head of department at the Institute of Early Childhood at Macquarie University.

Robyn Yates, Senior Director of the Government Education Policy at the Association of Independent Schools [AIS] of NSW, and Nicole Jones, the New South Wales State Manager of Goodstart Early Learning was there, as was Justine Oobal, the Local Government Education and Care Managers Group, John Gunn from the rural section of Community Connections Solutions Australia [CCSA], Natalie Grenfell, the Executive Officer of Gowrie NSW, Ginie Udy, the Chief Executive Officer of SDN Children's Services, Neisha O'Neill, President of Child Care New South Wales and Tim Keegan, Executive Officer of the Mobile Children's Services Association of NSW. They were all asked to contribute their knowledge and experience to make sure that this bill contains what is wanted by the sector, and to ensure that it will benefit and help our teachers, which I think is the right way to go about introducing something to this industry.

This bill complements the earlier one that I mentioned by making three amendments. They include enabling the policies announced in March 2013 as part of the Great Teaching, Inspired Learning reforms ensuring that all teachers are professionally accredited, which is really important. The second reform deals with the outcomes from the consultation process by the former NSW Institute of Teachers. The third reform deals with the national developments to which New South Wales has subscribed—namely, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The significance of the change is that for the first time early childhood teachers will be required to have the appropriate qualifications and maintain their accreditation against professional teaching standards, just as accredited teachers working in schools currently do. This is an important part of and one of the major commitments made in the "Great Teaching, Inspired Learning—A blueprint for action" reform. Greater employment mobility for teachers who are qualified to work in both schools and early childhood centres will be provided through these reforms.

In 2011 all education Ministers reached agreement to implement nationally consistent teacher registration. When this Government came to office in 2011 it said it would try to get rid of red tape and make our cross-border agreements work. This agreement requires that all accredited teachers have a current Working With Children Check clearance to maintain accreditation. This change will enhance interstate teacher mobility, as currently only Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory automatically recognise the accreditation status of New South Wales teachers.

Another change recommended in the bill is that the requirement to be accredited will now apply to those teachers who take classes or teach individual students, as well as those who have active oversight of and responsibility for the delivery of the curriculum in a school and the assessment of students. School principals and other senior staff who have active oversight of these functions, but who do not necessarily engage in actual classroom teaching, will be required to be accredited as members of the teaching profession in line with the rest of the teaching profession across the nation.

In relation to teachers working in early childhood settings, the requirement to be accredited will apply to qualified teachers who deliver educational programs based on an approved learning framework, and those teachers who have oversight and responsibility for that delivery. To allow further consultation with stakeholders about implementation and transitional arrangements, these items that related to the pre-2004 teaching workforce and early childhood teachers will commence later than the rest of this bill.

The Act will also be amended so that the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES] will be the only teacher accreditation authority with the capacity to grant provisional and conditional accreditation. Only teachers who have a current Working With Children Check clearance will be able to be accredited. Additionally, the responsibility for accreditation is with the individual teacher and does not become the responsibility of his or her employer. This is to ensure that schools are able to guarantee they are employing accredited teachers.

The bill also provides greater clarity around voluntary accreditation. This is important for teachers who are not working in schools or early childhood centres but who wish to remain accredited members of the teaching profession. This could include pre-2004 teachers currently working in non-school based educational roles, such as consultants in the Department of Education and Communities or a Catholic education office or those teachers who are on secondment. Those teachers may choose to be accredited so that they have the option to return to a school teaching position sometime in the future. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The voluntary accreditation provisions do not negate the mandatory requirement for school executives or school counsellors to be accredited if they teach. There has been significant consultation with the Department of Education and Communities, the Association of Independent Schools NSW, the Catholic Education Commission and early childhood stakeholders. This also included consultation with the relevant unions. We found there was broad support for the scope of these reforms. They asked for them, and here it is. I support this bill as it is reassuring to know that the teachers who help with our children's education maintain high standards and are accredited before they are appointed to start working in a school or in an early childhood centre. I must mention some of the wonderful schools in my electorate. Because of today's parliamentary sitting I missed the year 12 graduation ceremony at Holsworthy High School this morning, and I apologise for that.

I was represented by Jeff Page, my electorate officer, who made sure that a certificate was given to one very special student on my behalf. Year 12 graduation is an important time in someone's life. It is a sign that 13 years of education are coming to an end. It is an exciting time when students are looking at either undertaking further education or moving into the workforce. It is an interesting time and a time when young people make their own decisions. I congratulate all those at Holsworthy High School who took that big step today. I would have liked to see the new lift at the school, which will benefit students with disabilities, and a new kitchen for students to use in their studies—the funds for which were provided by the Government. Every time I visit the school I have been provided with delicious food and they always give me some treats to take back to my staff. It is most welcome.

Mr Geoff Provest: Do they get back to the staff?

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: They do. I am not greedy at all; I share well. I thank the Minister for Education for helping out when Woronora River Public School needed some urgent upgrades to its school hall. The Minister came to the rescue, so to speak, and helped when the doors needed upgrading urgently to make sure that the kids have easy access to the school—which is my old school. The school has also been able to install air-conditioning because it is very cold at Woronora.

Mr Geoff Provest: It must have been built in recent times.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: Thank you, no; but I appreciate the sentiment. The school has had many upgrades. It now has fencing all around it, which is particularly important as there are more students than ever with autism. We must ensure that they stay within school grounds, particularly at a bush school like Woronora,

where it is easy for them to wander off. Now we know they are safe and sound. We also know that they will have accredited teachers looking after them, all the way from their early childhood education to the end of their schooling. Recently the member for Parramatta spoke about talking to some schoolchildren. I had the privilege of talking to children at St Christopher Catholic Primary School at Holsworthy about the Government. I asked them who the Premier was.

Mr Geoff Provest: Be careful; this could be career limiting.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: It could be because they answered "Clive Palmer". I corrected them and told them it was not Clive Palmer—although he does get a great deal of media. We then had a terrific discussion about the difference between the State and Federal Parliaments, which I think they found quite useful. I was so impressed by their questions about State and Federal issues as well local issues, such as roads, trains and the needed upgrades in our area. It was great to hear from those year 6 students. With the support provided through this bill, their wonderful teachers will have the status and recognition they need. I commend the Minister for Education and his staff, who spent a great deal of time and effort putting this bill together. I thank them for their work. This bill is in the best interests of our community, and I commend it to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.20 p.m.]: Before I begin my contribution in support of the Teacher Accreditation Amendment Bill 2014, I declare a conflict of interest: I have 17 schoolteachers in my family and they will be listening very carefully to what I have to say about teachers. The object of the bill is to amend the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 as follows:

- (a) to require all persons who teach in schools to be accredited under the principal Act (at present only new school teachers or persons who started or returned to teaching in schools after the principal Act commenced are required to be accredited),
- (b) to require persons who teach in early childhood education centres to be accredited under the principal Act,
- (c) to make it an offence for a person to teach in a school or early childhood education centre unless the person is accredited (at present, in the case of schools, only the person's employer commits an offence if the person is not accredited),
- (d) to provide for the voluntary accreditation of certain qualified persons who do not teach but who are employed in areas related to teaching or education,
- (e) to enable the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (the Board) to accredit teachers at a provisional or conditional level and to also provisionally re-accredit persons whose accreditation has ceased or been revoked,
- (f) to enable the Board, on application by a person who is accredited, to place the person's accreditation on hold during an extended period of absence from teaching,
- (g) to provide that a person cannot be accredited as a teacher unless the person holds a working with children check clearance,
- (h) to make a number of other amendments of an administrative, minor or consequential nature.

The bill also makes consequential amendments to the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards Act 2013. Currently, initial accreditation occurs at the point of employment. Changes to the Act will mean that the Board of Studies, Teaching and Education Standards [BOSTES] will be the only teacher accreditation authority with the capacity to grant provisional and conditional accreditation. This will occur prior to a teacher's employment. The board's officers have expertise in the assessment of qualifications for the purpose of accreditation, especially overseas qualifications. School employers including the Department of Education and Communities, the Association of Independent Schools of NSW and the Catholic Education Commission are in favour of the change.

Employers are currently responsible for ensuring that each teacher working in a school has a current Working With Children Check clearance. As the board will become the initial accreditation authority, a change to this process is required to prevent a teacher being accredited and then not receiving a Working With Children Check clearance. Amendments to the Act will mean that Working With Children Check clearances will be aligned with accreditation and the board will require each teacher to have a current clearance for initial accreditation and for maintenance of accreditation

Until now only teachers who began teaching or who had a break from teaching for five years or more were required to be accredited. Teachers who are currently required to be accredited are referred to in the Act as "new scheme teachers". The requirement to be accredited will now apply to those who take classes, or teach individual students as well as those who have active oversight of and responsibility for the delivery of the curriculum in a school and the assessment of students. Specifically, school principals and other senior staff who

have active oversight of these functions but who do not necessarily engage in classroom teaching will be required to be accredited as members of the teaching profession. This is in line with the legislative delineation of the teaching profession across the nation.

School counsellors will also be encompassed by the mandatory or voluntary accreditation arrangements depending on the context of their employment in relation to teaching. This amendment will not commence until a date to be proclaimed following further consultation with key stakeholders about implementation and transition arrangements. The bill also includes amendments to allow for the voluntary accreditation of qualified teachers who work in educational roles outside of schools. These might include qualified teachers working in a range of advisory or consultant roles for the Department of Education, other organisations, teacher unions or the board.

This bill makes it necessary for teachers to become accredited like people in many other professions. Doctors, lawyer and engineers have to be re-accredited each year. My wife works as a registered nurse at a doctor's surgery in Taree and she must attain a certain number of education and instruction points each year to ensure that she will be re-accredited. Through this bill the teaching profession will be brought into line with what other professionals have done for decades. The voluntary accreditation provisions do not negate the mandatory requirement for school executives or school counsellors to be accredited if they teach.

The amendments will require the accreditation of all teachers in early childhood education centres as defined under the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW) and Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Act 2011 and regulations. The requirement to be accredited will apply to qualified teachers who work in a range of early childhood learning settings and who deliver educational programs based on an approved learning framework and the teachers who have oversight and responsibility for that delivery. These amendments will not commence until a date to be proclaimed following consultation with early education stakeholders. One appointed person with knowledge and expertise in early childhood education and one elected early childhood teacher will join the Quality Teaching Council. These changes have the broad and welcome support from key early childhood stakeholders.

I turn now to the specific provisions of the bill. Schedule 1 [41], as it relates to new section 28, makes it an offence for a person to teach in a school unless the person is accredited. In the case of school teachers who are not currently required to be accredited—for example, those who were employed as a school teacher before 1 October 2004 and who have remained employed as a teacher since that time—the requirement to be accredited will not apply until a later date to be appointed by proclamation. Schedule 1 [3] extends the definition of "teach" to cover persons who undertake teaching duties in early childhood education centres. Schedule 1 [41] also makes it an offence for a person to teach in an early childhood education centre unless the person is accredited under the principal Act. However, this requirement will not apply until a later date to be appointed by proclamation.

Persons are currently accredited as teachers under the principal Act by teacher accreditation authorities. This includes the provisional or conditional accreditation of a person who has a relevant degree or teacher qualification but who does not meet the requirements for full accreditation in accordance with the professional teaching standards approved by the Minister. Schedule 1 [41], as it relates to new sections 30 and 31, modifies the accreditation process by authorising the board to accredit persons at provisional or conditional level before progression to full accreditation by a teacher accreditation authority. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Schedule 1 [41], as it relates to new section 33, also authorises the board to provisionally re-accredit a person whose accreditation has been revoked or has ceased because the person has not satisfied the requirements for full accreditation within the required time, which is usually three years. Schedule 1 [48]—proposed section 40A—will enable but not require non-teaching school counsellors and qualified teachers who are not actually teaching in schools or early childhood education centres to be accredited by the board. The new section covers non-teaching executives such as principals and qualified teachers working in areas related to teaching but does not affect the requirement for those school or centre executives and school counsellors who teach to be accredited.

Schedule 1 [5] provides that the board, or a person or body approved by the board, will be the teacher accreditation authority for persons who teach in early childhood education centres and also for certain qualified persons who are voluntarily accredited under proposed section 40A. Schedule 1 [22] makes it clear that only the board may accredit teachers at provisional or conditional level. The board has a number of additional functions. Schedule 1 [9] provides that the board is to monitor, evaluate and report on the quality of the teacher education

courses and programs approved by the Minister under the professional teaching standards. Schedule 1 [10] provides that the board has the function of making recommendations to the Minister as to approval by the Minister of teacher education courses—

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

Pursuant to sessional order discussion on petition signed by 10,000 or more persons proceeded with.

PLAYMATES COTTAGE CHILDCARE CENTRE, DUBBO

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [4.31 p.m.]: I am proud to raise the 10,000 signature petition from certain citizens requesting the creation of a Dubbo Base Hospital master plan that does not include the closure of Playmates Cottage Childcare Centre. Dubbo Base Hospital is being redeveloped to ensure that the local community can access health services as close to home as possible and where possible on the one site. Redevelopment of Dubbo Base Hospital is and has been a priority of the New South Wales Government.

The Government has already allocated \$91.3 million towards stages one and two of this redevelopment and that work is significantly underway. Late last year the New South Wales Government allocated an additional \$600,000 to commence planning for the next stages of the redevelopment of Dubbo Base Hospital, known as stages three and four, to ensure it can meet the needs of the community not only now but into the future. The upgrade already being undertaken is unprecedented—it is historic for the area—and local health care can only continue to improve with the ongoing support of the Government.

Consultation as a result of that planning has commenced with health service staff and community stakeholders to determine the highest clinical priorities that should be addressed in the planning of stages three and four of the Dubbo Base Hospital redevelopment. In parallel with this consultation period the master planning process has been completed. The redevelopment project team presented to stakeholders at the zonal master plan meeting on 4 August 2014 about bringing health services that are currently located on other external sites back onto the Dubbo Base Hospital campus. An example of those services is the Aboriginal Mums and Bubs Service currently located in an industrial area of Dubbo with no access to public transport.

At the time I gave a public commitment, which I reiterate today, to assist Playmates Cottage—it currently leases a building on the hospital site and has done so for just under 16 years—to develop a business strategy for funding a new facility, obtain a list of appropriate Crown and shire council lands for a new Playmates Cottage site and review a design brief for a new purpose-built facility. A working group consisting of representatives from Health Infrastructure, Western NSW Local Health District and Playmates Cottage has been formed and is scheduled to meet on 24 September 2014 to assist Playmates Cottage to move forward.

Playmates Cottage has been granted a further extension to its lease that I secured until 2016—another two-plus years to enable that design and planning work. Leasing space for health services outside the grounds of Dubbo Base Hospital is not only inconvenient for staff and patients, it is also expensive and draws on the finite financial resources of the local health district and prohibits the hospital from delivering what could be the highest level of health care that the community deserves. The long and respected history of Playmates Cottage in the Dubbo community and the affordable childcare service that it has provided to families in the city and surrounding region is acknowledged, and I have done that continually during debate in the community.

The local health district is committed to maintaining open and transparent communication with Playmates Cottage throughout the further planning process. It is anticipated that the first stage of planning for Dubbo Base Hospital stages three and four will be finalised later this year. Construction of the main clinical services building is scheduled to be completed in late 2015. When completed stages one and two will deliver new operating theatres, a day-only and extended day-only ward for surgical purposes, an in-patient ward, a special care nursery, an upgraded renal dialysis unit, a central sterilisation department and a refurbished main hospital entry and upgraded infrastructure.

Stages three and four will be exciting projects for the Dubbo community. This is a generational opportunity to provide not only for Dubbo but for western New South Wales by providing radiotherapy, chemotherapy and extended paediatric services to over 200,000 people. I have made no secret of the fact that

health is my number one priority. I want to make sure that everyone in regional and western New South Wales has access to world-class facilities. I have given my genuine public and written commitment to help Playmates Cottage relocate as a result of this ongoing development.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [4.36 p.m.]: I acknowledge the members of Save Playmates Cottage Committee who are present in the public gallery. I have received a letter from them dated 11 September 2014 that I would like to read into *Hansard*. The letter states:

Dear Dr McDonald,

Our community was motivated to petition for the retention of Playmates Cottage Childcare Centre due to the uncertainty that has surrounded the future of the centre since the announcement of the redevelopment of Dubbo Hospital four years ago.

In 1985 Dubbo City Council was granted funding from the State Government to build Dubbo's first community based long day care centre. The then CEO of Dubbo Hospital, Brian Semmler OAM, offered a small parcel of land separate to the clinical care hospital buildings for the construction of the centre and a 21 year peppercorn lease was instigated. When the lease expired in 2006 local health imposed rent as part of the lease renewal conditions.

For the past 29 years Playmates Cottage has successfully co-existed with the hospital and provides a high level of childcare for health workers and other families.

42 children attend Playmates each day, 100 children each week. Playmates has historically catered for "at risk" children, those with special needs, and those that cannot afford the higher fees charged by private providers.

Playmates is ideally located being the only childcare service in northeast Dubbo. It is within walking distance of the CSU campus, senior high school, allied health services and opposite the TAFE campus.

Over the past four years we have written to parliamentarians seeking clarification on what the redevelopment of the hospital will mean for our centre. We were advised that our concerns would be taken into account when planning the redevelopment, that we would not be disadvantaged and that we would know our future by the end of 2012. In 2013 we were informed that our site was yet to be formally identified for inclusion in the redevelopment and the lease was extended to December 2015.

In October 2013, following the circulation of rumours concerning the future of Playmates Cottage, a meeting was requested with the hospital CEO. A meeting was held on 2nd December 2013. At this meeting we were handed a letter, signed by Western New South Wales Local Health Chief Executive Scott McLachlan, stating that Playmates Cottage must quit its premises by 31 December 2015.

The following day a second letter, again signed by Scott McLachlan, was handed to the centre amended to read "if there is no future use identified for the land or building throughout the master planning process Playmates Cottage may be able to extend the lease beyond 31 December 2015". This is an example of how difficult it has been for Playmates Cottage to know what the future holds.

Now Playmates Cottage has been informed that the master plan has identified its site for redevelopment for primary and community health services and there is no space available for the facility on the Dubbo Hospital campus.

Prior to the 2011 State election Troy Grant, now member for Dubbo, responded to a letter from the centre "I give you my commitment that I will work closely with your group to try and ensure that you are not disadvantaged in any way due to Dubbo Base Hospital upgrades. I further commit to working closely with you to ensure that Playmates continues to provide the best service possible to the community of Dubbo."

In a recent press release Troy Grant stated "The presence of Playmates on the Health precinct is of obvious benefit to not only the Health District but also to the broader community with an ever growing demand on child care places".

Whilst we are pleased that Mr Grant acknowledges the importance of Playmates Cottage for health workers and our community we are at odds to understand why he has not provided strong representation and recommended that Playmates Cottage remain where it is.

The simple solution would be to plan the hospital redevelopment to include the retention of Playmates Cottage. This would allow both the hospital and Playmates Cottage to continue to serve the Dubbo community with a minimum of disruption and cost. We urge parliamentarians to save Playmates Cottage. If this is not possible then funding for a new centre should be provided by the State Government.

Yours faithfully

Christine Castlehouse
Annette Priest
Jim Jane
Ros Burns
Ben Shields
Representatives of the Save Playmates Cottage committee
11/9/2014

That is a very good letter and a very good summary of the difficulties. Having worked in the health system for 40 years, I know how it works and that hospital redevelopments are very often fraught with difficulties. What

the Dubbo community requests, and what is actually achievable with political will, is for both parties to have their needs met. The most effective way of improving health outcomes in the long term is high-quality affordable child care. Centres like the Playmates Cottage Childcare Centre are absolutely vital not only for the child care they provide but also for the example they set to other areas and as a benchmark for what high-quality child care should be. It is also vital for the staff, who value having child care close to where they work. The last time I looked, Dubbo was on the Western Plains. There is a way forward. The Dubbo community expects politicians to be able to find it.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.41 p.m.]: I thank the petitioners and those who have travelled so far to hear this debate in Parliament. The only reason this debate is happening today is that the New South Wales Government made a commitment to debating petitions tabled in Parliament that have 10,000 or more signatures. I must say what a great local member and local champion the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, and member for Dubbo, Troy Grant, is. It is pleasing to think of a new hospital for Dubbo. The New South Wales Government is getting on with the job of redeveloping the Dubbo Base Hospital to ensure that local patients will be able to access quality care closer to home. It is interesting that Opposition members had 16 years in which to do that. Because of their negligence, it was never delivered. The former Labor Government promised that hospital for 10 years, but did not deliver it. It will be delivered.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: Labor members do not like it when they start hearing the truth. The mantra of the Labor Party is: Say whatever it takes. For the information of the member for Macquarie Fields, the day care centre will not be disadvantaged. The Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, and member for Dubbo has given a commitment to working with the committee and assures us that over the next two years the centre will be there—until 2016. He made a commitment to work with the Dubbo community to ensure their needs are met and that a long day care centre is available. The people in the gallery can be assured that their local member and this Government will deliver a long day care centre between now and December 2016.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! Opposition members will come to order. People in the gallery have travelled all the way from Dubbo over their concern about the long day care centre. Opposition members are acting like spoilt children—the sort of children the day care centre would not want. Opposition members will show the people in the gallery and the House some courtesy.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: It is interesting that because of the conduct and behaviour of Opposition members, most of them are on three calls to order. If they are called to order one more time, they will be removed from the House until we resume in three weeks. The Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, and member for Dubbo has made strong representations in relation to this matter. The investment in health in Dubbo already includes one of the biggest hospital redevelopments in regional New South Wales; many other regions in the State would love to have it.

Further funding of \$600,000 to plan inpatient, paediatric and support services has been provided. Consultation has commenced with health service staff, clinicians and the community to determine the highest clinical priorities that should be included in stages three and four. In parallel with this consultation, the master planning process has been completed. The redevelopment project team made a presentation to stakeholders at the zonal master plan meeting on 4 August 2014 about bringing health services that are currently located on external sites back onto the Dubbo Base Hospital campus. [*Time expired.*]

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [4.44 p.m.]: After listening to the arguments advanced by two Government members in this discussion, I ask myself: How on earth did it get to this? As part of the planning process, why was consideration not given to having the existing child care centre co-located at the hospital? I thank the people in the gallery and congratulate them on the enormous effort involved in collecting 10,000 signatures. I understand that the signatures were collected after many hours of standing on the streets of Dubbo. I hear what Government members are saying, but it beggars belief that consideration was never given to co-locating the existing child care centre. The whole point of the centre is where it is located.

The thought of the child care centre being relocated with some nefarious promise of a working group and maybe a solution after 2016 offers no solace to people who work at the centre, the parents of children at the

centre and certainly the children who attend the centre. One of the beauties of the Playmates Cottage is that it is a community-based child care centre. What the Government is offering is a private-public partnership, which is a very different proposal from the child care centre that currently exists.

Mr Troy Grant: Hang on. Do you know what you are talking about?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Canterbury will be heard in silence.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think I know more about early childhood education than the Minister. What we are seeing at the Dubbo Base Hospital are upgrades, which are fantastic—and of course people want that—as well as new purpose-built infrastructure, refurbishment works, clinical buildings, maternity and birthing units, a special care nursery and operating theatres, but there is no childcare centre. One of the great needs that exists in New South Wales, which relates to productivity and the economy, is places where children can be minded so that women can go back to work. That seems to me to be one of the really strong arguments for co-location of centres where people work. This centre has been operating for 30 years, it is the most economical service in Dubbo, and it was not considered properly or appropriately.

Mr Troy Grant: It was considered.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It might have been considered, but it was decided that it was not appropriate for it to stay where it is. That is what the argument is about. It is not about the redevelopment; no-one is arguing against that. The reason that people have driven for five hours from the Minister's community is that they are saying they want to keep the centre where it is. My strong advice to the Minister is to go back to the drawing board and make it possible. The Minister cannot tell me that it is not possible to do this. [*Time expired.*]

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I seek an extension of time.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The sessional orders do not provide for an extension of time to be granted in this instance.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In that case, I conclude by congratulating the people in the gallery.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that her time has expired. She will resume her seat.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to resolution matter of public importance proceeded with.

AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP DAY

Matter of Public Importance

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.48 p.m.]: Since 2001 Australian Citizenship Day has been celebrated on 17 September each year. It is a day for every Australian citizen to reflect on the true meaning and importance of having citizenship. Australian citizenship is not just about having legal status to stay in this great country. Being an Australian citizen is about having a sense of duty to this country. This is a common bond between all of us and we strive to make this country an even greater place with each passing day. In our multicultural Australia, it really does not matter where a person was born and what their culture is. Becoming an Australian citizen fills people with a great sense of pride and affirms their commitment to this great country. Becoming an Australian citizen means people have a social responsibility to their neighbours, their colleagues and their community—a responsibility to band together and work towards the common goal of driving this nation forward to make it a better place for us all.

It is a great honour and a privilege to be an Australian citizen and today we all must reflect on how fortunate we are to live here in this magnificent country and the importance of the roles we play as Australian citizens. Within the Fairfield local government area we have more than 100 new Australian citizens sworn in every month. I am struck with joy and happiness at each citizenship ceremony I attend to witness my local residents taking their pledge to our country. Throughout the ceremony, you can see on faces of each one of them the tremendous pride and happiness they are feeling to have finally become an Australian citizen.

I recall speaking with one young gentleman who had just completed his citizenship ceremony, who stated, "Now I can proudly tell people that I am Australian." For many people who have come to our country, becoming an Australian citizen is a second chance in life. Living in Australia gives them hope to rebuild, to start anew and make something for themselves. You only have to speak to the locals in my community of Fairfield to hear stories of the celebrations they had on the day they became Australian citizens. My mother's family continues to remind me of the time 62 years ago when they became Australian citizens as a family. It was an incredibly momentous occasion in their lives, and 62 years later they are still talking about how special that day was to them and what being an Australian means to them.

I believe Australia has a unique culture. Although we have an identity that may have some cringe-worthy moments—we all know what I am talking about—we are well known to never shy away from a great Aussie barbeque, a pie at the footy or a cup of tea with lamingtons. This is who we are. This is highlighted at the Fairfield citizenship ceremony when, at the conclusion of the ceremony, all new citizens are invited to come together to have a cup of tea or coffee with, yes, you guessed it, a lamington. It happens every month. The cameras come out, the smiles are abundant and the celebrations begin.

For some of us, our journeys are long and for some short, but each individual has a unique story about what it means to gain citizenship in our great country. In my capacity as a local member and as an Australian it makes me proud to see families accepting citizenship together. This is a true testament to their commitment to Australia. Yesterday citizenship ceremonies were held across Australia and thousands of new Australian citizens took the pledge. That is thousands of individuals who share in our ideals and our way of life, and will help us work towards building a better Australia for tomorrow.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [4.52 p.m.]: It is a great honour to speak on this matter today. I acknowledge the hard work of the Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy, the Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism in New South Wales and the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services who are in the Chamber. I and my family are products of multiculturalism. My grandparents on my father's side immigrated in the 1950s from Egypt and Malta and on my mother's side they came from Ireland. My wife's family also immigrated in the 1950s and 1960s. Each member of my family is the product of multiculturalism. Many of my family later became Australian citizens. I acknowledge the member for Fairfield for bringing this matter of public importance to the House.

Australian Citizenship Day is celebrated on 17 September each year and is a special day to reflect on and celebrate being an Australian citizen. Australian citizenship is more than a legal status, it is a common bond that represents our shared democratic beliefs, and gives us a sense of belonging and pride in our achievements as a great nation. Am I right in saying that? I am. All Australians are encouraged to value their citizenship and the contributions that citizens make in shaping our nation. Sydney is one of the most multicultural cities in the world. Twenty per cent of my constituents come from mainland China, and there are large Greek, Macedonian and Lebanese communities in the Oatley electorate. There is now a growing Indian community contributing to the Oatley electorate. It makes my electorate a great place to live and work, and for me to represent.

New South Wales has a new vision that includes a clear focus on the benefits and values that unite us as Australians and promote the social and economic benefits of cultural diversity. You can see that at citizenship ceremonies, as the previous speaker mentioned. At the Hurstville citizenship ceremony that I attended two months ago more than 90 people were becoming citizens. There was a broad cross-section of cultures represented at the ceremony, including Chinese, Indian, Italian and Greek. They are making our local community home and making it stronger. The southern suburbs are very multicultural. Our football team may not be good, but the St George community pride is healthy. I acknowledge the member for Rockdale who is in the Chamber and who also has a multicultural community. Diversity and community focus are what make Oatley a great place to live.

All of our communities are very much pro-family and pro-community, they are made up of hardworking individuals. When I reflect on my family history from the 1950s and 1960s it reflects the work ethic of many immigrants. Many parents had not just one, but multiple jobs to provide a roof over their head and to send their kids to good schools. They worked day in day out seven days a week to put food on the table and shelter over the heads of their families, and to form a community in Sydney, Australia.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.57 p.m.]: Having been Mayor of Fairfield City for about 10½ years and as someone who was born overseas, I have a very keen understanding of the importance of Australian Citizenship Day. In my time as mayor I presided over many Australian citizenship ceremonies. In

10½ years I calculate I have given 10,500 people citizenship in ceremonies held each month, except for January. Interestingly, last year more than 2,000 people became Australian citizens at more than 46 ceremonies held throughout the country.

What I loved about those ceremonies were the hope, pride, joy and excitement on the faces of people who were about to take the pledge to become Australian citizens. That is essentially what Australian Citizenship Day is all about. Celebrated each year on 17 September, Australian Citizenship Day is a time to celebrate and reflect on what it means to be an Australian citizen and the contribution of our citizens to this country. Being an Australian citizen is about more than just getting a certificate or achieving legal status: It is a shared bond that gives people a sense of belonging, pride in their country and a belief in the value of democracy. When I presided over citizenship ceremonies in Fairfield it always warmed my heart to hear people taking the pledge of loyalty to Australia, which states:

From this time forward, under God, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey.

Yesterday, 17 September, I mentioned that many people were taking the pledge across this great country. Today I give thanks to my late parents who in 1957 took the pledge on my behalf when I was a young boy. I give thanks to this country and to its citizens. I am proud to be an Australian and I am grateful for the opportunities, the peace, the prosperity and the sense of community that this country has offered me and my family. When people come to this country, Australia does not ask them to forget their country of birth, their culture, traditions or religion. Australia asks them to become a good citizen and a good neighbour and to bring their culture and traditions to be mixed with the other traditions and cultures that we have in this country. In that way they can help in making Australia an even greater country for future generations. We are thankful to this country for the great opportunities it has given us. Citizenship Day is all about living together, being good neighbours and respecting each other's values, religion and culture.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.00 p.m.], in reply: In closing this matter of public importance today I thank the member for Oatley and the member for Cabramatta for their contributions regarding Australian Citizenship Day, which was celebrated yesterday on 17 September. I am always touched by the fact that when we raise matters of public importance members on both sides of the House contribute. Often, members will share their personal stories relating to the matter being discussed. The member for Oatley proudly spoke about his heritage and his parents coming to Australia in the 1950s, his father being of Egyptian-Maltese heritage and his mother being from Ireland. The sense of pride that the member for Oatley has in his heritage is shared by many members of this House when we speak about our parents and the stories of their origins.

Recently I ventured back to Italy, the place of birth of my parents. Italians understand that in Australia multiculturalism is shared and citizenship is taken up by many people. It is a big step to come to this country where another language is spoken and where there are many different traditions. But people can be assured that it is a country that accepts all and I am sure that members agree that that is a good thing. The member for Cabramatta said that during his time as mayor more than 10,500 people received citizenship from him. When the member for Cabramatta walks the streets of Fairfield he is in the limelight. Many people approach him to say that they received their citizenship from him. They recall that special moment and say how fortunate they are to be a citizen of Australia.

The member for Cabramatta is the epitome of citizenship in this country. He came to Australia as a refugee boy who had spent many tumultuous years in a refugee camp. He went on to become the mayor of Fairfield and a representative in this place. I am proud to say that it is testament to the opportunities offered by this great country of ours. In closing this matter of public importance on Australian Citizenship Day, I note that as members who represent an electorate where new citizens take the pledge to affirm the values, ideals and traditions of this country we do not expect them to lose their traditions but to incorporate them into our great Australian way of life. In that way, we can continue to live in one of the greatest countries in the world.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

TONY BARTON, STATE HOCKEY PLAYER

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.03 p.m.]: I inform the House that Tony Barton from Taree has been selected to represent New South Wales in the Australian Over 35s hockey championships. Tony

was selected following the State Over 35s titles held in Armidale, where he was a member of the victorious Manning B Division team. Tony came from Port Macquarie to Manning hockey in 1997 and initially played with the Tigers team, which won several premierships. Tony now plays with and captains the Taree Sharks in the Mid North Coast Premier League. The Sharks is mainly a young side that has developed well during the 2014 season, thanks in part to Tony's skilful play and his mentoring of the young players.

VIETNAMESE NURSING HOME PROJECT

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.04 p.m.]: On 21 June I attended the Vietnamese Nursing Home Project fundraising dinner at the Fairfield RSL. The dinner provided an opportunity to update the community on the progress of the project. The Vietnamese Nursing Home Project is a major initiative that aims to raise funds to establish the first residential aged care facility for the Vietnamese community in New South Wales. The facility, to be located in south-west Sydney, will have 60 high-care beds and is expected to cost \$14 million. This worthwhile project is ably led by the Australian Vietnamese Aged Care Services in partnership with the Vietnamese Community of New South Wales, the Australian Vietnamese Health Professionals Association and the Vietnamese Women's Association. With these organisations on board, the success of this project is certain.

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL DAY BALL 2014

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [5.04 p.m.]: On 7 June 2014 I joined a number of my Parliamentary colleagues and Premier Mike Baird, MP, at Rosehill Gardens for the Philippine National Day Ball 2014, commemorating the 116th anniversary of the declaration of Philippine independence. Organised by the Philippine Community Council of NSW, it is one of the most anticipated days of the Philippine community, where they celebrate their independence and nationality. It is also a great day for others to learn more about Filipino culture, considering that the Philippines is one of Australia's close neighbours. The evening was a great success and showcased Australia's ever-growing multiculturalism and diversity, which I am incredibly passionate about. I thank Jose Relunia, President of the Philippine Community Council of New South Wales, for his work in holding this event and allowing us to be a part of it.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE NETBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [5.05 p.m.]: I ask the House to acknowledge the consistently outstanding achievements of Sutherland Shire Netball Association, located in my Miranda electorate. The Sutherland Shire Netball Association is the largest junior netball association in New South Wales and, in fact, the world. It has achieved considerable success at representative level over the years. I am sure it will continue to do so. On Saturday 6 September I had the privilege of attending the Sutherland shire netball grand finals and presentation ceremony.

I joined the Sutherland Shire Netball Association President, Maria Bettini, for a walk around the courts to watch the exciting and close contests in wet weather conditions. Several matches went into extra time and there was a fantastic crowd of supporters on the sidelines. Soon after, I had the honour of presenting trophies to the winners and the runners-up. I know the House will join me in congratulating all the administrators, coaches, umpires, volunteers, supporters and, of course, the players in the Sutherland Shire Netball Association on a fantastic 2014 season and wish them all the best for the 2015 season.

SUPERINTENDENT DAVID GRAY, FIRE AND RESCUE NSW

PATRICK INNESS, CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.06 p.m.]: I wish to recognise David Gray. Recruited at the age of 18 years in Sydney in 1974, Dave Gray is now Port Macquarie's number one fireman. Holding the rank of superintendent of Fire and Rescue NSW for the Mid North Coast region, Dave Gray—nicknamed Ugly Dave Gray—is now in charge of over 300 personnel at 19 stations in Coffs Harbour, Taree and an area from Tea Gardens to Gloucester, Woolgoolga and Dorrigo. Aside from a million dollar budget, administration responsibilities, caring for his crews and community outreach, Dave has been involved in bringing members of the Indigenous and migrant communities into Fire and Rescue. Congratulations to Superintendent Dave Gray on 40 years of helping to save lives and for his dedicated service.

I also acknowledge Port Macquarie resident Patrick Innes, who has been awarded the Mid North Coast Local Area Command Certificate of Appreciation at the recent Rotary Police Officer of the Year Awards for his

kind actions during an emergency situation. On 21 June 2012 Mr Innes was first on the scene at a horrific accident whilst driving along Hill Street, Port Macquarie. Quickly assessing the situation, he called ambulance services and tended to the needs of a badly injured woman, comforting her until emergency services arrived. I congratulate Patrick Innes on his commendable bravery and community spirit.

LAO CULTURAL CENTRE

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.07 p.m.]: I recognise the opening of the Lao Cultural Centre in Smithfield Road, Edensor Park, on Sunday 14 September. The opening ceremony included addresses by Deth Sysengrath, President of the Lao Community Advancement (NSW) Co-op Ltd, and Phanh Aryavong, President of the Lao Buddhist Society of NSW Incorporated. They and their respective board of directors and management committee members deserve credit and recognition on the opening of the office and for the unity that they have now developed within the community. The opening featured many community members and the participation of the venerable monks. The cultural centre is adjacent to the community's temple. It is all on ground originally granted by Neville Wran. This is another example of the significant cultural diversity that is at the centre of south-west Sydney's multicultural society.

HARRY GIBBONS, CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION FOR SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.08 p.m.]: I congratulate Harry Gibbons of Asquith Boys High School, who puts a sensational amount of effort into selling Legacy badges every year. Last year he sold more than \$1,000 worth of Legacy badges and raised \$3,200 for the charity. Harry is an outstanding leader in his school and within our broader community. This was recognised recently by Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Dame Marie Bashir, who awarded Harry a Certificate of Commendation in the Order of Australia for his outstanding community service. Harry is an outstanding example of what is best about our community in the Hornsby shire. I congratulate Harry on his efforts to raise funds for Legacy and thank him for his extraordinary service to our community.

LOST IN THE WOODS

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.09 p.m.]: I congratulate the Housing NSW tenants of Urana Street, Villawood, on the production of the short film titled *Lost in the Woods*. The movie stars 10 housing tenants who combined their talents to produce the short film. It took eight months to complete. The film was shown at the Indie Gems Film Festival for emerging filmmakers, held at Parramatta Riverside Theatre. The actors in the film were all given acting lessons and worked with the director of *Mad Max*, Nick Lathouris, cinematographer Vanna Seang, and producer Christian Tancred. *Lost in the Woods* is set in the worlds of social media, violence and paranoia in a notorious place known as "The Woods".

GEORGES RIVER COLLEGE, PEAKHURST CAMPUS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [5.10 p.m.]: The Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, and I officially opened the \$5.7 million upgrade at Georges River College at the Peakhurst Campus yesterday. This upgrade is a major investment in education infrastructure in the local area, providing the school with a new, state-of-the-art gym. The project also included two multipurpose outdoor courts, landscaping and covered walkways. Georges River College, Peakhurst Campus has been celebrating 50 years of quality educational provision for students.

The work now completed means that staff can continue to provide excellent learning opportunities in a modern facility that is second to none. The new gymnasium facility includes a stage and wings, a first-aid room, a staffroom, an equipment store, a chair room, a sports store, student change rooms and much more. Credit should be given to the school community for its support and the planning and delivery of the project. I wish the school community the very best for the future and I am sure it will enjoy this wonderful new facility.

EDUCATION WEEK AWARDS

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [5.11 p.m.]: I pay tribute to the unsung heroes in the education sector. I refer to non-teaching staff who make a vital contribution to their schools. The following people were recognised at the recent Education Week Award ceremony: Kerrie Morgan, Brenton Robertson and Tanya King from Abermain Public School; Jane Reynolds from Bellbird Public School; Nicola Murphy from Cessnock High School; Chris Burke from Cessnock Public School; Jan Stevens from Cessnock East Public School; Ann Gerard

from Cessnock West Public School; Gabrielle Naysmith from Congewai Public School; Michelle Lizdenis from Kearsley Public School; May Orr from Millfield Public School; Stephanie Earl and Kerri Redmond from Mount View High School; Michelle Rowsell from Nulkaba Public School; Louise Shearer from Paxton Public School; and Marissa Floyd from Wollombi Public School—which members opposite are planning to close.

ST GEORGES BASIN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.12 p.m.]: Next Tuesday 24 September I will have the pleasure of attending the official opening of the new St Georges Basin State Emergency Service unit. As members know, the NSW State Emergency Service is an emergency and rescue service that provides invaluable support to the South Coast community. Our region is the hub of State Emergency Service responsiveness, training and development, with the service's State headquarters located on the South Coast. Statewide training, planning and operational activities as well as the agency's corporate functions are based in our area.

The opening of the St Georges Basin unit is a reflection of the commitment of our local area to the mission of the State Emergency Service and the ever-increasing level of capability of the organisation. The St Georges Basin unit has already displayed its professionalism and compassion in a diverse range of rescue work. Flood rescue operators recently responded to a call from Kangaroo Valley to assist an elderly person to safety after having been isolated by floodwaters. They also assisted in vertical rescue efforts in Jervis Bay, freeing an individual trapped at the bottom of a cliff. I commend the unit for the work it has done so far. I look forward to working closely with the State Emergency Service in future to support the tireless work of volunteers in protecting our local communities in times of crisis.

SYDNEY UNIVERSITY SOCCER FOOTBALL CLUB BOYS YOUTH LEAGUE

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [5.13 p.m.]: Last night was the Sydney University Soccer Football Club Boys Youth League presentation dinner. Unfortunately, because the New South Wales Parliament was sitting until midnight I was unable to attend as I normally do every year. This year, the league came fifth in the club championships. Given the circumstances of the season, it was a very impressive result. I acknowledge the head coach, Stan Stamatellis, operations manager, George Lundy, convenor, George Phillips, and the coaches—one of whom is my son Matthew—and managers of the league for their dedication to the club and our young players. I also acknowledge the parents and volunteers, who every week display as much commitment and dedication to the teams as do the players. On behalf of the community, I thank Sydney University Youth League for providing our children the foundations of discipline and teamwork that are practised on and off the field. These attributes prepare our young players for a bright future in whatever path they choose. I wish the Sydney University Youth League the best of luck for next season and hope everyone enjoys the off season.

ARBOUR RETIREMENT VILLAGE

NOWRA BRIDGE PROJECT

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.14 p.m.]: I congratulate Arbour Retirement Village, which recently won the Best Retirement Village Development Australia Awards 2014 Excellence and Innovation Award run by the Property Council of Australia. I congratulate the development partners James Robinson, John Leo and Adam Somerville, residents and staff, including the general manager, Mike Lans. It is fantastic to have such a prestigious award go to a Shoalhaven development. It reaffirms the village's reputation as a brilliant choice of quality retirement living.

I also congratulate community members who were chosen to participate in the Roads and Maritime Services management workshop for the Nowra Bridge project to help determine the preferred location. Rebecca Grills and Ian Henry were selected from 20 community applicants and will represent community views to help the project team to identify priorities and criteria to assess the possible options. The New South Wales Government has provided \$2 million this year for planning a potential new river crossing and the workshop is an important step in this process. The one-day workshop will bring together Roads and Maritime Services project staff, technical staff and key stakeholders, including the two community representatives, to review the material gathered from the technical studies and community feedback.

BOB FENWICK MEMORIAL MENTORING GRANTS PROGRAM

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.15 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to six local mental health nurses who are among a select group recognised today for their participation in a prestigious mentor program

established to honour the memory of Orange mental health nurse and Australian Bravery Award recipient Bob Fenwick. Mr Fenwick was a highly respected and regarded mental health nurse who tragically died as a result of a work-related incident in 2011. The grants program was established by the New South Wales Government in recognition of his passionate support for mental health nursing and the assistance he offered to more junior staff.

Six local nurses from the Bloomfield Hospital were selected to take part in the program and one staff member took part as a mentor. They included Christine Gozon, Elizabeth Hove, Htet Aung Kyaw, George Dulay, Serena Miller, and Kate Jackson who mentored northern Sydney-based nurse Margaret Flynn at the hospital's Older People's Mental Health Policy Unit. I congratulate all the nurses and staff. It was wonderful to welcome Kate Fenwick to the House today.

ENDEAVOUR SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

MELISSA AND JOCK CAMPBELL, WANDA SURF LIFESAVERS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.16 p.m.]: I congratulate Endeavour Sports High School, Caringbah, which this week became school champions for the fourth time in the National School Boys Rugby League Competition. Endeavour won the grand final of the GIO Schoolboys Cup, the premier competition in schoolboys' rugby league, at Kogarah Jubilee Oval. Endeavour scored 22 points—Jamayne Isaako scored two tries and three goals and Billy Lennon and Curtis Scott each scored tries—defeating Patrician Brothers Blacktown, which scored 12 points. I congratulate centre Jamayne Isaako, who was awarded Player of the Match. I also congratulate Caringbah resident Dave Howlett who since 2007 has been the head coach of the Open Age schoolboy teams at Endeavour Sports High School.

I congratulate Wanda Surf Life Saving Club's Melissa and Jock Campbell on their gold and silver medals respectively at the World Life Saving Championships in France this week. Melissa won the women's two-kilometre masters beach race six months after the birth of their child. Jock finished second in the two-kilometre men's masters beach race. Both will compete later in their open division races.

SURF LIFE SAVING NSW

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.17 p.m.]: I have spoken in this place about the importance of the surf lifesaving movement. The movement's headquarters is in my electorate at Belrose. The official Raising of the Flag ceremony to launch the 2014-15 Surf Life Saving NSW patrol season will occur tomorrow morning at North Steyne Surf Life Saving Club. I commend the movement and acknowledge the official start of the season. As we all know, surf lifesavers do a wonderful job. I look forward to spending some time with those responsible for looking after us on our beautiful beaches tomorrow morning.

HUNTER VALLEY TRAINING COMPANY

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland) [5.18 p.m.]: Hunter Valley Training Company [HVTC] is Australia's oldest and largest group training organisation, having employed and trained more than 20,000 people over the past 33 years. Operating as a non-profit organisation based at Rutherford near Maitland, HVTC provides employment and training opportunities to about 1,000 people a year and has 10 regional branches located throughout New South Wales. I was delighted to officiate with Minister Piccoli at the recent opening of the new \$5 million HVTC Skills Centre.

The centre provides specialised and flexible trade, post-trade and short course training through its training organisation. I congratulate the HVTC board and particularly the chairman, Robert Cameron, AO. I also acknowledge the Hon. Milton Morris, AO. A building named in his honour was unveiled. Milton Morris, a former member for Maitland, was the founder of the company and still devotes a great deal of time to the company. The HVTC is a fantastic organisation and I again congratulate those involved.

YOUTH HOSTEL ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [5.19 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the incredible contribution made by the Youth Hostel Association [YHA] Australia and congratulate it on its seventy-fifth anniversary. Of course, the best YHA hostel in the world is in Pittwater. It is located in a beautiful heritage arts and craft guesthouse set on a sylvan hillside above Morning Bay. Basking in northern sunshine, the

Pittwater YHA has operated adjacent to Kuring-gai Chase National Park since 1967, continuing a legacy from the original Pittwater YHA that first opened in the early 1940s. I thank John Doherty and his wonderful partner, Sarah Polomka. Together they have run the hostel for more than a decade and have provided many visitors with a warm welcome and a wonderful stay in the heart of the best community in the best country on earth.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ASSOCIATION OF MARIA SS DELLE GRAZIE AND SAN VITTORIO MARTIRE

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.19 p.m.]: I inform the House of the activities of an organisation called Maria SS Delle Grazie and San Vittorio Martire—the Association of Maria SS Delle Grazie and San Vittorio Martire. This organisation has existed in Sydney for more than 50 years, established by people from Calabria in the south of Italy—the Calabrese. Many of its members are constituents of mine and many of their activities occur in my electorate. I first attended a function of this group in 1994, its annual charity ball that year. Its most recent charity ball was held on 5 September at the Conca D'oro at Riverwood. In addition to the annual ball, the association conducts an annual Italian festival, which will be held in November in the grounds of the Liverpool Catholic Club.

In the years I have been involved with the association two distinguishing features of its activities come to mind. One is its unrelenting focus on charity. The group has a very deep sense of wanting to assist other people apart from itself—in a sense, for some of the group, sharing the good fortune that they have enjoyed. The other is remembrance, maintenance and celebration of their cultural traditions. In that sense the group is part of the extraordinary tapestry known as Australian multiculturalism. On the evening of the annual dinner, speeches were given by the association's president, Silvio Marrapodi, and its vice-president, Joe Bova, along with some comments from the association's secretary, the indefatigable Tina Furfaro. There were also unavoidable speeches from the members of Parliament who were present. The acting chair of the Community Relations Commission made a contribution.

A presentation was made by the Junction Works, a disability service based at Austral well known within the Liverpool region and, indeed, beyond. The Junction Works was one organisation that benefited from the association's fundraising on the night. As I said, the Junction Works is quite well known and has been providing disability, youth and children's and community services in south-western Sydney since 1987. Its expressed mission is "creating new possibilities in people's lives". Accordingly, it focuses on delivering support services that are designed to reduce disadvantage and increase people's capacities. This is done through skill development, decision support and social connectivity. The Junction Works' information states:

Support from communities, businesses and foundations and grants makes it possible for The Junction Works to provide additional opportunities for the people we support, like the digital inclusion program and our going places program which supports the development of independent living skills.

Currently, the Junction Works supports 253 people, including those with an intellectual disability, a developmental disability and a physical disability or, indeed, both. Its aim is to enable people to live a life of opportunities, inclusion and self-determination. One particular initiative of the Junction Works is to develop a transition and respite house. As well as providing some respite, the Junction Works has a transition plan for people to move towards greater independence, especially young people with disabilities. The transition and respite house is intended to support people with disabilities to move towards a sustainable and more independent living arrangement. It will benefit those young people with a disability who are capable of living a more independent life as well as provide respite support for parents and carers.

It is appropriate to acknowledge the other association office bearers and committee members for 2014. They are vice-president, Frank Furfaro; assistant secretary, Tipaldo; treasurer, Roy Ameduri; assistant treasurer, Roy Agostino; and chairman, Adriano Coluccio. Committee members are Frank Baudille, Giuseppe Carlino, Frank Cosentino, Antonio Fuda, Robert Furfara, Frank Macri, Saverio Mazzaferro, Pino Meli, Joe Nesci, Frank Placanica, Cosimo Simone, Anthony Spagnolo, Joe Tipaldo and Dom Ursino.

I should acknowledge the sponsors. Events such as the annual ball would be of comparatively limited success without sponsors, who include Business 2 Business Commercial Fitouts, Adriano Coluccio Funeral

Services, Maggiotto Building Company, Superfresh at Eastwood and Crows Nest, Gulli Food Distributors, Rosetta Prestia, Vince Cammareri Travel, Kemps Creek Family Centre, Elders Real Estate Liverpool, Formtec Group, Roy Marrapodi, Living Choices Kitchens and Joinery, Sutherland Best Fresh, the Food Lover's Market Moorebank, Liverpool Catholic Club, Navarra Venues, Metro Cuts and Colour Specialists, Panuccio Tailors, Fabrizia Pizzeria and Restaurant, and Signora Maria Montelione. It was a delight and pleasure to be involved in this year's event, as it has been for all prior years.

SHOALHAVEN DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.23 p.m.]: This evening I shall discuss the growing need for additional parking facilities at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. From the outset, I commend the doctors, nurses and health professionals at the hospital for their continued dedication and extraordinary efforts in providing world-class care to local patients. We are privileged to be served by men and women who provide exceptional healthcare services to our region, and I express the appreciation of all local residents for their service. However, there remains the pressing issue of access to additional onsite parking at the hospital. Since the redevelopment of the hospital in 2001, the increasing number of staff and patients has meant that the current car parking facilities are insufficient.

I was proud to be part of the Liberal-Nationals Government that committed in 2010 to delivering an additional 124 spaces and did so in 2011, and more recently provided an additional 24 spaces. The delivery of these spaces was overwhelmingly welcomed by the community. However, with additional health facilities delivered on the site by this Government since 2011—including the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre, Shoalhaven Sub-Acute Adult Mental Health Unit and the Grand Pacific GP Super Clinic, as well as increased patient presentations to the hospital in the past five years—even more parking facilities are needed at the hospital.

Clearly, this issue is not insignificant and indicates a requirement to meet vast and growing community needs. Medical staff and patients are increasingly frustrated at not being able to access the car park on most days of the week. Previously, I presented to the House an excerpt from an email sent to me by one of my constituents reflecting the impact this infrastructure has had on the lives of local families. It was the Liberal-Nationals Government that responded to the needs of a mother who was unable to take her six-year-old daughter to hospital for treatment.

In the face of this situation, the Minister for Health and Medical Research, Jillian Skinner, has been compassionate and dedicated to helping countless families in similar situations. The Minister understood the particular needs people faced in trying to access the hospital, and worked with me relentlessly until additional spaces were delivered. Individuals already ill and vulnerable should not be forced to experience further discomfort trying to reach healthcare services. The New South Wales Government and Minister Skinner have ably ensured that this is not the case.

I am confident that the assistance this Government has provided will continue; it needs to continue. I have received countless emails from individuals thanking this Government for providing them with the ability to access vital services without added strain. However, still more work needs to be done. I ask the community once again to join me in a campaign to further increase the number of parking spaces. I am sure the member for Kiama joins me in requesting community support for a campaign to increase car parking at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital.

Today I launched a petition drawing the attention of the Government to the need for additional parking spaces at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital and requesting, once again, the same support and commitment from the Minister. Considering the families, children and staff needing constant access to the hospital, it is important that any expansion of parking facilities at the hospital be at grade with reasonable fees, and only if they are necessary to fund car parking services.

The Labor Government failed to deliver for my local community for 16 years. Only the Baird Government has proven itself able to provide for the Shoalhaven. Once again I call on the Government to meet the needs of doctors, nurses, health professionals, patients and visitors to the Shoalhaven's health facilities and provide this infrastructure in a way that is accessible to the local community. I will, as will the member for Kiama, continue to work with all levels of administration, including the hardworking members of the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, with whom I meet regularly, and the board regarding this issue to provide a swift solution for the Shoalhaven.

I hope that after these many years of positive efforts the Government will continue to work with me and the member for Kiama to provide a solution to a real and growing problem. As a compassionate and diligent representative, the Baird Government has been committed to serving my community, and I am confident that it will continue to deliver better outcomes for the Shoalhaven. The reality is that we need more car spaces because the current number is inadequate. The problem continues even following the 2011 election commitment.

More facilities are being built on the site of the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. We need to send a strong message to the Government not just from local members but also from the entire community about the need for additional car parking. I ask the community again to join us in a campaign of petitions and letter writing to ensure the strongest possible message is conveyed to the Government. I do not favour multistorey car parking because that means high fees, as happens in Wollongong where patrons pay \$17 to \$20 a day. That expense is not appropriate for South Coast constituents. We want at-grade parking with an additional 200 spaces.

TENNIS NSW SOUTHWEST REGIONAL TENNIS CENTRE PROJECT

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events) [5.28 p.m.]: It gives me pleasure to speak about an exciting proposal for the people of Young. Young has a proud and proven history as a tourist destination, attracting people to the Young shire for the annual Cherry Festival in December. A new internationally rated tennis facility in Young is being proposed that would further enhance Young's attraction as a tourist destination. The New South Wales Government has already assisted the Young Shire Council with a \$1.2 million upgrade of the Young sports fields through the Local Government Infrastructure Renewal Scheme. The funding for this development enabled the upgrade of the council's sports fields and provided up-to-date facilities such as car parking, lighting, toilets and change rooms.

Tennis NSW plans to develop a number of priority regional tennis venues in targeted communities across New South Wales, including in my electorate. An investment in tennis infrastructure in New South Wales is imperative to bring the facilities up to standard to further develop players and to encourage community participation. The proposed \$7 million south-west New South Wales regional tennis centre project for Young aims to deliver an integrated multi-use venue for tennis and bowls, with professional-standard tennis courts, hot-shot courts and a redeveloped clubhouse. Further, it will include a community meeting space for other local sporting and community groups, a family play area equipped with a children's playground and a barbecue area. The centre has the support of Young Shire Council, Tennis NSW, Young Tennis Club and, as the member for Burrinjuck, it also has my support.

I note in regional New South Wales there are more than 310,000 citizens playing tennis at all levels, and in the south-west area of New South Wales, which takes in the township of Young, there are almost 28,000 players. Regional New South Wales has produced some great tennis players including the amazing Lesley Turner Bowrey from Trangie, who won two grand slam titles and was runner-up four times; Evonne Goolongong Cawley from Barellan, who won seven grand slam titles and was runner-up 11 times; and the great Margaret Court, who was born in Albury. More recently Nick Kyrgios from Canberra staged the big surprise at Wimbledon by defeating Rafael Nadal. Nick spent his early years in tennis playing on the regional tennis circuit.

It is through partnerships with Tennis NSW that we will see more stars from regional New South Wales. But tennis is not a game limited to professionals. It is a game for all. It is part of Australia's national sporting and cultural heritage and provides the people of New South Wales with an activity that is safe, healthy and fun; relevant to all cultural backgrounds; and age- and gender-neutral. It is affordable for families and young people. In fact, in the last 12 months 689,000 people played tennis in New South Wales, and 468,000 people expressed a keen interest to play tennis. As of June 2014 there were 115,546 registered tennis participants in the various clubs across the State.

Further to our participation in tennis, a great number of us enjoy watching tennis matches. This summer is set to be a great one for tennis fans. We have the Hopman Cup in Western Australia, starting in early January. This is followed by the Apia International in Sydney, which I hope every member of this House will attend, from 11 to 17 January. The Australian Open in Melbourne follows. These events attract an international audience and highlight Australia as a tennis destination. In the last year there has been an increase in international ticket purchases from Asia of 79.6 per cent; from New Zealand of 107 per cent; and from Europe of 220.4 per cent.

The Apia International Sydney puts a global spotlight on Sydney with a cumulative global audience of 21½ million. This international attention can be seen in the Apia International website, which had more than two million views in the two months leading up to the 2014 tournament. Destination NSW is working with Tennis NSW to make 2015 even more exciting, by bringing many of the world's best players to Sydney. I support the proposal for the south-west New South Wales regional tennis centre for Young. Tennis is a part of our sporting heritage and a game for all.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.32 p.m.]: Declan Flaherty is a young constituent who has undertaken work experience in my office this week. He drafted this speech suggesting a possible mandatory "safe drivers" course for new licence holders. For many people who live in areas underserved by public transport, driving is an essential means to reach employment and schooling, and to conduct daily errands. The value of a drivers licence extends to younger people, with some 77 per cent of those aged between 16 and 25 in New South Wales holding a learners licence, provisional licence or independent licence. This represents some 380,000 young people across the State.

For the past decade young drivers have represented 16 per cent of the entire driving population of New South Wales, but have accounted for more than 26 per cent of all collisions and an unacceptably high number of deaths. Despite extensive programs and road-safety campaigns from Transport for NSW, this figure is only just beginning to marginally decline. Tougher licencing restrictions and higher age requirements have contributed to the decline in licence ownership and deaths amongst young people. However, are young drivers safer drivers as a result of the various regulatory changes in licencing?

Declan turns 16 on 1 December this year and is looking forward to attaining his L-plates and beginning his driving experience. After 120 hours of supervised driving by a full licence holder and after 12 months, holders of a learners permit can apply for a provisional 1, or red Ps, licence. Optional and theoretical safety courses are available from Roads and Maritime Services, and these courses run for a divided but total period of four hours. This course, once completed, can count for 20 hours of logbook credit. Also, practical driving with a professional driving instructor can count for three hours of driving for each one hour of real time, up to a limit. I understand the Safer Drivers Course, combined with professional driving lessons, can reduce the number of compulsory supervised hours from 120 to 80.

One option to minimise car crashes involving young people and reduce the rate of fatalities is to adjust the learners course. Declan's proposal is that learners should complete an eight-hour mandatory safety course, which would incorporate the existing four-hour theoretical course. The course would involve various presentations from first-hand emergency workers including police paramedics, emergency department staff and Fire and Rescue NSW. This is an aspect of licencing that is absent under the current regime. The course is currently in operation across New South Wales, held at numerous Police Youth Citizens Clubs [PCYC]. However, the course is currently tailored to traffic offenders. It is designed to give offenders insight into the importance of safe driving practices, through front-line workers providing first-hand experience and expertise to influence poor driving attitudes.

This suggestion involves those most capable of education influencing young drivers' behaviour by being in direct contact with and influencing those who most need it: inexperienced drivers who generate a quarter of all motor accidents on New South Wales roads. Potential benefits include safer roads, fewer deaths and a reduction in crash-related costs that currently run to \$2.8 billion per year. There is nothing more confronting than a first-hand, front-line and realistic account of a tragic and avoidable incident. The proposal seeks to directly involve youth and new drivers with their respective communities through their PCYC. Such a connection can further aid attempts to alter community attitudes towards risky driving behaviours. This, in turn, could potentially lead to declines in risky behaviours, not to mention placate other risky behaviours and build a sense of community. For regional or rural areas without a PCYC, the course could be delivered through a local school.

The course would deal with the major causes of traffic accidents today, including driving under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, fatigue and speed, the biggest killer of young people on New South Wales roads. It would outline the law, road rules, roles of emergency services, effects of road trauma and the consequences of road trauma from victims' perspectives. The relative costs of implementing this program could be partly added to the current cost of the licencing fees and are insubstantial compared to the costs faced by the New South Wales taxpayer relating to crashes.

The course would undoubtedly benefit young drivers. It would provide them with the necessary degree of understanding and insight when first becoming entrusted with the responsibility of a drivers licence. The course would help provide them with first-hand responsibility for controlling motor-vehicles. It would also ensure active interaction between community groups for a purpose: to make the roads of New South Wales a safer place for all constituents. A step toward safer drivers now is a step toward safer roads tomorrow.

MEMBER FOR MACQUARIE FIELDS

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [5.37 p.m.]: I start by thanking my colleagues for coming to the Chamber. Tonight I wish to announce to the House and the people of Macquarie Fields my decision not to contest the 2015 State election. It has been an honour and a privilege to represent the Labor Party and the people of Macquarie Fields during the last eight years I have spent in the New South Wales Parliament. My decision to leave politics at the next election is based on my desire to spend more time with my family—something that life in politics simply does not allow. They did not choose to be in politics but have been a constant source of love and support during my time in Parliament.

I wish to thank my friend John Robertson, who is in the House tonight, for his guidance, support and friendship in the last five years. It has been a great trip, and I wish him and the Labor team all the best at the next election and beyond. I will continue to work for the electorate of Macquarie Fields and the New South Wales Labor Party until the 2015 election and thereafter. I will support in any way I can whoever the local Labor Party members choose to nominate as Labor's candidate for Macquarie Fields at the next election.

I thank the local Labor Party members in Macquarie Fields for their loyalty, friendship and support over the past eight years. They have been a constant source of inspiration, kindness and friendship during my time in politics and I could not have done it without them. I take this opportunity to thank my staff, Natalina Coluccio, Marion Goymour, Sandra Sullivan and Rheuben Freelander—who is in the House—for their hard work, kindness and support during my time in politics. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in politics over the past eight years and I continue to enjoy every day I spend in politics but, for me, it is the right time to leave.

I thank the community of Macquarie Fields for their support and for electing me to represent them. Macquarie Fields is a fantastic area. It is where my wife, Jenny, and I have lived and raised our family and worked for 24 years. We will continue to work to improve our area, particularly in health services, in the years to come. After the 2015 election I will return to paediatric practice and clinical teaching in south-western Sydney. It is an exciting time to be a doctor in Western Sydney with the best generation of medical students that New South Wales has ever seen. Working within the public health system as a paediatrician has been my passion for 40 years. I will continue to work to deliver high-quality health care and social justice for all our local kids. Thank you.

Members and officers of the House stood in acclamation.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for his service to New South Wales.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.41 p.m.]: On behalf of all members I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Macquarie Fields. Although we have not always seen eye to eye in the Chamber because of the differences across our party lines, at the end of the day we need to remember that the vast majority of us come into this Parliament with the intention of achieving better outcomes for our constituents and the people of New South Wales. The member for Macquarie Fields can be proud of the fact that he has done that. On behalf of all members I thank him for his contribution to Parliament.

PORT MACQUARIE-HASTINGS ROADS

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Small Business, and Minister for the North Coast) [5.42 p.m.]: The state of council roads in the Port Macquarie-Hastings local government area was recently brought to my attention by more than 500 concerned community members. These residents took the time to put pen to paper by way of a petition to outline their concerns regarding the council's priorities. They believe that council has discriminated against them in regard to decisions that have been made to carry out repairs on rural roads and to construct new roads in their local government area. They believe that the roads are not getting the priority funding and attention that they deserve. The petition, which contains 516 signatures, has also been tabled in Parliament by the member for Port Macquarie, Mrs Leslie Williams.

One of the core functions of local government is to manage the day-to-day maintenance of local roads. This Government has financially assisted councils with this task in a variety of ways, including through the Local Government Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, which has provided more than \$1 billion to councils for local infrastructure maintenance, including roads. However, it seems that the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council is unable to get its act together and cannot deliver infrastructure for local roads. Three years ago this Government allocated \$18 million towards work on the Stingray Creek Bridge and upgrades to Ocean Drive, but the council has dilly-dallied and work has not started on these vital projects. Meanwhile in 2013 council allocated a sum of \$950,000 for works to carry out much-needed repairs to Sarahs Crescent in the King Creek area near Wauchope. However, at the eleventh hour, council redirected this funding to other works and no explanation was given to residents. They were extremely disappointed because it was their expectation that council would stick to its designated program and complete much-needed works.

The appalling state of Sarahs Crescent is replicated on other busy roads such as Beechwood Road, King Creek Road and Pembroke Road around Wauchope. Ratepayers become irate when they see funds being spent on projects to resurface already good roads in the Port Macquarie central business district and on promotional videos and media advertising featuring the mayor. By way of contrast, this Government is delivering record funding to roads. In the Oxley electorate, approximately \$400 million was allocated in this year's State budget, which included \$2.6 million to repair and upgrade the Oxley Highway around Wauchope. Council is not listening to its ratepayers and it is not delivering vital infrastructure to the rural and western areas of the beautiful Hastings Valley in and around Wauchope and towards the upper Hastings.

My advice to Port Macquarie-Hastings Council—it can choose to take it or not—is simple: To be fit for the future, councils need to undertake their core responsibilities efficiently and effectively. There is no more basic a responsibility than giving ratepayers—including those in rural areas—decent roads on which to drive. This Government has shown a willingness to help all councils achieve this through the Local Government Infrastructure Renewal Scheme and the new Fixing Country Roads program that was announced in this year's State budget, which is allocating \$37.5 million to help councils repair local roads. It is time that the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council stopped playing politics and worked more closely and effectively with its local State members—including me and the member for Port Macquarie, Mrs Leslie Williams—on behalf of its ratepayers and the road users of the Port Macquarie-Hastings local government area.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.47 p.m.]: As Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Transport I commend the Deputy Premier for outlining that this Government has injected \$400 million into funding for roads in his electorate of Oxley. This Government is spending a record \$5.5 billion on roads across New South Wales in this financial year—record road spending that has not been seen in the history of this State—which comes on the back of funding of more than \$500 million for the two previous years. Road infrastructure and, in particular, safe roads are some of the most important aspects for which this Government is responsible. Every member of this Government can feel justifiably proud of the funding that the Baird-Stoner Government has injected into roads.

GALLIPOLI SCHOOL TOUR 2015

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [5.48 p.m.]: On 25 April 2015 Australia will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli for World War I. On 4 August this year the Centenary of Anzac commemorations began and with it came the opening of the ballot for the Government's 2015 Gallipoli School Tour. The school tour will include 100 students and 28 supervising teachers from New South Wales. They will have a unique opportunity to be a part of the commemorative ceremonies to mark this milestone in Australian history. Schools were selected by ballot and I am pleased that of the 420 expressions of interest in New South Wales Lisarow High School was one of the successful schools. Lisarow High School is the only school on the Central Coast to be selected and it will be a great honour for four students in years 10, 11 or 12 to have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in such an historical event.

At the invitation of the school's principal, Anthony Angel, I am honoured to be a part of the selection panel to assist in determining which students will be attending the Gallipoli School Tour next year. Through the selection process students are invited to submit a piece of work on a theme or topic that encompasses the Centenary of Anzac. Submissions may be a research paper, an essay, a poem or a song, or a visual representation. As a part of the interview process, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate they have the qualities and attributes that would befit a student representative of New South Wales at the commemoration. As part of the 100 students representing New South Wales, these students will join students from other States, descendants of those who served at Gallipoli, Australian First World War widows and thousands of Australians

who were successful in the national ballot, in participating in the official commemorative services at Gallipoli next year. I cannot emphasise enough what an incredible opportunity this presents. It will mark a significant moment in our history and will be a life-changing experience.

Australia's role in the First World War was monumental for our country and our State. It was our country's first major conflict, and New South Wales saw more than 164,000 men between the ages of 18 and 44 enlist in the Australian Imperial Force and the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force. More than 50 per cent of the volunteers for the Australian Imperial Force from New South Wales were either killed or wounded. While the Gallipoli campaign was comparatively minor in the First World War and was not as successful as hoped, it has become Australia's iconic symbol of bravery, mateship, sacrifice, tenacity and spirit. It has played a significant role in defining us as a nation. The Anzacs are synonymous with our sense of identity as Australians.

Out of our first test of nationhood the Anzac legend was born, and as a nation we pay tribute to all our serving men and women—past and present—on Anzac Day. We remember them. The Anzac Centenary program is not solely about the Gallipoli campaign and Australia's involvement in the First World War; it is a way for us to reflect and honour our uniformed men and women throughout all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. We contemplate what it means to be Australian and we pause for a moment to be truly grateful for the freedom that is protected and fought for by those who serve in our armed forces. Charles Bean, Australia's most famous war correspondent and key founder of the Australian War Memorial, said of the Anzacs:

What these men did nothing can alter now. The good and the bad, the greatness and the smallness of their story will stand. Whatever of glory it contains nothing now can lessen. It rises, as it will always rise, above the mists of the ages, a monument to great-hearted men; and, for the nation, a possession forever.

The Gallipoli landing may have occurred nearly 100 years ago, but the weight of significance remains, perhaps even more so now. From generation to generation, the sacrifices made should never be forgotten. I look forward to seeing what students from Lisarow High School present as their submission to the selection panel and their personal interpretations of the Centenary of Anzac. The successful students will be announced in December this year. I am certain that each student who goes to Gallipoli next year will take from it an individual personal experience that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

ORANGE TIGERS AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.52 p.m.]: This afternoon I pay tribute to the mighty Orange Tigers who have claimed back-to-back Central West Australian Football League [AFL] premierships for the first time since 1999. I was at the ground to witness history in the making. It was a wonderful game and a wonderful victory by the mighty Tigers, who were up against the Bathurst Bushrangers. The opening stanza was hotly contested; it was physical and the Bushies came out in full force. The Bushies got out to an early lead and many of us who were watching were a little concerned that things were not going to script for the Tigers. But the Tigers regrouped and in the end skipper Tim Barry lifted to propel his side's lead out to 40 points in the second quarter. I do not know what was said in the second quarter but certainly the Tigers took the game to a new level. The *Central Western Daily* reported on the match and said:

Whatever coach Nathan Pearce said at that change must have been genius, because no team in the region is capable of running with the kind of footy the Tigers dished up in the ensuing 25 minutes. It was breathtaking.

Four goals to Barry and one each to Robotham, Bubnich and Phillips, the Tigers attack was simply irresistible for the Bushrangers' defence, with Barry's last in the quarter a thumper from 50 metres out. From there the result was almost forgone.

It was breathtaking. The final result was a great Tigers victory, 19.14.128 to 10.10.70, for an absolutely stunning grand final—the club's first home grand final win since 2002. Who are these champions of the Central West, I can hear you asking, Mr Acting-Speaker.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Name them.

Mr ANDREW GEE: I will name them. Captain Courageous, Tim Barry; No. 23, Daniel Bruce; No. 7, Josh Bubnich; No. 8, Matt Dippolito; No. 19, Simon Ewin; No. 37, Justin Fong; No. 11, Nicholas Goudie; No. 36, Dale Hunter; No. 4, Paul Jenkins; No. 20, Simon Kay; No. 14, Jarrad Lenegan; No. 10, Ben McKenna; No. 24, Mitch McKenna; No. 2, Corey McKenzie; No. 9, Ben Monaghan; No. 27, Jaydan Phillips; No. 33, Murray Robotham; No. 16, Chris Rothnie; No. 17, Michael Rothnie; No. 5, Joel Ryder; No. 18, Leigh Turner; and No. 39, Jeremy Tuson. I also pay tribute to coach Nathan Pearce, who had this side working beautifully despite a bit of a hiccup and an unexpected start.

Well done to the Bathurst Bushrangers. They tell me that often there is no love lost between these two teams, but the Bushrangers put up a great contest and I pay tribute to them because it was a hotly contested and hard-fought game. I also acknowledge the Tigers reserve grade team and the under 18s team, who were not successful but they played in the best traditions of the Tigers. Congratulations to the Bushrangers who took home the silverware in those grades. I also make special mention of the central umpires on the day: Scott Crowley, Joe Tatnall, Adrian Bowden, Paul Willoughby, Brenton Showell and Brendon Bedford. I saw Paul Willoughby from the sidelines—he ran like a tiger all day and it was a great effort.

I also mention James Williams, with whom I watched the match—he did the welcome to country and I certainly appreciated his company on the day—and Amber Cashel who performed the national anthem. It was truly a remarkable day. I pay tribute to all members of the team for their hard work as they did so well. We are very proud of them. I also pay tribute to the organiser, Mr Whitton, my old friend who did so well. It was a difficult organisational feat on the day but he brought it home beautifully. Congratulations to the Orange Tigers.

CENTENARY OF ANZAC ESSAY COMPETITION

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.57 p.m.]: Today I am a proud man. I am proud of the achievements of the young people in Western Sydney. Today I get to announce to the House the winners of the Centenary of Anzac Essay Competition—the six students from Western Sydney who will join Jason Morrison, the member for Blue Mountains and me on a trip to the battlefields of the First World War and London in November. The Premier announced the winners at Parramatta RSL Club on Monday 25 August with Anthony Ball from ClubsNSW, who was joined by Major General Warren Glenny and the directors of the Castle Hill RSL, which sponsored the morning tea. Credit goes to Anthony Ball who is generously sponsoring the trip. Panania's Dan Nguyen of Hurlstone Agricultural High School said:

The Centenary of Anzac is about today's brave, strong Australians and New Zealanders, those that fight for our country in present conflicts. ANZAC is also about us, modern society. They died for us and we must remember them.

Lihini De Silva of Baulkham Hills High School said:

Our closest experiences to war are merely through a black box in our living room at 6pm, so while we speak loosely of peace, we cannot truly appreciate its deeper meaning as long as we cannot justify the meaning of war.

Samuel Lewis of St Columba's Catholic College wrote:

The ANZAC legend was forged on the Western Front as well as in Gallipoli, as Australians and New Zealanders upheld the virtues of mateship, bravery, discipline and initiative; all the qualities that modern Australians strive to uphold.

Emily Frey of Quakers Hill High School was inspired by our servicemen. She said, "As a young Australian I aspire to remember the courage, leadership, mateship and bravery modelled by our ANZACS and to apply these qualities to every aspect of my life." Madison Thompson, also of St Columba's Catholic College, Springwood—two of the six winners came from that school, which is a remarkable achievement—wrote, "Through commemoration of the Centenary of ANZAC, we once more empower those individuals whose sacrifice has shaped modern Australia and demonstrate our commitment to upholding the values at the core of our national ethos." Jack Jeffries of Parramatta Marist High School said: "They remember them and they remember what it means to be Australian." I offer my congratulations to the winners. I am sure everyone agrees that they will be embarking on a trip that will present them with many unique opportunities.

One thing all the essays had in common was a respect for and understanding of our national symbols and traditions. Unfortunately, that understanding has not found its way to the City of Sydney council. I am, of course, referring to the "Rising Sun", which has been worn as a badge on the slouch hat of our diggers since 1902. However, the City of Sydney council recently mutilated Sydney's Martin Place Cenotaph by replacing the crown on the Rising Sun badge with the letter "A". Not only does that reduce the aesthetic appeal of the badge but it also sneers at the tradition of diggers who served wearing that same badge. The only reason I can come up with for the change is that Lord Mayor Clover Moore is a republican. She wanted to remove a reference to the Crown and our sovereign and replace it with a single letter "A". I find this repugnant and I am speechless with anger. The Lord Mayor should be forced to apologise. Lord Mayor Clover Moore is making a cheap political statement as we pause to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac. Our sacred symbols should not be changed because she does not like the Constitution or the people's will.

Lord Mayor Clover Moore thought this change would go unnoticed, but it was noticed by countless veterans at the Battle of Australia ceremony at the Cenotaph last week and they were understandably distressed.

The Lord Mayor will never understand the depth of sacrifice and meaning of these symbols because her vision is blurred by hatred—hatred of tradition, hatred of sacrifice, hatred of Australia. Fortunately, the majority of Australians are good, thinking people and I doubt they will tolerate this decision to illegally change one of our national symbols. I urge the City of Sydney council to return the Rising Sun badge to its original form. My essay competition demonstrates that many young Australians still have the deepest respect for our diggers and national symbols. I am proud that kids from Western Sydney are so connected to our past and possess such a rich understanding of our heritage that they chose to enter this important essay competition.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.02 p.m.]: I acknowledge the outstanding work and leadership of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Youth, Homelessness and the Centenary of Anzac. I also congratulate the winners of the Anzac Youth Ambassadors Essay Competition. This worthwhile competition raises awareness and reviews our history. Importantly, it teaches us to remember, respect and value those things that are important to us as Australians. I am disappointed to learn of the actions of the Lord Mayor of Sydney. I support the comments of the member for Baulkham Hills and wish him well in having this matter of great concern to him—and, I am sure, the wider community—rectified.

BIRRONG RAILWAY STATION

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [6.03 p.m.]: The implementation of the new Sydney Trains timetable in October 2013 has caused great concern and inconvenience to many constituents in my electorate, particularly to the residents of Birrong. The new timetable was slapped together without public consultation and as a result it is adding stress to the lives of commuters and residents of Birrong, Chester Hill, Sefton and Yagoona. Birrong is a quiet suburb with approximately 1,200 households. Historically, Birrong railway station is a small station on the Bankstown line that served the needs of local residents and nearby primary and secondary school students. The station is accessed from a narrow overhead bridge. I have witnessed commuters alighting from vehicles in the middle of the road bridge to access the station. There is no safe pick-up and drop-off area at the station or easy access lift and there is limited shelter from the elements.

Elderly commuters such as Fred and Betty Dihm have great difficulty accessing the platform—it is even worse in the rain because the stairs are exposed to the elements. Since October 2013, despite only ever being a minor suburban station, Birrong railway station has been transformed into an interchange on the T3 Bankstown line. This has resulted in many residents in the neighbouring suburbs of Chester Hill, Villawood and Sefton utilising Birrong station to avoid the multiple train changes on their daily commute. These commuters previously enjoyed direct journeys to Strathfield and the inner west on the Inner West line via Regents Park, which has been scrapped. They are now forced to change trains twice—at Birrong and Lidcombe stations—when travelling to the inner west.

Express services no longer stop at Yagoona railway station, and this is also exacerbating the situation. Yagoona residents like university student Goran Naumoski, who formerly caught the express service at Yagoona, now travels by car to Birrong to commute. Yagoona is the closest train station for the residents of Georges Hall and Bass Hill but, since the scrapping of express services at Yagoona, their routine now also includes Birrong station. Many of those commuters are avoiding Bankstown railway station because of peak-hour overcrowding and lack of available parking. Birrong railway station is the closest alternative. I have conducted several mobile offices at Birrong and the overwhelming response from residents is that they want action to solve the parking chaos that is now occurring in their quiet streets.

Residents of Rodd Street Gladys and Kerrie Richardson and Ursula Thompson described to me at length their frustrations about the number of commuters who now fill their street with parked cars because of the limited number of commuter car parking spaces. This extra patronage has left Birrong station in urgent need of a comprehensive upgrade, including increased commuter car parking spaces, a safe pick-up and drop-off point, improved lighting, shelter and an easy access lift. Earlier in the year I wrote to Premier Mike Baird, Minister Gladys Berejiklian and Bankstown City Council to request funding for the immediate upgrade of Birrong station and the implementation of a traffic management plan to address the parking concerns of Birrong residents. Since my representation, I have conducted a site inspection with Bankstown City Council General Manager Matthew Stewart and Director Anthony Vangi, who have expressed council's willingness to work with Transport for NSW to implement a plan to address these highlighted issues.

Sadly for the residents of Birrong, the New South Wales Government has done nothing to relieve the pressure on Birrong station to accommodate this extra patronage. No funding was included in the State budget for the urgent upgrade of this much-needed infrastructure at Birrong railway station. In their correspondence

neither the Premier nor the Minister for Transport indicated that Birrong station will become a priority upgrade project; instead, they brushed off the request with a stock standard answer. As I have said, the issues at Birrong railway station are the result of the implementation of the new train timetable. I again call on the New South Wales Government to provide the necessary funding to upgrade the facilities and to implement a comprehensive traffic management plan for the Birrong area.

KURNELL PENINSULA DEVELOPMENT

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.08 p.m.]: On 4 September, the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* published a front-page story reporting on a call for me, among others, by the National Parks Association Southern Sydney Branch to oppose a plan by Besmaw Pty Ltd, owned by the Holt family, to build up to 2,000 homes, a large shopping complex and a business park on Besmaw's 177-hectare site on the Kurnell peninsula. I had already invited the association to meet with me to discuss its concerns, and that meeting occurred last week. The association is concerned that the Besmaw proposal will threaten bird and marine life, and potentially breach Australia's international obligations.

Earlier this year an application by Besmaw to bypass Sutherland Shire Council and go through a pre-gateway review process with the Department of Planning was unsuccessful because it was said to be premature to consider this proposal ahead of a strategic plan for the future of the peninsula. I understand that the department has commenced preparation of the South Subregional Delivery Plan, which includes the Kurnell peninsula; that Besmaw has been invited to participate in the development of the strategic plan with the council and the department; and that this strategic plan is still in the early stages of development.

Given the 250th anniversary in 2020 of Captain Cook's landing at Kurnell, the decline of heavy industry on the Kurnell peninsula and the existing severe degradation of the Besmaw site, appropriate development on the Besmaw site could be a fantastic opportunity for a renaissance of the Kurnell peninsula and an upgrade to provide a better gateway to the birthplace of modern Australia. But numerous difficult issues must be addressed properly. These include the effect of aircraft noise and limited public transport, both of which greatly restrict the development potential of the site. They also include the impact of any extra traffic not only on Captain Cook Drive on the Kurnell peninsula, but at downstream intersections to the west.

No development should go ahead without a comprehensive and independent environmental analysis, including the impact on bird and marine life. Appropriate environmental protection is likely to require at least appropriate setbacks from the Boat Harbour Aquatic Reserve, and may well require one or more green corridors through the site. Appropriate precaution against sea level rises is also likely to be necessary. But subject to these matters, locking the gate completely and stopping all development is not a serious option. That is because the Besmaw site is already zoned under State Environmental Planning Policy (Kurnell Peninsula) 1989 to permit use of the land for tourism, recreation or industrial parks. This means that substantial development could take place there already under existing zoning, in particular a large industrial park.

The latest Besmaw proposal is, in my view, far too dense for a site affected by aircraft noise and poorly serviced by transport infrastructure. Dense residential development under or adjacent to flight paths and away from transport hubs would place an unacceptable strain on roads and would be socially inequitable. But I think there is scope for some more modest residential development in the least noise-affected areas of the site, instead of a big industrial park apparently permitted by current zoning. However, in return for the extra profit that residential development would bring to Besmaw over industrial development, I expect Besmaw to be offering very substantial community dividends in the form of dedication to the public of large parts of the site for open space and/or green corridors.

The latest Besmaw proposal does include some significant dedication to public use, in particular the beach, but I believe Besmaw can and should go much further. The latest Besmaw proposal stands in unfavourable contrast with the nearby Australand development at Greenhills Beach. There the compromise between the pre-existing ownership and planning rights of landholders on the one hand and amenity for old and new residents on the other hand resulted in about 70 per cent of that site being dedicated as open space. The Besmaw site is no ordinary development site, which would largely be only a local government issue. So I am taking, and will take, a close interest in what is proposed. I have had helpful briefings from Sutherland Shire Council, the New South Wales Department of Planning and Besmaw.

I am and remain keenly interested in what Kurnell residents, and more broadly Cronulla residents, want for the site, and I have had informal discussions with residents about this. Development on the Besmaw site

represents a threat and an opportunity. If overdeveloped or blandly developed, it would represent further degradation of the Kurnell peninsula. However, I believe if the various stakeholders act in good faith and engage with each other, an attractive outcome can be achieved.

COOGEE ELECTORATE SCHOOL PRODUCTIONS

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [6.12 p.m.]: I have had the absolute joy to experience two of my local area's school productions that transported the audience and me back in time. The first of these productions was the annual Randwick Boys High School and Randwick Girls High School NIDA show entitled *Time After Time*, which delivered to us a whirlwind tour of Australia's cultural history and beyond from the 1950s onwards. The audience was treated to the evolution of rock and roll and the life of Johnny O'Keefe, as well as adaptations of *The Dish* and *Paper Giants*, to name but a few chapters regaling our history and development as a country.

The extravagant beauty of the show performed by high school students was of such a calibre that one would not believe this was a simple school production. The technical precision of the stage crew and the awe-inspiring dancing of students from all year groups was a testament to the effort and time that had been put into the show throughout the year. Not to upstage this but equally as inspiring and thought provoking was the production of *Last Post* put on by Clovelly Public School last week, highlighting that such talent is not only reserved for higher education students. This cast of primary school students absolutely amazed me beyond all words of description, bringing home the realities of World War I during this poignant time in our nation's history.

Through letters from soldiers and their families and cultural landmarks of the decade, vivid images of Australia seemingly familiar yet far away from us all were brought to the forefront of our minds and left us with the potent message that "kids do not go to war, war comes to them". With the voices of our veterans brought back to life, it was truly a beautiful spectacle that re-energised our history and gave it new life. School productions often have a cliché and stigma attached to them as poorly organised and poorly acted, yet these stand as shining examples to anyone who watched, debunking such ideas forever. The importance of promoting the arts and extracurricular activities in our schools is paramount to providing our children with well-rounded educations and pathways into their future adult lives.

These productions provide training and skills, demonstrated by both the junior and senior students with such professionalism that it inspired the lives of the performers and the minds of the audience. In the production by Randwick Boys High School and Randwick Girls High School I could see future stars of Australia coming to the point in their lives where they are able to dictate so much of their future and where they will go from the end of their school careers. The students of Clovelly Public School demonstrated the acting capabilities and maturity of such young individuals performing well above their age and presenting a history full of ugliness, hope and the birth of our nation on the field of battle and on the home front. Whether that future is following a career in show business or perhaps a different path, these chapters in the lives of our children will be forever a part of their history and be fondly remembered.

These productions cannot go on without the phenomenal efforts of teachers, parents and helpers who give so much time beyond the call to make such spectacular shows. Special mention must be given to the directors, choreographers, designers and coordinators, including Garry Scale, Gill Falson and Charli Dugdale from Clovelly Public School and Alysia Hodges, Julie Bowden, Kylie Fagan and Maxine Ford from Randwick, for their creativity and management of these events. But what cannot be ignored is the presence of volunteers in the performances put on by students who work in their spare time and demonstrate such commitment to the work, which they give freely. That often defies imagination. Without their work, the stage set is not constructed, costumes are not made and the foundations of beauty and spectacle in such shows cannot go ahead.

These events produced by students, helpers and staff alike bring home the talent that is being fostered in our schools. We should be forever thankful that in our State we have schools that allow students to express themselves and push beyond their cohort and comfort zones to perform such spectacles. I was truly elated to have experienced this from the audience, and I could observe in its full vibrancy the joy and happiness that these children and young adults have in their school lives.

CABRAMATTA MOON FESTIVAL

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [6.17 p.m.]: I am honoured to speak about the Cabramatta Moon Festival, which was celebrated over the weekend of 7 September 2014. It is one of the biggest Asian festivals in

Sydney, with nearly 90,000 people from around the city making their way to Cabramatta for food, culture and celebrations on this special occasion. I was glad to see that Sydney's infamously moody skies did not deter the crowds, who began to trickle in right on the mark at 9.00 a.m. The festival fell on the same day as Father's Day. However, families were well catered to, with great stalls, activities and various performances, such as lion dancing, traditional Chilean dances and Vietnamese singing.

The festival ended with a marvellous display of fireworks—something for which our great State is well known around the globe. Traditionally, this festival is celebrated in East Asia by such countries as China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea and Japan. People pray and offer thanks to the moon for a successful harvest of wheat and rice at that time of year. But the celebration of the Moon Festival also stems from various Chinese legends, the most popular being the myth of Chang'e, based on a goddess of immortality and her sacrifice for her husband. One year, 10 suns rose in the sky, causing crops to shrivel and water supplies to run dry.

A skilled archer named Hou Yi shot down nine of the 10 suns, leaving only one in the sky for light. As a reward he was given an elixir of immortality, which he gave to his wife, Chang'e, for safekeeping. One of Hou Yi's apprentices attempted to steal the elixir. However, to prevent him from stealing it, Chang'e swallowed the elixir and flew to the sky—where she chose to live on the moon to stay near her husband. Overcome with sadness, Hou Yi put out her favourite foods as a sacrifice. The locals, sympathising with the star-crossed couple, followed suit, thus creating the annual Moon Festival.

Today the Moon Festival is celebrated with the lighting of incense and multicoloured lanterns, traditional lion dancing and, best of all, moon cakes. These moon cakes are small round pastries with dense red bean paste or lotus seed paste fillings. They usually contain salted duck egg yolks at the centre, and the tops of the cakes are stamped with the Chinese characters for harmony and longevity. Moon cakes are often gifted to family, friends and clients as a sign of good faith, to establish harmony and to wish each other long and prosperous lives. It was truly a joy to see a multitude of diverse cultures coming together to join in the festivities. The event was truly the festival of festivals, with people from all walks of life coming down to experience the atmosphere of the truly unique and beautiful community that is Cabramatta.

The Fairfield Local Government Area [LGA] is like the world in miniature, being the third most diverse LGA in the country—you can jump from Asia, to Europe then to the Middle East and back to Australia all within a few suburbs. This diversity was on show in the rich variety of food stalls that filled the streets on the day, from Vietnamese rice vermicelli and beef soup to Spanish churros and Australian tucker. The smells, the sea of people moving between stalls and the soft sun hazing through an overcast sky created an unforgettable scene and ambience. It was fantastic to see the quality of community representation that was achieved in the vast display of stalls. It was not only food; there were many displays by community-based organisations such as Vietnam Vision, beyondblue and various Buddhist associations.

I acknowledge the volunteers and workers from Fairfield City Council who put together the sixteenth successful Cabramatta Moon Festival. I especially thank Cheryl Bolster of Fairfield City Council for coordinating the event. I thank the performers for stepping up on the day and showcasing their talents. I also acknowledge Mayor Frank Carbone for taking part in the ice bucket challenge on the main stage of the Moon Festival to raise awareness for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, an insidious disease that relentlessly and progressively denies its sufferers physical independence through the degeneration of the body's motor neurones. All in all, it was a pleasure and honour to join the locals in this event. [*Time expired.*]

WESTCONNEX

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.22 p.m.]: Somehow the more we hear about WestConnex the more it feels as though we know less. This is not only my sentiment but also that of those in my electorate—who today fear the possibility that their street, or even their house, will be sacrificed as part of this Government's supposed grand transport plan for our State. The frustration of residents in the suburb of St Peters was further heightened when drilling commenced last week. The first residents knew about this came not from letters informing them that this would be occurring or from a workman politely knocking on their door and advising them that loud drilling was imminent. Rather, they found out what it was when they watched the television news that night. How could this Government hold residents in such contempt? I quote the Chief Executive Officer of WestConnex, Mr Dennis Cliche, who said of the drilling:

This is in preparation for our tender so that we have more information for our bidders to have a look at when they come up with design solutions.

They have no idea where this road is going, whether it is above ground or below ground, or the route. We are being completely left in the dark. What is even more concerning is that residents are not even given the chance to start making plans about their future. Mr Cliche went on to say:

We haven't defined an exact route per se.

I am sure that those affected are comforted by his words! My constituents have the right to know what will become of their homes and backyards. The continual refusal by this Government to provide answers to residents has begun to affect their quality of life. What this New South Wales Government must learn is that the areas in my electorate affected by the WestConnex, particularly Tempe, St Peters and Sydenham, are some of the most close-knit communities I have ever come across.

Led by Marrickville's Citizen of the Year, Patrick McInerney, the community is given the opportunity to voice their concerns, discuss policy and connect with one another through the extremely active Facebook page Tempe 2020. It is no wonder that the New South Wales Government is expected to revise the route to no longer go through Tempe, following a significant amount of pressure from community groups including Tempe 2020. I can only imagine the community's response when it is confirmed that there will be tunnels running under their houses. I have already been contacted by residents who are seeking answers and the only response I can provide to them is that the Government's lack of interest in the residents' concerns reflects its lack of intellect.

Announcing plans here and there without having any real strategy is quite extraordinary, but we can expect nothing else from this Government. Has the Government considered what the structural impact will be for the many houses more than 100 years old that will be affected? What about the schools and churches? Furthermore, we still have zero clues about where the smokestacks are going to be. Where is the pollution from the tunnel going to go to if there is a tunnel? How many homes and businesses will be compulsorily acquired if there is no tunnel? We also still do not know what WestConnex will cost. Is it \$12 billion, \$13 billion, \$15 billion or \$30 billion?

Federal Labor allocated \$1.8 billion to the WestConnex project, as it was designed at the time of the 2013 budget, but on three conditions. Firstly, there would be no new tolls on old roads—but the Government is re-tolling the M4 after it is widened. Secondly, the new road would go to the city and Port Botany—but it is no surprise that it does not. Thirdly, a full business case would be signed off by Infrastructure Australia—but this has not happened. This whole project looks set to be an extraordinary disaster in terms of accountable, competent government.

When everything is shrouded in secrecy and no-one can get any answers, it is no wonder that everyone is so concerned. The impact on the small communities of St Peters, Tempe and Sydenham could be devastating if this project does not consider the needs of these communities. The New South Wales Government must begin long overdue dialogue with the residents of St Peters, Tempe and Sydenham. They have a right to know how their lives are going to be affected by a Government that refuses to listen to them.

INNER-SYDNEY CITY LIVE MUSIC VENUES

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [6.27 p.m.]: The inner city has long been the place to see live music and live performance and the place where musicians and performers live. The performance arts communities continue to thrive in my electorate and contribute to the State's cultural, social and economic fabric in the face of rising challenges. I believe all levels of government should work to encourage a vibrant live music and live performance scene. Australian cabaret and jazz and the pub rock scene have strong roots in Sydney, as do gay and lesbian drag shows. We constantly hear people revere the glory days of the live music scene of the 1970s and 1980s, when most venues had local bands playing every night.

Unfortunately, in the 1990s poker machines were introduced into pubs and hotels, which ultimately replaced the bands. The onerous Place of Public Entertainment [POPE] licences were also introduced, forcing venues to apply for additional development consent and creating the need for costly works if live entertainment was provided on premises. Before 2008 our liquor laws were prohibitive of anything but beer barns, which since the 1990s had stopped hiring bands, and nightclubs, which do not normally have live music. Increasing gentrification of the inner city created new tensions with residents, who do not want to hear loud music inside their homes late at night when they are trying to sleep, which is fair enough. The growing trend for families to stay in the inner city and in apartments creates additional challenges to encouraging live music because aspiring

young musicians grow up without garages to jam in and share walls with neighbours likely to be bothered by band practice. Similarly, the affordable housing crisis prevents many performers and artists from living in the inner city because they rarely earn enough money to cover rising rents and house prices.

While the closure of dedicated Surry Hills live music venues the Hopetoun and the Excelsior were seen as blows to Sydney's live music scene, new live music venues continue to emerge in the inner city including the Oxford Art Factory, Good God, Frankie's Pizza Bar, FBI Social, the Hollywood Hotel, the Brighton, the Standard, the Lansdowne and upstairs at the Beresford. Sydney bands continue to have international success, particularly independent bands.

Removal of the need for live music venues to get a POPE licence and new liquor licensing laws that encourage small bars and hotels without gaming machines—introduced following Clover Moore's small bars campaign—have encouraged a different mix of licensed premises. But this year inner Sydney live music suffered a new setback with new liquor licensing restrictions that target all licensed venues in the central business district, Oxford Street, Darlinghurst and Kings Cross. Of the 220 hotels, pubs and clubs in the central business district, 143 are classified live music venues and these must now close the door to new patrons at 1.30 a.m.

While traditionally bands would play shows before midnight, this model has been changing with live music provided later. Furthermore, some venues subsidise live music shows with traditional nightclub entertainment after midnight. I understand the Government's intention to address alcohol-associated violence; however, live music should be a part of the solution. It is well established that people consume less alcohol while watching a performance when the band is playing or the drag show is on—few are at the bar.

The City of Sydney adopted the Live Music and Performance Action Plan to help strengthen inner Sydney's live music and performance scenes. Recommendations include trialling music loading zones outside venues, making council-owned properties available for practice; facilitating the approvals process for small, low-risk events; setting new soundproof standards for new residential developments; and providing formal, independent and confidential mediation to deal with noise complaints. Included is a proposal for the Federal Government to ease restrictions to allow more musicians to play secret shows and collaborate with local musicians in small venues without breaching contract or visa arrangements.

There are also vital recommendations for the State Government. Musicians and performers need to be included in affordable housing schemes so that they can access key worker accommodation and the Government should create a fund using poker machine revenue, given poker machines in hotels contributed to the reduction in live music, to support live music projects. In 2011 the Australasian Performing Right Association commissioned Ernst and Young to survey Australia's live music scene and found that it contributes more than \$1.2 billion to the Australian economy, supporting almost 15,000 jobs with total profits and wages at \$625 million. Thirty-two per cent of the venue-based music industry is located in New South Wales. I hope the House will join me in acknowledging the massive economic, social and cultural contribution of the inner city's live music scene and call on the Government to assess the impacts of licensing laws and introduce measures to ensure the viability of a growing live music industry.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Macquarie Fields, Dr Andrew McDonald, in private members' statements. I also congratulate him on his contribution to the parliamentary process and wish him well in his future endeavours.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Thank you, Madam Acting-Speaker.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.34 p.m. until
Tuesday 14 October 2014 at 12.00 noon.**
