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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 14 October 2014

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PENRITH VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [12.06 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the outstanding work of the Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce in the local community and pay tribute to the recently outgoing members of its executive committee. Ms Jill Woods has been the chief executive officer [CEO] for a number of years and has done an outstanding job in growing the business community in our region. She has been ably supported by outgoing executive members including Vice-President Joe Grassi, Treasurer Steve Willingdale and committee members Robert Glasscot, Robert Drage, Wayne Young and Wayne Moloney. Ms Woods was also supported by President Peter McGhee, who has given a number of years of outstanding service to the Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce and will continue to serve on the committee as Immediate Past President.

The Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce now has a new leadership team that is full of enthusiasm. It is led by new President Gina Field, who has performed outstandingly as a local business leader through her Nepean Regional Security business and has been a strong advocate and representative of the Penrith region. She will be supported by Vice-President Linda Kemp, who is an equally strong and passionate advocate for our region. These women, along with Treasurer Teresa Tidball, Secretary Natalie Ballard and committee members Daniel McKinnon, John Capes, Joh Dickens, James Hill and Wayne Willmington, will make up the new leadership group that will drive growth across the Penrith region by supporting business and small business in particular in our community. The chamber has also continued its strong renewal work by appointing new interim CEO Ann King. She comes to the chamber with an impressive background of achievement in the private and public sectors. I know she will offer a high level of professional support to the new and enthusiastic chamber of commerce committee.

The Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce was established in 1927 by a group of forward-thinking business and community leaders who went on to make a significant contribution to the development of Penrith and its surrounds. It is good to know that some of those founding businesses are still members of the chamber. One organisation that comes to mind is Lamrocks Solicitors, which has been a member since its first year. The Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce continues to work closely with Penrith City Council, the Penrith CBD Corporation and the Penrith Business Alliance in an effort to grow businesses in our community. The chamber currently has more than 300 members including leaders from a diverse range of backgrounds such as retail, commercial and manufacturing businesses as well as a number of representatives from government, statutory and local organisations.

The organisation has been active in increasing support and networking opportunities across our community so that people can grow their businesses within our region. It is a strong advocate for the continuation of government policies that allow businesses to thrive, particularly in the growing area of greater

Western Sydney. I am pleased to note that since the change of leadership there has been a strong focus on increasing the membership of the organisation. Indeed, just in the last week a further 25 members have joined the chamber of commerce. I say to all businesses operating in the Penrith region that the chamber is there to support them. The chamber has a long history of experienced business operators who can guide new business start-ups through the initial tough period and plenty of people with experience who can assist businesses to grow.

It also has very strong links with the NSW Business Chamber. Western Sydney is at the forefront of economic growth in this State and Penrith has a role to play. The Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce, under the new leadership of Gina Field and Linda Kemp, together with their new dynamic and enthusiastic executive, will assist the community to continue to grow from strength to strength. Most importantly, the chamber of commerce will support businesses that support the community, not just through financial contributions to the community but primarily through their ability to grow their businesses, thereby growing jobs in the community and making Penrith stronger.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [12.11 p.m.]: Over the weekend I met two extraordinary families who are experiencing increasing levels of frustration due to a disappointing lack of support for their children in their local area. One of those constituents, who did not mind her plight being made public, is Lutfiye Caliskan of St Peters. Mrs Caliskan has a 12-year-old daughter with severe autism and global developmental delays. For five years Celine went to Gardeners Road Public School, one of the few schools in New South Wales to have a support unit for students with severe disabilities. Celine now attends Cairnsfoot Special School in Arncliffe and receives support at school.

Mrs Caliskan expressed to me her frustration in trying to find activities for Celine before and after school, on weekends and during school holidays. When Celine was younger and first diagnosed she attended a community centre in Marrickville where she took part in before and after school care activities and had access to early intervention programs. This provided Celine with the opportunity to engage with children her own age and enhance her development. Since then Mrs Caliskan has been unable to find any programs or community centres that cater for her daughter or that offer activities for Celine to interact with other similar children.

Mrs Caliskan's son, nephews and nieces can easily access clubs or societies where they are able to participate in dancing lessons, taekwondo, holiday camps or even homework groups. To her frustration, Mrs Caliskan has not been able to find any activities for Celine since she has been at her new school and this has completely isolated Celine from her community. Sadly, Mrs Caliskan feels that the sentiment in her community is that it is the "family's problem". Family members give up their jobs and their holidays, siblings give up their time with their parents, and grandparents change their dialysis schedule in order to cater to child-minding duties. In turn, the community does not offer any support to the family of a child with a disability. Mrs Caliskan and her family happily give up their time for Celine but they need support.

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has outsourced services to St Vincent de Paul but the only program that could be found for Celine is one in Rozelle for children over 16 years. This program is unsuitable for Celine, who is 12. One of the concerns of parents of a child with a disability is who will support their child when they are no longer alive. Mrs Caliskan, with a broken voice and in tears, raised that very issue with me on Saturday. This is the sad reality for these families. When that time comes, Mrs Caliskan hopes that Celine will be comfortable enough to continue to access services as a result of having been exposed to them over many years. If that is not possible Celine may have to go into a home, and she then becomes the community's problem. It makes sense for the community to support families like the Caliskans.

Mrs Caliskan and her husband want the best for their daughter and for her to have the greatest opportunities possible. Celine needs to be exposed to outside influences and for her world to expand, not shrink. Currently, outside of school Celine's world is limited to her parents, brother and grandparents. That is hardly a world that the rest of us are offered. It is simply not fair that Celine cannot access programs in her local area and interact with children her own age. It seems that no consideration is given to children with a disability and there is zero awareness of the huge gap in services for school-aged children like Celine. They simply fall between the gaps. Celine receives fantastic support from her school and I understand that Mrs Caliskan is very pleased with the opportunities and education provided by the school. Unfortunately, this does not extend beyond the 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. school day because her community does not provide parks, groups or even specific activities where these children and their parents feel comfortable to attend.

Mrs Caliskan tells me that she is not able to take Celine to the park with other children because they do not accept Celine, so she is confined to her backyard. All Mrs Caliskan wants is for her daughter to be able to access music lessons or gymnastic or dancing classes. I can guarantee that she is not the only parent in my electorate who is facing the same difficulty. Children with a disability should not be excluded from the opportunity to learn. As everyone in this House will attest, learning is not only undertaken in the classroom. It is often during extracurricular activities when children interact and socialise that important lessons are learnt. Children like Celine, whose parents do whatever they can and give up so much, should be given the support that they deserve in their community and the same opportunities that are offered to their peers. Attention must be paid to this issue now.

DUBBO ELECTORATE COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [12.16 p.m.]: I acknowledge the very worthy recipients of community awards across the Dubbo electorate who day in and day out do so much for their communities. As a member of Parliament I represent a wonderful community and one of the best aspects of my job is the opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of people in our communities. Taking a moment to recognise those people in our community is particularly important because many of them do not seek the limelight; they go about their wonderful work quietly and diligently. I thank them on behalf of the community and the State because they are the backbone of our communities.

I want to congratulate a number of people. Each deserves his or her own private member's statement but there are so many in the Dubbo electorate that I have had to condense them into a single private member's statement. Mrs Pam Bell of Peak Hill was presented with a Dubbo electorate award. She played an instrumental role in helping to get the Peak Hill multipurpose service project underway. I acknowledge the Minister for Health, who is at the table today, and thank her for her stellar effort in supporting our community with the provision of a vital piece of world-class health infrastructure for an isolated community. The Minister is aware of Pam's work on the Peak Hill Health Council and I was very proud to present Pam with a Dubbo electorate award in recognition of her efforts.

I also presented Michael Greenwood from Parkes with a Dubbo electorate award. Michael is the Bruce McAvaney of the Central West; there is nothing he does not know about sport. He has contributed so much to sport through his work on the sporting council, Parkes Shire Council and the Australia Day committee and his many emceeing duties. No-one could beat his efforts in attributing the success of any sports event to Parkes. I have spoken before in this Chamber about Rhonda Brain, who is the 2014 Dubbo Local Woman of the Year. Rhonda is behind the Paint the Town REaD program, which is a wonderful program that encourages parents and the community to engage in reading with children from a young age. Indeed, the program is now being delivered across Australia as a result of Rhonda's work.

Peggie Beath from Canowindra is someone who has always put others before herself. She is often seen at the local hospital as a member of the United Hospital Auxiliary where she has served for 27 years. She also has served for 42 years with Meals on Wheels and for 27 years with the Red Cross. She has been with the Country Women's Association for 40-plus years. Her service to the Canowindra community is outstanding. I am very proud of her. She can also be seen driving people around the community, a task she does without recognition. She has been providing transport options in areas where there is no form of public transport. Peggie is a wonderful lady and very deserving of her award.

Eleven ladies in my electorate have been added to the 2014 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll. They include Gay Daley from Parkes, who has contributed 26 years of service to the Parkes Home Care Branch. Since her retirement she has been an outstanding volunteer at the Parkes Neighbourhood Centre. Gay also volunteers for Meals on Wheels, the local Community Visitor Scheme and the local Community Transport Scheme. Christine Dedobelaar of Parkes, who is a Eucharistic minister, is regularly seen at local nursing homes and the hospital and visiting those who are unable to make it to Holy Communion. Christine goes above and beyond in the provision of service to the community and more broadly in her role with many charities throughout the town.

Jodie Greenhalgh of Eugowra has been recognised for her work behind a community-driven plan to revitalise the wonderful bushranger town of Eugowra and boost its tourism profile. This includes her involvement in the Canola Cup and the Escort Rock and organising the successful Mother's Day function on the banks of Mandagery Creek. I recommend the *Bushranger Mural* in Eugowra to all and urge everyone to see it. Wilma Hepburn of Forbes is heavily involved in community activities, including the Friends of the Forbes Hospital Organisation. I commend the Minister for Health, who is present in the Chamber, for the magnificent

\$60 million-plus hospital that is appearing out of the ground in Forbes. The people of Forbes are very happy about that. Wilma is also an active member of the Forbes Garden Club and a regular seller of raffle tickets and deserves her place on the honour roll. Maggie McPhail of Forbes has been recognised for her outstanding efforts in regards to Camp Quality.

Darlene Lawler of Forbes has been recognised for her significant contribution in the local early childhood centre as a volunteer. She has developed a reading book and has been a fundraiser for the Children's Cancer Institute as well as having been busily engaged in sorting and packaging relief packs during Cyclone Yazi, to name but a few of her activities. Molly Neilsen of Forbes has been recognised for 50 years of service to the Royal Far West and the Forbes Sunshine Club. That is a magnificent achievement. Daphne Prior of Forbes has been recognised for her community spirit and fundraising for the Kidney Car Rally. Alison Uphill of Forbes has been recognised for her work with the Forbes Rugby Club. Julie Virtue of Forbes has been recognised for her role as a pastoral carer in the community for 30 years. Elizabeth Allen of Dubbo has been recognised for her wonderful work in the Dubbo Health Council and the Dubbo Prostate Cancer Support Group. I am extraordinarily proud of the people to whom I have referred. I commend them all to the House.

GOSFORD ELECTORATE COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [12.21 p.m.]: I inform the House of individuals from the Woy Woy peninsula in my electorate who have been recognised for outstanding achievements in the areas of social work, sport and education. Dianne O'Brien from Umina has been selected as one of three finalists in the NSW-ACT Regional Achievement and Community Awards. Di is a very special individual. The awards recognise individuals who can enhance the social, environmental and economic prosperity of regional and rural areas of New South Wales. Di was selected because of her guidance, encouragement and much-needed support within her community.

Dianne, or Auntie Di as we know her, has worked passionately for her community to assist in furthering the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people—something she continues to do as an Aboriginal health manager at Medicare and as the volunteer chairperson for the Mingaletta community group. Auntie Di has been instrumental in creating housing opportunities for members of the community and has assisted in the building of the Mingaletta headquarters. She has worked in the establishment of a variety of community programs and health initiatives within the area. The winner of the regional service award will be announced at a gala dinner on Saturday 21 November at Wagga Wagga RSL Club, and I extend best wishes to her for that occasion.

I also acknowledge the Brisbane Water Secondary College. At the recent New South Wales Combined High Schools Touch championships the college met with success. For the previous two years the college had been knocked out of the competition by sports high schools. The college team's defeat of The Hills Sports High by six points to five in the final, which was played at McEvoy Oval, Umina, on Wednesday 20 August, was the culmination of a two-day carnival in which the team defeated schools from Warilla, Wagga Wagga, Inverell and Tweed River. It was not until the team's semifinal victory over its Central Coast rivals, the Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, that the team members realised their potential and that they could go all the way—and they did.

Congratulations go to the participating players and teacher Matthew Marker. The players included captain Nicolas Hynes, player of the match Guy Pearson, Tom Hall, Bruce Waia, Garrison Steele, Wade Hannell, Darnell Wisham, Jack Steed, Sean Cole, Mitchell Wilson and Jarrod Hull. I congratulate all the boys and the Brisbane Water Secondary College on their magnificent achievement at the New South Wales Combined High Schools Touch championships.

In conclusion, I offer special congratulations to the wonderful students of Woy Woy South Public School, who received commendable results in an international schools competition. Two distinctions were awarded: one to Robin Slater in year 4 and one to Jake Hooker in year 6. Credits were awarded to Riley Steele and Heather Snape in year 4 as well as to Keira Murphy and Taini Te Puia in year 5. Merit awards were received by Ebony Jackson, Zoe Caldwell and Tamsin Caldwell. I congratulate the teaching staff and students of Woy Woy South Public School on their commendable efforts in education.

WILEY PARK GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [12.26 p.m.]: I take great pleasure in once again acknowledging in this House the wonderful work of one of my community's outstanding comprehensive high schools. Today I share the successes and achievements of the principal, teachers, parents and students from Wiley Park Girls

High. At the outset I state that I regard teaching as one of our society's most important vocations and recognise the value to all of us of well-trained and properly resourced teachers in our public schools. In fact, my early professional ambition was to serve as a teacher and hopefully inspire students to reach their potential academically and within our society.

Wiley Park's location in the heart of the Lakemba electorate should give a clue to some of the challenges faced by the leadership team at Wiley Park Girls High. Wiley Park is as ethnically diverse as a community can be. In fact, 97 per cent of students are from a language background other than English and the school is home to a number of students whose families are refugees who have settled in Australia. This diversity is also a factor in more than 16 per cent of households that do not or cannot speak English well or at all. Just for a moment consider the challenges of educating children in our schools who have grown up not being read to by their parents and not learning English at home, as most of us have.

Wiley Park's unemployment rate is 13.7 per cent, which is more than double the unemployment rate for greater Sydney. Not surprisingly, the average household income in this community is very low. Sadly, nearly one-third of all households are in the lowest band of income quartiles and have to survive on less than \$614 a week. This is a significantly higher proportion than the greater Sydney rate of just over 25 per cent. I provide this information to paint a picture of the challenges faced by the Wiley Park Girls High School community and to highlight their success and achievements in a difficult environment.

The first matter I highlight is the positive attitude that the school's principal, Maureen Davis, and her leadership team bring to those challenges. It stems from a deep belief in the capacity of the girls who attend this school and the knowledge that with encouragement and support they can reach their potential as students and citizens. When faced with a difficult task, some people throw in the towel and give up before they start. Wiley Park Girls High School teachers and staff have never walked away from the challenges and the results speak for themselves. The National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] results for students are very encouraging and show consistent improvement, particularly compared with similar school groups.

Students achieved improved results in subjects including ancient history, chemistry, English, legal studies, modern history, music, retail, and visual arts. Seventy-one per cent of students achieved a band 7 result or higher in the spelling component of NAPLAN and 60 per cent of students achieved a band 7 result or higher in the writing component. While those results are good, the students at Wiley Park Girls High also have benefited from the safe, supportive and nurturing environment that is helping the girls to achieve their goals as students and as active members of the community. Students are encouraged to explore their interests through various extracurricular activities which give them a chance to explore and work together for common interests and goals. Groups that have been established include the school magazine, a cultural dance group, a garden sustainability club, an astronomy club, a conservation club and a peer support group.

Wiley Park Girls High School strives to develop an enduring spirit of service by fostering the value of giving back to the community. Student volunteering was introduced in 2013 to encourage a community focus when considering the students' future career and academic paths. Volunteering activities included cultural dance and musical performances by students at St Basils Nursing Home and the introduction of the Adopt a Grandparent Program. Students give Christmas cards and small gifts they have made to residents who are without family. One of the programs that epitomises the spirit of unlimited possibilities was the school's participation in Space Camp Program in Turkey earlier this year.

The students from the school were the first Australian students chosen to attend this prestigious academy. The purpose was to gain an understanding of an astronaut's training and preparation. I acknowledge the support and strong role played by the school's parents and citizens group. The parents of this group are very active and work in partnership with the teachers and staff to support the students and encourage a sense of community spirit both within the school and more broadly in the local community. I am inspired by, and proud of, the calibre of students who are reaching their academic goals at Wiley Park Girls High School. Schools such as this do the unsung work of building communities and giving hope and opportunity to our young. I particularly acknowledge the leadership, passion and hard work of Principal Maureen Davis, who has made an enormous contribution to this school and to education in general. Ms Davis is retiring at the end of this year. Congratulations to everyone involved with this wonderful school.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina) [12.31 p.m.]: I take this opportunity once again to raise an issue that I regard as important for our sustainable future, namely renewable energy. The communities I have represented

for 26½ years have continually championed environmental causes, including recycling, anti-pollution measures and renewable energy use. I have spoken in this place on many occasions in support of various forms of renewable energy, including geothermal energy, solar power, biofuels and cogeneration plants such as the Broadwater sugar mill. The Ballina electorate is part of a larger region known as the Northern Rivers. My constituents have an undeniable commitment to sustainability, particularly renewable energy. Research undertaken by Regional Development Australia [RDA] Northern Rivers found that our area has a significantly higher uptake of solar power than other parts of New South Wales. Whilst 8.5 per cent of houses in New South Wales used solar power in 2012 the Ballina electorate averaged 18 per cent of houses with solar power systems installed.

The New South Wales Government is a strong supporter of the renewable energy target [RET], which aims to have 20 per cent of Australia's electricity produced by renewable sources by 2020. Our Government is committed to a secure, affordable and renewable energy future for this State. In its submission to the review of the renewable energy target the Government reaffirmed its commitment to increase the supply of energy from renewable sources. Our Government supports retention and reformation of the RET by allowing greater market self-determination. The solar bonus scheme under the former Labor Government was nothing short of a farce. It unnecessarily cost the New South Wales taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. Since the abolition of the scheme the cost of solar panels has dropped dramatically.

The Government understands the importance of economic growth and placing downward pressure on the cost of living, including energy costs, for New South Wales households. The people of the Ballina electorate are in tune with that sentiment, as attested by the high uptake of solar power in the area. Indications are that Australia is well on track to meet the 20 per cent target by 2020—and, indeed, exceed it. I have welcomed recent comments in the media from senior members of the Federal Government supporting the retention of the RET and confirming that the target is likely to be exceeded. It is important to maintain certainty around renewable energy targets so that investor confidence continues and strengthens. The State Government demonstrated its support in September last year when it released the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan. The plan will grow renewable energy generation in New South Wales.

I was pleased to hear the Northern Rivers energy group has been awarded a funding grant of \$54,000 by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and the Total Environment Centre in order to assess the feasibility of becoming a community-based renewable energy company. The Ballina council is leading by example through investment in the development of a pyrolysis plant that will dramatically change the way organic waste is processed. Pyrolysis technology heats up organic waste without using oxygen, producing two main products called biochar and syngas. Biochar is added to soil as a nutrient and increases the soil's ability to hold water. The NSW Department of Primary Industries at Wollongbar in my electorate has been trialling biochar with local coffee, sugar cane, macadamia, rice and avocado growers with positive results. The other by-product, syngas, is captured during the heating process and is a form of renewable energy. This energy will not only power the pyrolysis plant but also excess energy will go back into the electricity grid.

Ballina council has received a \$4.25 million grant from the Federal Government to help fund the pyrolysis plant. When it is operational it will be the only one of its kind in Australia. It will be fuelled by organic waste sourced from the weekly kerbside pick-up, wood waste and biosolids. This is a fantastic example of renewable energy and I have no doubt that it will play a part in the Federal Government's renewable energy target. The council aims to provide renewable energy at competitive prices and will offer other options, including the purchase at a fair price of solar and other renewable energy from residential, commercial and government system owners.

The council will provide access to renewable energy equipment, education and market opportunities for low-income earners. This is an exciting prospect for the Northern Rivers. Similar ventures are being explored in other parts of the world, including Colorado in the United States. As the representative of such an environmentally conscious electorate I am extremely interested in all forms of renewable energy, including solar-thermal power plants that use the sun to produce steam that is utilised by industry for electricity production.

Mr Dieter Horstmann, the owner of Byron Eco Park at Tyagarah, has created a unique place for innovative alternative energy concepts to be tested and demonstrated. His latest area of interest is super-powered solar panels in conjunction with Aquion Energy non-toxic batteries. Indeed, battery technology is an area of immense interest for renewable energy proponents. I congratulate Mr Horstmann on his continued innovative progress and support of renewable energy projects that will reduce greenhouse gases and our future reliance on

fossil fuels. The conservation and restoration of the environment, renewable energy and sustainable practices have always been key considerations in my work as a local member and I am pleased to see so many innovative renewable energy projects happening in my electorate.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.36 p.m.]: Most members across New South Wales have a Rural Fire Service in their own or an adjacent electorate. I quote from the Rural Fire Service website, which states:

The NSW Rural Fire Service [NSW RFS] is now the world's largest volunteer firefighting organisation. The geographic area of New South Wales is 800,630 square kilometres, which is approximately 10.4 per cent of the Australian land mass. The NSW RFS has jurisdiction over 99 per cent of the State's land area now, but it had humble beginnings. During the 19th century coordinated firefighting was almost non-existent with many landowners forced to defend their own properties. By the beginning of the 20th century, in response to particularly serious fires, the New South Wales State Government formalised the control of fire prevention, which led to the formation of the first formal brigade at Berrigan in the State's south. According to the *Berrigan Advocate* newspaper, the brigade was formally recorded in November 1900 at a meeting at the Royal Hotel on the Murray River. It is the first official record of a formal bush fire brigade in New South Wales.

From humble beginnings in Berrigan all those years ago, the RFS has morphed into not only one of the largest volunteer organisations in the nation but also, as we all agree, the most professionally managed and operated. It is my great pleasure to have a regional fire headquarters located at Heathcote East in my electorate. The Heathcote Brigade was formed in 1942-43 as a bush fire brigade to protect the local community and operated out of the station located on Bottleforest Road, Heathcote. The brigade was formed in 1974 as a support brigade for the Sutherland Shire Bushfire Organisation and operated out of the station located at Wilson Parade, now home to the State Emergency Service [SES].

As a kid living near the Royal National Park, I remember like it was yesterday the times my family was threatened by bushfires. On one occasion in, I think, 1964 I lay awake late into the night listening to eucalypt trees exploding as the fire raged towards our home. At some time early in the morning my dad woke me and asked me to come into the backyard. That morning I saw in the torchlight animals and reptiles of all types jumping, crawling and running through our backyard to escape the oncoming firestorm. Thankfully, the RFS was on the front line and saved our home. Again, when I was in primary school we were evacuated from our school to Loftus railway station, where we sat on the platform with wet towels over our heads. I was never quite sure why we had wet towels over our heads or why we were sitting on an open railway station platform. Maybe the towel was so we could not see what was coming.

The Rural Fire Service in my electorate covers some of the most rugged and inaccessible national parks, State forests and water catchments in the Sydney Basin. We should always remember those brave men and women who have lost their lives in the service of our community when attempting to keep us from harm's way. I will speak briefly about one of those heroic teams. On 9 January 1983 the Heathcote 81 crew left the Bottle Forest Road station and headed out to battle a blaze, alongside other brigades, not knowing that they were about to lose three of their colleagues. The fire had crossed Temptation Creek and was ripping through thick bush that had remained unburnt for 15 years. The crew included captain Keith Campbell, his daughter Sharon, Thomas Bielecke, Gregory Moon, Jim Fowler, Paul Fenn, Craig Goodall, Craig Blanche, Robert Sawyer, Phillip Bourke and Rod Crane.

At Sydney airport the mercury had risen to 38 degrees. Keith Campbell sent three of his team to help a woman, not knowing that she was a spectator and in no danger. One volunteer escorted the woman to safety and two members returned to their truck, but fire blocked their path. They frantically tried to back-burn. The truck was their only shelter and they huddled next to the tanker as the fire roared through. Mr Campbell died, metres from the truck, while attempting to shield his crew with a hose. There was so much ash and smoke that survivors had no idea he and fellow firefighter, 20-year-old Gregory Moon, had been killed. Thomas Bielecke of Caringbah, aged 35, suffered burns to 70 per cent of his body and died the next day. Six other crew members were critically injured and suffered horrific burns. Despite that awful tragedy, volunteer firefighters Jim Fowler, Sharon Campbell and Rod Crane remain active members of the Rural Fire Service. There is nothing more I can say than thank you.

ELECTRONIC TICKETING SYSTEM

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.41 p.m.]: I speak today about the rollout of the Opal card electronic ticketing system, which in my electorate has been far from seamless. The introduction of electronic ticketing was inevitable and is a step forward but the rollout of this system has been mismanaged. No-one

expected a miracle transition overnight. However, my electorate office has been inundated with complaints about the rollout. One of the main criticisms is the lack of retail outlets for Opal cards in my electorate. This is a significant inconvenience to my constituents and demonstrates a lack of understanding of public transport needs and patronage patterns in Lake Macquarie. The busy Newcastle and Central Coast line runs from one end of my electorate to the other. When the phasing out of paper tickets began at the beginning of September there was only one Opal card outlet in the entire electorate. That outlet was at Boolaroo, which is not convenient to the most heavily used stations.

Morisset station—the second busiest station on the Newcastle line—is in my electorate. Fassifern—a busy Intercity and CountryLink station—is also in my electorate. However, Transport for NSW has not deigned to provide a retail outlet at or near either of these stations. The stations were not even considered for pop-up kiosks—although several were provided on stations in the neighbouring Government electorates on the Central Coast. The Minister for Transport was good enough to drop in to Maitland recently to address the lack of outlets there. She announced pop-up kiosks for stations in that electorate. If the Minister feels inclined to address the lack of outlets in Lake Macquarie, I would be happy to host a similar visit. In the meantime, the Minister has assured me by correspondence that additional retail outlets for Lake Macquarie are in the pipeline and I sincerely hope those negotiations come to fruition sooner rather than later.

I acknowledge that Lake Macquarie commuters are not alone in experiencing this inconvenience—and this is another baffling and unsatisfactory aspect of the Opal rollout. It was reported recently in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that Transport for NSW will not introduce sales of Opal cards at all stations. The journalist reported that at the largest railway station in Australia—Central station—he could not buy an Opal ticket at the ticket machines or the ticket booths, yet they were available at the adjacent newsagency. It might be common to sell tickets at newsagencies but generally commuters expect to buy things such as newspapers at newsagents and rail tickets at station ticket booths.

I draw the attention of the House to the clandestine way in which the introduction of the Opal card has been used to steamroll an undertaking, given 24 years ago, that commuters should not be charged extra to travel on public transport between Toronto and Fassifern stations. In 1990—when the rail line from Fassifern to Toronto was cut—State Rail promised that the permanent replacement bus service would be free of charge. Successive governments have honoured that undertaking. However, since 1 September users of "the train" bus—route 273—are being charged extra for this service, which has increased their weekly commuting costs by up to \$15. That is a substantial increase. The decision to treat this service as a separate route—and to charge accordingly—was taken without consultation or warning. Regular patrons became aware of the change only when they started to incur these significant additional charges. If the intention was to squeeze more revenue out of commuters in western Lake Macquarie, it was an underhanded way of doing so.

The issue of the Opal readiness of buses has been the subject of complaints to my office. One constituent—who commutes regularly from southern Lake Macquarie to Sydney for work—was ordered off a bus by a driver in the northern suburbs because the bus did not have an Opal scanner. After protesting that he should not be penalised for the department's failure to make all buses Opal ready before it began withdrawing paper tickets for sale, the patron duly alighted so as not to cause any further delay to other commuters on the bus. Lo and behold, when the next bus on the same route came along several minutes later it was equipped with an Opal scanner, so he was good to go. This treatment was unduly punitive of a patron who had tried to do what the Government is encouraging public transport users to do: Get with the new Opal card system.

I appreciate that the Minister has since advised bus drivers to use their discretion and common sense in such circumstances and let card holders ride for free if the bus is not equipped with a scanner. However, this sort of situation should never have arisen. The Opal card system has the capacity to be a fantastic system and the rollout should have been far less problematic than it has proved to be. The Oyster card system in London works like a dream and it was there for Transport for NSW to copy. Public transport users in my electorate have been significantly disadvantaged by the introduction of the Opal card. While I acknowledge that some action has been taken to deal with the problems I have raised, I ask the Minister to expedite the provision of additional retail outlets in Lake Macquarie and to reverse the ill-advised decision to treat route 273 as a separate bus trip.

LIBERAL PARTY SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [12.46 p.m.]: Albury is the birthplace of the Liberal Party, and this year marks 70 years in the life of this very Australian political party. Whereas Labor's 1949 model "Light on the Hill" inspiration emanated chiefly from its annual conference at Trades Hall in Sydney, the Liberal call to arms

was a rolling event centred around a conference held in Albury some five years earlier. In December 1944 Liberals departed Albury with a draft constitution under their belt and a provisional federal executive to drive the movement. Nine months later the Liberal Party was formally launched in the Sydney Town Hall. Does it matter that the Liberals debated their *raison d'être* in a regional centre rather than in a State capital? Did it help with clear thinking to get away from the political cauldrons of Sydney and Melbourne? Let me take you to some of the key principles from those early days of the Liberals. The Liberal Party may have been the vision of many, but there is no doubt that its gun salesman was Bob Menzies.

Out of the swirling tides of world war, he presented a clarity of vision. Those who had suffered through the Great Depression and the hardships of war were looking for leadership and for positive change. In his early speeches Menzies highlighted his concerns. He was anti-socialist and he believed in small government and lower taxes. He criticised the Labor Government for seeming "to believe that Government departments can spend our earnings for us more wisely than we can". Does that not sound familiar? As I look at these foundation speeches, two ideas stand out now. Menzies preached that the true dividing line running through society was not class but the difference between people who were industrious and those who were idle. Productivity was key to nation-building. From his earliest Liberal Party speeches, Menzies also sought to rebalance the status quo between men and women. In his 1946 election platform Menzies said:

May I say that this speech is addressed not only to men but to women. Indeed, even more to women than to men! For, during the war, even the most unimaginative of men must have become acutely conscious of the incalculable importance of the work done by women in industry, in the Services, and in the home.

Tonight I speak to the women of Australia with profound respect and gratitude. They have established an unanswerable claim to economic, legal, industrial, and political equality. I hope that the time will speedily come when we can say truthfully that there is no sex discrimination in public or private office, in political or industrial opportunity.

That vision of equality—including specifically "an unanswerable claim to economic ... equality"—has not always shone in Liberal ranks with the luminosity expressed by Menzies in 1946. But this is foundational to what it means to be Liberal, even when there are "unimaginative men" about. It should come as no surprise to hear that at the party's launch Menzies proclaimed that "Liberalism proposes to march down the middle of the road". We all understand now this fact of political life in Australia. However, in his 1960 speech to the Young Liberal Movement, Menzies urged the Young Liberals to constantly ask, "What is it we believe in?" We might not hear these words sufficiently often any more. Menzies pilloried the purely political types. He said:

If there has been a degeneration in the standard of politics, it is chiefly because we have tended to move rather blindly from expedient to expedient. In the long run there can be no high politics unless all parties have a sense of direction.

We need to return to politics as a clash of principles, and to get away from the notion that it is a clash only of warring personalities.

That was said in 1946. Keeping to my electorate, I remind members that Corowa is the birthplace of Federation. The United States might have its Tea Party but Australia had Earl Grey, the British Minister in charge of the colonies. It was the divisive Earl Grey who helped to spark the idea of Federation here with his plans to separate Victoria and New South Wales. The Corowa branch of the Border Federation League organised and hosted a conference that brought the Federation idea to life as a people's movement. Momentum grew steadily from the motion unanimously accepted at Corowa in 1893. Certainly there is something creative about politics along the Murray River, where we are very aware of border crossings and jurisdictional negotiations. Menzies mused:

The really liberal mind will at once appreciate that Australia will not be a virile, growing community unless the main accent is placed upon how we can develop Australia; how we can learn more and grow more and make more and sell more and enjoy more.

Liberalism is, in part, a call to find enjoyment—indeed, even more enjoyment. Now that is a noble political aim. It is also what so many of us are seeking when we move away from big cities and into regional Australia. We choose places to live in the regions, like Albury, because we want to "learn more and grow more and make more and sell more and enjoy more". How Liberal is that?

LAURIETON HAVEN CRAFT EXHIBITION

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [12.51 p.m.]: I consider myself extremely privileged to have the opportunity to represent the people of the electorate of Port Macquarie in this House. Another just as significant privilege is to be a part of the local community of the Camden Haven. I always enjoy the opportunity to share special occasions with residents of this area whether it be in Johns River,

Lansdowne, Kendall, Moorlands, Hannam Vale or Laurieton. In recent weeks I was honoured to be a part of the official opening of the Laurieton Haven Craft Exhibition held at the Uniting Church in Laurieton. I always enjoy attending the exhibition, not because I feel inspired about what I might be able to create myself but because I can get in early to do some Christmas shopping or to purchase a special birthday gift.

I will be the first to admit I do not have the talent to produce the extraordinary pieces that these ladies can. However, in the commercialised world in which we now live it is great to be able to purchase high-quality handcrafted gifts. This year's exhibition was outstanding, with myriad items on offer either for purchase or inspiration, including embroidery, paper tole, card making, beading, spinning, lace crochet and many other unique crafts. The theme of the exhibition was "Birds of a Feather". That theme was chosen because each Tuesday in the Uniting Church hall there is a hive of activity as ladies gather in a relaxed, friendly and caring atmosphere to share and learn new skills and crafts. The exhibition also included some very imaginative displays for visitors to appreciate, including "A Bower Bird Bush Setting", "A Flurry of Feathers", "A Touch of the Orient" and "A Sea Creatures' Fantasy".

I was joined at the opening by Reverend Bruce Westbrook and Mr Kevin Robinson and Carolyn Norman from Little Wings, which is the recipient of money raised from this year's Laurieton Haven Craft Exhibition. As I said in my remarks at the official opening, there are many beneficiaries of a local event such as this. Charitable organisations such as Little Wings and the many others that have preceded it receive the proceeds, the community has the opportunity to enjoy an amazing display of local talent and, of course, the ladies themselves participate each week and derive enormous pleasure and companionship from this social outing. I am pleased that Little Wings was chosen as this year's recipient of funding because I know that it has provided a wonderful service to families within the Port Macquarie electorate. It has supported local children who have cancer or other life-threatening illnesses and their families by providing free flights to and from the Children's Hospital at Westmead while they are undergoing treatment.

It would be remiss of me while sharing with the House this showcase of local crafts not to mention the renowned Devonshire tea that goes hand in hand with this event. I have no doubt that many male partners are convinced that it is a worthwhile event to attend simply because they will be rewarded with homemade scones, jam and cream at the finish. I thank Doreen Bate for the invitation to be a part of the official opening and I congratulate the ladies on the organising committee and all the exhibitors on another successful event. A past beneficiary of the proceeds of the Laurieton Haven Craft Exhibition, and certainly a very deserving one, is Kendall Riding for the Disabled. On 27 September I joined volunteers, participants and the community to celebrate the organisation's twentieth anniversary. Despite the uninvited downpour during the morning there was no shortage of smiles from those with disabilities who joined in this special celebration.

I have been a long-time supporter of the organisation, and it can be assured that that will continue. It is fantastic that people in our community volunteer so much of their time and take so much care to ensure every individual who attends, no matter what their ability, relishes the joy and the memories that go with riding a horse. I will not single out any volunteer; I congratulate and thank them all. Whether they are a leader, a coach, a grounds person, a feeder, a supporter or they organise the morning tea, they all contribute to making our community a great place to live regardless of whether they have a disability. I wish Kendall Riding for the Disabled a happy twentieth anniversary and I am confident that with its members' determination, compassion and generosity there will be many more anniversary celebrations ahead.

HIS EMINENCE BEATITUDE MAR BECHARA AL-RAHI

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [12.56 p.m.]: It is with great joy and honour that I acknowledge and advise the House of the visit of His Eminence Beatitude Mar Bechara Al-Rahi. His eminence will make his first visit to Australia from 24 October until November 2014. The Lebanese Maronite Community is looking forward to his visit and his blessing. Patriarch Al-Rahi was born in Himlaya in the Matn district of Lebanon in 1940. He entered the Maronite Order in 1962 and was ordained as a priest in 1967. He was consecrated as auxiliary bishop in July 1986 and in 2003 he was elected secretary of the Maronite Synod. In 2011 he was elected patriarch of the Maronites, replacing Mar Nasrallah Sfeir.

In November 2012, when he was created cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI, Patriarch Al-Rahi said that for the sake of communion he would work to establish a sincere and complete dialogue with Muslims to build a better future and common life and cooperation. He was also awarded the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour by the President of France, Nicholas Sarkozy, and the National Order of the Cedars in 2012. On his visit to Australia, Patriarch Al-Rahi will visit all parishes and meet with parishioners. He will also have a special

gathering with Maronite youths. He will be visiting all States and his goal is to strengthen the relationship with our homeland and to encourage the local Maronite community to stay united in supporting Australia and showing their loyalty to this great nation. Patriarch Al-Rahi will visit State parliaments and the Federal Parliament and will meet with leaders, including other religious leaders. He will highlight the conflict in the Middle East and the resulting suffering experienced by Christians.

I had the privilege to meet His Beatitude during my last visit to Lebanon. It is my duty when I visit my country of birth to go to Bkerke—the See of the Maronite Catholic Patriarchate—and to receive his blessing. I was overwhelmed by the great respect His Beatitude has earned from all religious leaders in Lebanon. He plays an important role in maintaining harmony in the community and the relationship that he has built up between Maronite Catholics and other religious groups across the country is vital in achieving that. As a Maronite Catholic it gives me great pride to be subject to His Beatitude's authority. Today I publicly acknowledge his role and contribution and pay my respects to him. I look forward to meeting with him during his visit to Australia. I take this opportunity to thank Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, the clergy and the members of the organising committee for making this visit possible.

KINGDOM CULTURE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [1.00 p.m.]: On Saturday 11 October 2014 I was pleased to attend the open day of the Kingdom Culture Christian School. Accordingly, I acknowledge in the Parliament Pastor Ben Irawan and his wife, Cisca, and Senior Pastor Elizabeth Brookshaw. Pastor Ben Irawan is the President of Arncliffe Community Life Centre and a senior pastor of Life Centre International, a church with congregations in Sydney and Wollongong. As well as being a key figure assisting the community, Ben also is a public speaker, entrepreneur, community builder and accomplished musician. He is the editor of popular *New City Magazine*, chairman of Dads4Kids Fatherhood Foundation, and a board member of Australian Heart Ministries and Focus on the Family Australia. Ben also is the founder and head of the Kingdom Culture Christian School, which has gained approval to open in 2015 for kindergarten to year 6 students.

The Arncliffe Community Life Centre has a remarkable history and was founded by Senior Pastor Elizabeth Brookshaw in 1982 in her heartfelt endeavours to help members of the community in need. This home fellowship continued to grow into a church, situated at 19 Dowling Street, Arncliffe, New South Wales, and was named the Body of Christ Mission Centre. Senior Pastor Elizabeth Brookshaw, who continues her national and overseas missionary work and currently is in Malaysia, entrusted the senior leadership and care of the centre to her son, Ben Irawan, and daughter-in-law, Cisca. In November 2004 the church formally changed its name to Arncliffe Community Life Centre. The life centre is a non-denominational, not-for-profit organisation. Everyone is welcome and currently 26 different nationalities attend regularly. The life centre promotes the development of good values, life skills and talents to children and young people in the surrounding community.

Its early intervention strategy prevents young people from getting into a life of drugs, violence, crime and bad associations. The strategy's view is to raise tomorrow's leaders preparing for a future that is unknown to them. Pastor Ben Irawan's involvement in the Dads4Kids Fatherhood Foundation shows his strong emphasis on family unity. The foundation encourages dads to be actively involved with their children. The life centre also assists families experiencing marital, family and relationship problems, and also can help children who suffer trauma as a result of divorce. Changing a nation in one generation through education is the life centre's mission. Prevention through early intervention is the main focus and primary reason for forming the Kingdom Culture Christian School. Learning will be self-paced, student centred and based on mastering individual student strengths. The open day on 11 October 2014 was organised to showcase to the community the future curriculum.

Each Thursday from 7.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. the life centre also provides a program known as Kidz Rock for children aged five to 11 years. This is a time when parents can do their weekly shopping and for only a gold-coin donation safely leave their younger children to take part in games, prizes, stories and lots of fun. This program is very popular with parents and is well attended. Arncliffe community life centre also provides a psychology service called Headz Up Ministries for those in the community who need professional help and support. Fees are negotiated on a sliding scale according to income. The clinic provides a trained and professional clinical psychologist, who is a full member of the Australian Psychological Society, offering treatment approaches without medicine to address any underlying issues that are causing difficulty, anguish or distress. According to Pastor Ben Irawan:

We believe that the future of our community, city and nation lies in the future of our children. If we can raise great children and young people now, we will have a great future ahead of us.

CAMDEN ROTARY RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.05 p.m.]: Today I speak about the very successful 2014 Camden Rotary Relay For Life that was held recently. With some 1,200 participants and 71 teams the success of this annual event just keeps growing. Communities from Camden, Narellan and Wollondilly come together with one special purpose: to raise funds for the New South Wales Cancer Council. Many people participating have their own special story of how cancer has affected them—either as a survivor or knowing a friend or family member who has been affected by cancer. This year nearly \$250,000 has been raised adding to the \$782,000 raised over the past six years. Events such as Relay For Life would never be possible without a hardworking committee as that chaired by Rowan Moore and supported by Ross Newport, Alan Hamilton, Peter Sidgreaves, Dawn Thomson, Stephen Humphreys, Carla Nielson, Cindy Cagney, Nathan Dart, Matt Offord, Rick Wade, Chris Evans, Greg Eagles, Warwick Richardson, Peter Claxton, John Lee, Ralph Rossteuscher, Rob Elliott, Kevyn Moore, Aneek Mollah, Paul Davies and Chris Haywood. All these people and their respective Rotary clubs do a fantastic job.

The board of Camden Rotary must be very proud of the achievements of this year's relay. Congratulations go to President Rick Wade, vice-President Aneek Mollah, secretary David Yong, treasurer Ken Hughes, Andrew Perrin, Greg Eagles, Veronique Stevenson, Aaron Hodges, Noel Lowry and Terence Lee. Entertainment was provided over the weekend by Leah Cassar Performers and Somerset Music Performers, and 2MCR provided music throughout the event. I thank the many very generous sponsors without whom this event would not be possible. They are Camden Hire, Rotary of Narellan, Oran Park Town, Gregory Hills, Max and Nola Tegel, Noel Riordan, Bob Ingham, AO, and family, Camden Council, Camden Golf Club, 100.3FM, Vintage FM 88.7, JMD Developments, Austral Pharmacy, BC Coatings, ADCO, *Camden-Narellan Advertiser*, *District Reporter*, Wollondilly Shire Council, Combined Real Estate, *Macarthur Chronicle*, Firststyle Homes, Fowler Homes, Rotary Club of Picton, Camden Show Society, Woolworths Camden, Burton Contractors, Cardno Consulting Engineers, Macarthur Country Meats, Nepean Engineering and Innovation, Patterson Dry Cleaners and Phuon Nguyen.

Further sponsors were Bendigo Bank, Phoenix Engineering, Harrington Kitchens, DAM Structural Steel Pty Ltd, Cobbitty Grove Kitchens, BCD Security, Brown Smart Consulting, Commonwealth Bank, CSB Homes, Dennis Family Corporation, Everyday Homes, MainBrace Constructions, Marsdens Law Group, North by NorthEast, 91.3FM, Solutions Outsourced, Recom Electrical, Stuart Dolden, Warden Mobile Repairs, William Rofe, Roz Hill Sandra Claxton, Osteopathy Narellan, Peter Claxton, Mark Tomkins, the Franzman family, G and M Eagles, Gillian Carr, Distinctive Homes, David Hazlett, Dennis Ashton, Casaview Homes, Blue Tongue Homes, Brefni, A-1 Concrete Services Pty Limited, Icon Visual, Inglis Property Group, James Clifton, Jason Aquilina, Kelly Partners, Lee Massage and Acupuncture, Logico Homes, Macarthur 4WD Club, Studley Park Golf Club, Narellan Newsagency, Macarthur Stockfields, Plough and Harrow Inn, LM Hayter and Sons Pty Limited, Elm Tree Cafe, Camden Machinery, Camden Caravan Pty Ltd, Atlantis Aquatic Swim Centre Pty Limited, Neverland Holdings Pty Limited and South West Batteries. As can be seen, this truly wonderful community event is supported by so many of its members.

Some great competition happened between the teams to be the best top fundraisers. The top 10 fundraising teams were Oran Park Town, Camden Local Area Command police, Gregory Hills, Rotary Club of Camden, Austral Pharmacist Advice, Camden Golf Club, Jan's Wonderful Walkers, Holy Walkamolies, Laps for Life and Combined Real Estate. Individual fundraisers were just as competitive and the top 10 were Mark Perich, Wayne Perich, Bronwyn Parkin, Kay Sidman, Allan Webb, Hans Ede, Noel Quince, Melanie Moss, David Hayes and Jessica Franzman. All who attended had a wonderful time. Congratulations on a fantastic effort in supporting such a worthy cause. The Macarthur community is to be commended. The Rotary clubs of Camden, Narellan, Picton and Wollondilly North all do an outstanding job supporting this community event. In the past seven years over \$1 million has been raised. I commend each and every person, walker, team, sponsor, Rotary club member and anybody who contributed to a wonderful community weekend event. I look forward to next year's event.

HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE AWARDS

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.10 p.m.]: Each year I have the pleasure of attending several sports club award presentations in my capacity as patron. Recently both Kenthurst and District Football Club and Kellyville Kolts Soccer Club held their annual awards presentations and, fortunately, due to their being held at different times of the day, I was able to attend both. These two clubs are typical of the wonderful volunteering spirit in my electorate. The Hills has one of the highest rates of volunteer

participation anywhere in this country which not only says a lot about our area but also says a lot about the people who live in my electorate. I have often said that my residents do not ask for handouts but they do ask how they can offer a helping hand to others. In this case it is the many hundreds of parents who volunteer their time on behalf of the young people in our area.

The Kenthurst and District Football Club presentation day is an annual event and has been running since the club was founded in 1967. The club changed its name at the end of 2013 to move with the times, and is now incorporated as the Kenthurst and District Football Club. The club uses both Kenthurst Park and Annangrove Park for training and games. The Kenthurst and District Football Club currently caters for more than 500 players. It is a not-for-profit sporting group playing football-soccer and it is run by many volunteers who are committee members, coaches, managers, canteen helpers and field workers. The club has contributed substantial funds towards improving our sports fields including re-turfing Kenthurst Park 2, installing lights on all the fields, updating the canteen, contributing towards the water bore at Kenthurst Park for irrigation and supporting the new irrigation system at Annangrove Park to ensure that the fields are always in the best condition all year round.

Both fields are situated in picturesque rural settings, and the club draws players from near and far who want to be involved in a safe and healthy environment whilst developing young soccer players of the future. Every year the club goes from strength to strength. The club won the club championship in both 2012 and 2013 in the Gladesville Hornsby Football Association and this year won both the club championship and the Premier League. The last time the club won that award was in 1971—which was also the first year this award was introduced. The club won again in 1992. In 2002 the club became affiliated with the North West Sydney Women's Football Association—the only association in Australia that caters for all-female teams. The club won the club championship in this competition in 2009.

The vast majority of the current committee has been associated with the club for more than 20 years, with many holding positions on the committee for more than a decade. I commend Cathy Edmonds, who has held her current position as president of this club since 2001. Cathy is an icon in this area and is greatly respected by all members of the club and the broader community. Last year the Kenthurst soccer club won a competition jointly run by radio station Triple M and Ford, called Ford Ranger Rivals. The prize, which was awarded after a public vote, included a live call on Triple M of a match at Kenthurst Park between Kenthurst and its nominated rivals, Thornleigh. The day attracted more than 1,000 spectators and was well received.

Special mention must be made of many hardworking members of this club who have dedicated their time over the past two decades. These include Cathy Edmonds the current president, Tony Torville, Matt Geekie, Sue Torville, Adam Halvani, Leah Williams, Susan Lannoy, Garry and Nikki Riddle, Vince Sammut, John "JD" Durrant, Frank Capaldi, Warwick Gosling, Tom McGuinness, Michael Sproule and my great mate Ian McAulay. These people have made such a positive difference to so many young people's lives and deserve our respect and commendation.

Following this event I was able to attend the awards presentation on behalf of Kellyville Kolts Soccer Club. My association with this club dates back to 1990 when my son, Ryan, first started playing soccer in the under-6s. I am proud to say that some of the parents involved back then are still active in this club today. People like Geoff and Cheryl Elliot and Karen Vincent have dedicated a large part of their lives to this club and to thousands of young people in our area who have benefitted from playing soccer.

Geoff and Cheryl are rightfully life members and at the annual Red and Black night, which always follows presentations to senior players, Karen Vincent announced that after serving 25 years she was retiring. Karen's son and my son, Ryan, played together in the same team when our boys were just six and seven years old, which is a long time ago. For people such as Karen still to dedicate so much of her time to this wonderful club speaks volumes not only about the club but also about the very people who make these clubs a special place. Our community is indebted to them for their service. In 1990 Kellyville Soccer Club had just over 200 registered players. The club is now one of the largest soccer clubs in New South Wales with more than 1,400 registered players. The success of this club is due in no small part to the many volunteers who care for the grounds and organise teams, and the managers and coaches. This is an enormous amount of work.

The current Kellyville Kolts committee consists of Mark Moran, David Duggan, Karen Vincent, Craig Yaupaung, Gary Whitby, Wolfgang Betker, Bill Renton, Keith Westley, Greg Buchanan, President Steve Prattent, Kaye Wallace and Greg Roberts. I also make special mention of Craig Yaupang, who is retiring this year after 11 years at the club. Craig originally initiated submissions for numerous grants through the

Community Building Partnership, which I was happy to support, for the building of a new meeting room, storage shed and first-aid room which are now almost complete. Last year alone our Government provided \$24,600 through this funding for the club. As is often said, these volunteers are the glue that binds our community together. We are especially grateful for their efforts on behalf of our communities. Well done and thank you to everyone concerned.

BLUE MOUNTAINS BUSHFIRES

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [1.15 p.m.]: Friday 17 October marks the first anniversary of the worst bushfires in the Blue Mountains in living memory. The time has passed quickly. The Blue Mountains communities that have been directly and indirectly impacted have come to terms with their loss and are turning their energies to renewing their lives. During this time much has been said and written by the greater Australian community. I genuinely believe there is still great interest in how the Blue Mountains communities are coping at this time. It has been a memorable year with both positives and negatives. There has been a lot of finger-pointing and petty politics by the Labor Party, the latest being over the flexible community grants that are part of the \$1.8 million recovery package jointly funded by the State and Federal governments.

Let me make it crystal clear that there is no political input into the grants and their determinations. As all decisions were made at arms-length by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, shame on the Federal Labor spokesperson for her political pointscoring yet again. Grant recipients include Springwood Neighbourhood Centre for the fireworks project, which offers activities targeting an arts-based program for children, women and families culminating in an art exhibition. Other grants include a bushfire building conference and expo from the Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise, and Plant a Thought—a social bushfire re-greening project from Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre.

Many events will be held on Friday and at the weekend to acknowledge the anniversary. This coming week St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, which was ringed by fire on that fateful day, will be holding a thanksgiving ceremony. The invitation sums up the whole period so well: resilience, survival, service, love, celebration, compassion and community. Mount Victoria will lay a commemoration plaque to recognise the community's losses and the Winmalee community is organising a community fun day. The social services arm of the Presbyterian Church, Jericho Road, which had a lot to do with helping people at the time, will have a thanksgiving service at the Winmalee Presbyterian Church, as well as the Mountains Church at the Springwood Country Club.

An event of special significance to me is a memorial service and plaque unveiling at the Winmalee pet centre. One of the residents, Carolyn Milne, who lost seven cats as well as her home, will be unveiling the plaque. Over and over again I saw the deep grief of those who had lost their beloved pets. One family I know lost a small dog and a prize-winning horse owned by their daughter. Even now their daughter cannot come to terms with the loss of her horse. They have another dog and another horse, but that does not replace what they have lost—often a part of the family. The loss of pets and the thought that they suffered in any way adds to the grief of losing all one's possessions and one's home.

On a brighter note, 98 development applications for new homes have been approved by council and many residents have already moved into the newly built homes. This brings me to my friend Gordon about whom I spoke at the time of the bushfires. Members might recall that he was the first person I saw at the evacuation centre. He was barely recognisable as he was covered in black soot from the fire. He was very fortunate with his insurance as the company allowed him to pay the premium and to claim on insurance. His home is well on the way to being completed and the bricks are being laid. The man cave which was destroyed is still a rusting reminder of the devastation. However, as part of his connection with the past and with recovery, he is building a gabion wall with what he is salvaging from the wreckage. He has written a book about his experiences and he has a positive attitude to his life and to his family's future.

All in all the Blue Mountains community is coming to terms with its loss with a whole range of responses to the bushfire disaster. Many have chosen to rebuild and renew, while others have left the area as they cannot cope with the experiences they have been through. There have been many stories of challenges and hardships, which unfortunately are the honey for many media outlets. Equally, there are magnificent stories of strengthening relationships, new friendships through shared experiences and heightened community awareness of each other's needs. As the anniversary approaches, I again sincerely thank all the emergency services in the Blue Mountains for protecting the communities in which we live. We truly are blessed with our wonderful communities that support one other—something that was brought to light during the bushfire disasters.

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [1.20 p.m.]: One in four Australians experience mental illness in their lifetime. Last week was Mental Health Week, which aims to raise awareness of mental health issues in the community, to promote social and emotional wellbeing, and to encourage people to maximise their health potential to enhance the coping capacity of families and individuals and thus increase mental health recovery. I take this opportunity to highlight the fantastic work that is being done by Liverpool Hospital's Mental Health Service. Staff members work tirelessly in one of the busiest psychiatric units in the country that provides vital care to people in the community who need it most. I am not the only one who believes this service is fantastic and deserves to be promoted and recognised. Thanks to the ABC and the production company Northern Pictures, many people have had their eyes opened to the great care that patients receive when undergoing treatment.

In October 2013 the Liverpool Hospital's Mental Health Service joined forces with Northern Pictures to film a three-part documentary series that was screened on ABC television during Mental Health Week. *Changing Minds—The Inside Story* uncovered the realities of mental health treatment in the twenty-first century and enabled us to see patients and staff who, with humour and honesty, challenged the stigma and taboos relating to mental health. Before filming of the series commenced at the Liverpool Hospital an intensive six months of preproduction preparation was undertaken by the team that involved protocols, legal arrangements and access agreements. For 12 weeks a small crew filmed inside the locked wards of the mental health unit, capturing electroconvulsive therapy sessions and modern psychiatric drug regimes. For the first time on Australian television audiences were able to view the proceedings of the Mental Health Tribunal, which revealed the process that allows unwell people to be held against their will during treatment.

The aim of the project was to raise awareness of mental health and the issues surrounding it. The series challenged the stigma and discrimination that still exists about mental health. The important message is that help is available. The three-part documentary series sensitively followed the journeys of staff, patients and their families throughout their time that care and treatment was provided and their road to recovery. At times it was hard to watch and I admit that during the last few minutes of the series I was brought to tears, but at other times it was worth laughing out loud. The series was brilliantly put together.

Clinical Director Dr Mark Cross and his team kept us grounded by explaining the process and by indicating how patients had progressed or in some cases regressed. It was easy to see, as cameramen filmed their every move, that doctors and nurses at the hospital were professional and in difficult times provided a high level of care to their patients with humour and sensitivity. I thank the staff and patients at Liverpool Hospital's Mental Health Unit for allowing the filming to take place. People in the community who have had their eyes opened now recognise that mental health, like any other illness, can be experienced from time to time and that the stigma surrounding it must be reduced.

I had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Mental Health, the Hon. Jai Rowell, and the doctors and nurses at the Liverpool Hospital to attend an eight-minute screening. I thank them for the wall hanging of all those who were featured in the documentary and I assure them that I will find a great place to hang it in my office. The hospital made the most of the screenings by following a Twitter feed, which was a great way of breaking down the stigma of mental illness. It encouraged a lot of conversation, which is great for the hospital and for mental health. I thank everyone for all that they do when looking after these special people who need extra support at a stressful time in their lives.

Private members' statements concluded.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.25 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of 10 young engineers accompanied by Mr Peter Achterstraat, former Auditor-General of New South Wales. I welcome to the gallery student leaders, their parents and teachers from Epping Boys High School, Northcross Christian School and Melrose Park Public School, guests of the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Veterans Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education, and member for Ryde. I welcome Mr Brian and Mrs Gloria Walker, guests of the member for Kiama. I also welcome Mr Robert and Mrs Joy Westcott, guests of the member for Orange.

CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR

The SPEAKER: In mid-October 1914 as the volunteers of the Australian Imperial Force were gathering at Albany awaiting a date to set sail for the great adventure in defence of the Empire, the Western Front was already alight with mortal combat. On both sides of the great globe there was a race to the sea—how different they were. On the Western Front, as it was coming to be called, both protagonists were engaged in a titanic "race to the sea". Germany was anxious to seize the Channel Ports and separate England from its European allies, and the allied powers were desperate to prevent this.

On the other side of the world, thousands of young men were rushing to Albany to join the Australian Imperial Force to seek battle and adventure alongside their Empire allies. In the north, as they approached the coast the men were tired, exhausted and starting to realise what a terrible war this was—losing comrades, enduring hardship and facing death. They knew what war was all about. In the south, they were still bright of eye and sturdy of limb, full of flowing comradeship and eager for adventure. They had no idea what war was all about. North and south, but what of east and west?

At almost the same time to the east, in far distant Constantinople, the ancient capital of the far-flung Ottoman Empire, a weak sultan and a scheming war minister, in conjunction with their German advisers, were planning a naval assault upon the Russian ports of the Black Sea, which they would launch on 28 October and bring that fading empire into a war that would utterly destroy it and, in a move that resonates so dreadfully today, bring about the end of the last recognised caliphate—the work of a Turkish military attaché in Sofia, Bulgaria, who in the last days of October prepared for his return to Turkey and his date with destiny: Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal.

In the still innocent west, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Samuel Harden Church, president of the Carnegie Institute, produced his first great American response to the war. His tract, which was published in London in October, titled "The American Verdict on the War", came into being as a response to the manifesto issued by 93 German intellectuals, including 13 Noble laureates, seeking to justify Germany's invasion of Belgium and its role in precipitating the carnage. For the first time an influential American voice was raised arguing that that great nation could not stand idly by when confronted with the moral challenge inherent in the defence of liberty. North and south, east and west, none were spared its share of this unfolding calamity.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 20, I nominate Mark Joseph Coure as a Temporary Speaker in place of Garry Keith Edwards.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Courts Legislation Amendment (Broadcasting Judgments) Bill 2014
 Drug Court Legislation Amendment Bill 2014
 Passenger Transport Bill 2014
 Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013
 Water Management Amendment Bill 2014
 Road Transport Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill 2014
 City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014
 Mutual Recognition (Automatic Licensed Occupations Recognition) Bill 2014
 Bail Amendment Bill 2014
 Mining Amendment (Small-Scale Title Compensation) Bill 2014

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

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

T F BATHURST
 Lieutenant-Governor

Office of the Governor
 Sydney, 25 September 2014

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

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

MARIE BASHIR
Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 26 September 2014

Professor the Honourable Dame Marie Bashir, AD, CVO, Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that she has re-assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Governor:

DAVID HURLEY
Governor

General David Hurley has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that Her Majesty The Queen has been graciously pleased, by Commission under Her Royal Sign Manual and the Public Seal of the State of New South Wales, bearing date at Saint James's the eighth day of May 2014, to appoint him to be the Governor in and over the State of New South Wales in the Commonwealth of Australia; and that this day he took the Oath of Allegiance and the Official and Judicial Oath before the Honourable Thomas Bathurst, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, and assumed the administration of the Government of the State accordingly.

Government House, Sydney, 2 October 2014

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CHARLESTOWN**Issue of Writ**

The SPEAKER: I inform the House that, pursuant to section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, I issued a writ on 3 October 2014 for the election of a member to serve in place of Andrew Stuart Cornwell, resigned.

Nomination day—Thursday 9 October 2014

Polling Day—Saturday 25 October 2014

Return of the writs—Friday 7 November 2014

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF NEWCASTLE**Issue of Writ**

The SPEAKER: I inform the House that, pursuant to section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, I issued a writ on 3 October 2014 for the election of a member to serve in place of Timothy Francis Owen, resigned.

Nomination day—Thursday 9 October 2014

Polling Day—Saturday 25 October 2014

Return of the writs—Friday 7 November 2014

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I inform the House that the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Veterans Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Education.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

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

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. The House will come to order. Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the first time. Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. Opposition members are very unruly today.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.28 p.m.]

GENERAL PRACTITIONER MEDICARE CO-PAYMENT

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. On 18 August in Budget Estimates the Minister said there had not been any modelling done on the impact of Tony Abbott's GP tax. Yet a NSW Ministry of Health briefing note provided to the Department of Premier and Cabinet on 5 May clearly shows "health system information and performance reporting branch has undertaken cost modelling based on a co-payment". Why did the Minister mislead the Parliament?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: It is so typical of Labor Party members to change the facts to suit themselves. The reality is that there is no GP tax. The modelling—if one could call it that—was done for the Commission of Audit long before the Federal budget.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease shouting at the Minister.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This is a hypothetical because there is no GP tax. It has not got through the Senate and if it does get through—

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn members that they will be removed from the Chamber if they continue to interject.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: If there is a GP tax it is likely to be very much a modification of what was originally proposed. There is no way to make an accurate assessment.

[Interruption]

I did not mislead the Parliament. You are misleading the Parliament.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn Opposition members that the behaviour they displayed during that answer will not be tolerated. If they ask a question they should listen to the Minister's answer in silence. The member for Macquarie Fields should not interject when I am speaking. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the first time.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr GARETH WARD: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the New South Wales Government restoring trust in New South Wales politics?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his interest in cleaning up politics in New South Wales and for looking after the community that he works so hard to represent. The system of political donations in New South Wales is broken and needs reform. As I have said since the day I became Premier, we need to take away what is clearly a broken system. It is corrupted and needs to be fixed. My words when I came to Parliament were that political donations had become corrosive.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Earlier this year I appointed Kerry Schott to report to government in December on options for long-term reform of the political system, but I am determined to act now. I am determined to act for the 2015 election. We must act to restore the public's trust in New South Wales politics and government and I will take whatever steps are necessary to increase transparency and improve accountability in the political system.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The system of donations needs tougher penalties, more transparency, less influence from donations and more public funding. Today I am delighted to announce that legislation will come before the House to introduce those policies and principles to clean up the system for the 2015 election. Later this year the Schott committee will make further recommendations for future years but, as I have said, we must act now. The package will ensure tougher penalties for those who break the law. It doubles penalties for offences under the Act: most penalties will increase from \$22,000 and/or two years jail to \$44,000 and/or four years jail. It prohibits third party arrangements being used to avoid donations and expenditure caps.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment. It allows for prosecutions for offences to be commenced up to 10 years after the offence was committed for future offences. The package will be more transparent, allowing the public to see who is funding the people who represent them. It requires political parties to disclose donations received from 1 July to 1 February 2015 before the next election. The disclosure must be made within one week of the end of this period and will be publicly released by February 2015.

The package also lessens the corruptive and corrosive influence of donations on our political system. It reduces the caps on political donations to what applied for the 2011 election from \$5,700 to \$5,000 for a political party and from \$2,400 to \$2,000 for candidates. It reduces spending caps on electoral communication to what applied for the 2011 election and it reduces spending caps for registered third party campaigns to \$250,000 and to \$125,000 for non-registered third parties.

The package also provides for more public funding of State election campaigns. It replaces existing arrangements for public funding with a scheme similar to methods used nationally and in Queensland and South Australia. This makes the system fairer for all parties and rewards performance rather than spending, calculating the level of public funding with a dollar per vote model. Importantly, payments will only be made up to the applicable spending cap and only after the spending is proven and audited.

This is an historic and important change to clean up politics in this State. The package reduces reliance on donations, which is an overdue and needed reform, and at the same time it increases public funding. This is just a start, but as a government we were determined to act before the 2015 election campaign. We are determined to ensure that there are tougher penalties and more transparency. We are determined to ensure that there is less influence from donations and more public funding. This package delivers a system that provides for those principles and gives every basis for public confidence in New South Wales politics. It is long overdue but we are very proud to deliver it today.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER MEDICARE CO-PAYMENT

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given the Minister's previous answer that the GP tax will likely be a modification of what was proposed, what discussions has the Minister had and what knowledge does the Minister have about the GP tax to be introduced into the Federal Parliament?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I said if indeed there were any passage of legislation through the Senate it may well be modified. I have no details apart from what I have read in the media.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The reality is that there cannot be any modelling about something that is not detailed.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. I call the member for Cessnock to order for the first time. Opposition members will cease interjecting during Ministers' answers.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What action is the Government taking to work with councils to rebuild regional infrastructure?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Myall Lakes for a good and well delivered question sans notes.

[Interruption]

Members opposite have started already. They hate to hear how this Government is getting on with the job of rebuilding New South Wales and regional areas in particular because they do not have a single regional member. People know their track record on local government and infrastructure. But enough about members opposite. In just 3½ years the Liberal-Nationals Government has put regional New South Wales back at the heart of government.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: As I speak we are directly delivering some \$13 billion worth of infrastructure in regional New South Wales. That includes funding for projects such as the first major inland dam in more than 30 years and an amount of \$366 million will be provided for other essential water security projects around the State. Members opposite are hard work. People from Orange who are in the gallery are interested in this and so I ask members opposite to zip it for a minute.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Kogarah and the member for Wollongong continue to interject they will find themselves out of the Chamber.

Mr ANDREW STONER: It includes \$1 billion more in the roads budget each and every year to make regional roads safer and freight corridors more productive. It includes around \$1.5 billion at last count for regional hospital upgrades. I have already told the House about the much-needed upgrades being made to hospitals the length and breadth of country New South Wales. As I have also said previously, it includes more than \$200 million for the State's first Resources for Regions program to return a benefit to mining-affected communities that contribute so much to our State's wealth.

Investment in regional infrastructure is incredibly important because, when we came to office after 16 years of Labor, we inherited a \$30 billion infrastructure backlog. Last year the local government part of that infrastructure backlog was estimated at \$7.4 billion and that has been reduced this year to \$6.2 billion. Nevertheless, there is still a heck of a lot of local government infrastructure that needs to be rebuilt. Unlike the former Labor Government, which treated local government with contempt during its 16 years in government, this Government is working.

Ms Anna Watson: You cannot even keep a straight face.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Comrade, you will be all right. This Government is working with local government to get on with the job of rebuilding essential local infrastructure including in regional areas of New South Wales. I congratulate the Minister for Local Government and member for Bathurst on the magnificent Bathurst 1000 last weekend. What a great race! Perhaps even that race showed signs of the continued investment needed in local infrastructure. Recently I was pleased to announce with the Minister for Local Government and member for Bathurst \$148 million that has been unlocked under round three of the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme [LIRS]. The scheme will fund 31 successful projects that include a \$1.9 million local bridge replacement program in the Nambucca shire in my electorate, and goodness knows that sort of help is needed; the upgrade of Hastings River Drive, which could certainly use some help, in the Port Macquarie electorate; and a \$2.86 million upgrade of the sewage treatment works in Inverell in the Northern Tablelands electorate.

Ms Linda Burney: Was he at Panorama?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I know the member for Canterbury is not interested in the information.

The SPEAKER: It appears not.

Mr ANDREW STONER: This is essential local infrastructure that includes two new aeration ponds. That improvement has been achieved with the support of the member for Northern Tablelands and the very good Mayor of Inverell, Paul Harmon. This funding will bring the total LIRS investment, which was commenced under the previous Minister for Local Government and member for Ballina, to more than \$823 million, which this Government has pumped into local roads, water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants and local timber bridges on country roads. I know that Opposition members do not think this infrastructure funding is important, but we do. Across the State, 168 local infrastructure projects have been funded through the LIRS to date.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER MEDICARE CO-PAYMENT

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: In directing my question to the Premier I refer to the statement he made last week that the \$7 general practitioner [GP] co-payment was a "matter for the Federal Government", and I ask: Given that figures from the Department of Health show the co-payment will mean half a million more patients packing into emergency departments in New South Wales, when will he stand up to Tony Abbott and put our State before his Liberal mate?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There are not many good things about the member for Maroubra.

Mr John Robertson: That is unfair.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is what the Leader of the Opposition tells me. However, there is one good thing about him: He supported the Rabbitohs, and I congratulate them on a great grand final victory. They did well. I have made my position very clear on the health and education measures in the Federal budget.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Say it again.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Indeed, it is quite simple. I have said it in here and publicly.

Mr John Robertson: It is as clear as mud.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: No, it is very clear. The position that the States have been left in is unsustainable. How much clearer can I be?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Opposition members either want to hear, or they do not.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. Clearly they do not want to hear what the Premier has to say.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Do Opposition members want to hear, or not? We have agreed in the Council of Australian Governments [COAG], which obviously includes the Federal Government, that we will deal with the concerns about how to address the sustainability of health funding—which are shared not only by the Minister for Health and the New South Wales Government but also by others across the country—as part of the federation white paper. That is an important process and we will ensure that we stand up for New South Wales.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will ensure that we can continue to deliver a world-class health system.

Mr John Robertson: When?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is a health system that the Leader of the Opposition is too embarrassed to ask a question about—the amazing health system that is being delivered by our Minister for Health. We will ensure that that is maintained. Funding is an important part of that.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In the past few weeks I have noticed a change in strategy from the Opposition, which has gone from saying nothing about policy—and that is a white-knuckle ride.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Given that the \$7 co-payment did not even make it onto the COAG agenda, the Premier has a lot of explaining to do.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra does not know what the Premier will say. He will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: It is not about the co-payment.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not know what the Premier will say. There is no point of order. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat and cease arguing. Members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I will address that as part of our discussion. That is a discussion that we will be dealing with as part of the federation white paper. But when Labor refers to policy, particularly in relation to funding, it is a white-knuckle ride. It was amazing that the Labor Opposition went up to Newcastle and said, "We are going to build a convention centre and sky bridge."

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The question was about health. The Premier's response has nothing to do with health.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is referring to policy generally.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We should remember that the member for Maroubra is the shadow Treasurer and is responsible for policy funding.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor announced a plan that is estimated to cost close to \$300 million, which begs examination of its plan.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Liberal Party may have vacated the field in Newcastle, but this question is about co-payments.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Taking a point of order does not give the member an opportunity to argue. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The cost will be \$300 million and when I heard that I thought, "Heavens above, surely it is not the Labor of old, which announced projects with no funding to be seen. They can't do it again. They're not going to do that in Newcastle and remind the people of Newcastle that they never delivered anything for them in 16 years. They are not reverting to their old ways, are they?" Oh dear! What does a shadow Cabinet do, for heaven's sake? When a political party announces a policy, it has to have funding. Funding fits right next to the policy.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This is Labor's plan: You give confidence to everyone in Newcastle—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The Premier is 4½ minutes into the answer, but we have heard nothing in answer to the question.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor has no credibility on any policy, no funding, and no ideas, and they are letting down the State.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that I will advise them when the 45 minutes allocated for question time is close to expiry. I apologise for the inconvenience this afternoon.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr GLENN BROOKES: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Minister for the Hunter. How is the Government progressing with the delivery of major infrastructure?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I acknowledge the work done by the member for East Hills—a member who rolls up his sleeves and works hard on behalf of his constituents. I know he has a particular interest in infrastructure and I am pleased to be able to address the House on this important issue today. As always, it has been a busy couple of months when it comes to major projects. The Government has reached another milestone with the North West Rail Link. Today I announce that the third massive tunnel boring machine has arrived in the north-west. Those opposite are touchy about this.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Government committed to having a tunnel boring machine in the ground by the end of the year—we now have three of them on site.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased to say—

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is already on three calls to order. Do members not know what I am implying when I say that? I am implying that you should shut up and I mean shut up. I can say that.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The third tunnel boring machine has been named Isabelle by the tunnellers working on the project.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know those opposite do not want to hear about the North West Rail Link because they are embarrassed about what they did not achieve, but I will continue.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fairfield and the member for Mount Druitt will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The first tunnel boring machine—Elizabeth—is already underground, working for Bella Vista. The second machine—Florence—is being assembled next to Elizabeth and will start work soon. That is three machines on site. The North West Rail Link was one of the projects promised but then cancelled by those opposite. This is a project the Government is building—ahead of schedule and, so far, under budget. This is evident to everybody except the Leader of the Opposition. Those opposite are still in denial because recently he told colleagues and said again in his budget reply speech, "We have had media releases about the North West Rail Link but no real works."

That begs the question: What does the Labor Party determine are "real works"? Perhaps "real works" to the Labor Party means designing, printing and pulping glossy brochure after glossy brochure. Maybe it means announcing a project, cutting it in half, cancelling it, doubling the budget and still not being able to build it. Or maybe it is what those opposite did to the T-Card or the CBD Metro—hundreds of millions of dollars down the Sussex Street drain. Unfortunately to the Leader of the Opposition it does not mean major tunnelling, thousands of new jobs, excavation, contracts let and billions of dollars invested in this great State. While those opposite are still passing around their suggestion box for transport policies, the Government is getting on with the job and it pleases me to be able to give an update on some other projects.

The Inner West Light Rail Extension is a project which those opposite merely talked about but which the Government has already delivered. The Government has finished construction of the South West Rail Link and testing is now underway on that rail line. When we came to government, not a centimetre of track had been laid for that project. I am also pleased to provide an update on the Wynyard Walk. Tunnelling has now started on the pedestrian link from Wynyard station to Barangaroo. When that project is completed people will be able

to walk that distance in six minutes. That is a project the Government has been working on for years, and tunnelling has now begun. A million Opal cards have now been issued. Those opposite did not manage to have a single customer on their failed T-card project.

Ms Cherie Burton: Very clever.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Thank you, thank you.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Kogarah to order for the second time. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are very pleased to say that the CBD and South East Light Rail project is going well, with planning approval received and early works already underway. Planning is also well advanced and funding has been set aside for light rail in Newcastle and Parramatta.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In addition to the CBD and South East Light Rail we also have planning and budget allocation for light rail in Newcastle and Parramatta. I also mention the Transport Access Program through which \$770 million has been provided for more than 180 station upgrades, car parks and other amenities around our transport hubs, with many more to come. The Northern Sydney Freight Corridor is a project that sat in the too-hard basket for years under those opposite, but through Federal Government funding and our State funding we are making great progress to relieve freight and passenger services between Strathfield and Broadmeadow. On behalf of my colleague in the other place, I mention the WestConnex project.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Geotechnical drilling is already underway on stages one and two, and construction is due to start next year. The Government is also spending \$2.8 million on a new intercity train fleet. I know members in regional areas whose constituents have to sit on trains for long periods are looking forward to those new trains. The Government is also buying new ferries—which I know many members are pleased about—and hundreds of new buses. Throughout this great city and this great State, the Government is getting on with the job of building infrastructure. Labor has no plans and no policies; all it has done is to demonstrate mismanagement when in office.

The SPEAKER: Order! We have no clocks whatsoever so I am going to have to guess when a Minister's speaking time is up.

FEDERAL FUNDING

Mr RYAN PARK: My question is directed to the Premier. At the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] meeting last Friday, the Premier failed to secure any commitment to restore the \$25 billion of future health and education funding to New South Wales. When is the Premier going to stand up to Tony Abbott and start putting our State before his Liberal mate?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have made our position clear. The Opposition should be congratulating the Government for signing up to the Gonski agreement and delivering six years of funding. Unlike those opposite, the Government understands that if one makes commitments one needs the funding to go with them. The Cabinet signed up and said that it wanted to do that—we have made commitments over six years. One needs savings to deliver those commitments. The Government has delivered them. We have called on the Federal Government to honour that agreement and I have said that consistently, as has the Minister for Education. The Government is doing everything it can to provide the best possible outcomes in our education system in this great State.

I know that many students are doing their Higher School Certificate [HSC] examinations at this time and I wish them all the best—as I am sure the shadow Minister also does. The HSC provides great opportunities—even the shadow Minister got through it; he found a way. The Government is proud of what it has done with education. The Opposition does not seem to get it yet. I am concerned for the people of this State so I make the point that—shadow Cabinet, hello, come in—when a policy announcement is made, funding has

to go with it. The shadow Treasurer has not picked that up yet. Regarding the Newcastle policy, I said, "Oh, don't tell me they're going back to the old days." I went to their plan. Guess what it is? We heard from the transport Minister that it is a glossy brochure. We know it is serious when there is a glossy brochure. We know Labor is back in town with a glossy brochure.

Mr Ryan Park: What about Wollongong?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I know. Just wait. I need to get there. Going through this glossy brochure I was looking for \$300 million because that is how much it is going to cost. What do they say in their plan? They say, "We will establish a committee." I thought, "Well, that's good." The people of Newcastle are cheering, "There's going to be a committee, you ripper. A committee, here we go." Hang on; wait.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was about education and health funding—important issues that were not raised at COAG last week—it had nothing to do with what is happening in Newcastle.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is great news, there is going to be a committee. What is the second plan? Point two is that they are going to start an international drawing competition. Then point three. I love point three. There is a sense of déjà vu because there is no \$300 million, there is no \$250 million, there is no \$200 million and there is no \$100 million; there is not even \$50 million. How much is there for that committee? There is \$5 million, and even it is not funded. As the people of Newcastle consider what Labor is doing they are reminded about old Labor. This reminded me also of other policy developments and the member for Wollongong.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order clearly is under Standing Order 129. It covered a double page in the Herald and the front page in Maitland. It is a good policy. They like it and you know it.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: A policy has to have funding. I just told you that.

Ms Linda Burney: It has funding.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I just told you that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Wollongong, in a sign of things to come—this is not going to happen in the election—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: She said, "Hello, hello. Hello, hello. There's a convention centre going." What does the member for Wollongong say? "I'll have one of those too. You little ripper, here we go." She says, "There's no question in my mind—

Ms Noreen Hay: I want it from you. I want you to pay for it.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I have to say that I have no doubt whatsoever that the position taken by Labor would be that we would build a convention centre. Not even \$5 million in Wollongong—nothing. That is how you do policy.

Ms Noreen Hay: I stand by that.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: You have no credibility.

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

REGISTERED CLUBS

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: My question is addressed to the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. How is the Government ensuring a strong, vibrant club sector in New South Wales?

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the member for Tweed for his question. Everyone in this House knows that he is 100 per cent for the Tweed. He also is 100 per cent for the 14 registered clubs in his electorate that employ 845 people, have 109,406 members and provide a social contribution in his community of \$29.9 million. That story is reflected across this State in all the electorates that we represent. In fact, for 15 years the member for Tweed was the manager of the Tweed Heads Bowls Club. He has seen firsthand the contribution and great work of clubs, particularly in regional areas and how they support their communities through local sporting and charity groups. Members on this side of the House understand very clearly that clubs are the lifeblood of New South Wales communities. They play such an important role.

New South Wales has 719 bowling greens, 353 golf courses, 100 tennis facilities and 96 sporting fields directly related to clubs. Clubs are one of our State's biggest employers—news for those opposite—with 42,000 jobs, of which more than 20,000 are across regional New South Wales. Clubs contribute \$3.2 billion to this State's economy. This is why the Liberal-Nationals Government, the Premier and all his colleagues on this side of the House support our local clubs. As an indication of that support, in 2010 this side of the House signed a memorandum of understanding [MOU] with ClubsNSW. As a result of our commitment to the clubs industry, that memorandum of understanding has yielded \$66 million per annum and paved the way for 1,200 jobs since it was signed.

Yesterday the Premier and I were proud to sign another memorandum of understanding, the 2014 edition, at the ClubsNSW annual conference on the Gold Coast. As part of that MOU, tax rates affecting clubs have been frozen for another four years. This will provide certainty for clubs and the many sporting and community organisations they support. Reducing red tape is the key component of our MOU and this is addressed by increasing the cheque-issuing limits from \$2,000 to \$5,000, thereby removing more than 250,000 cheques from the system at a saving to clubs and communities of \$1.1 million a year.

The Government recognises the important role played by local clubs, particularly as evacuation centres, in emergencies whether they are bushfires, floods or tempests, as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and many people in this House will attest. Tremendous costs are associated with such an important role in taking care of those who are put into dire situations out of their control. ClubsNSW provides evacuation centres for all of those who, too often, are tragically displaced due to emergencies. The Government and ClubsNSW agree that there is more we can do to assist clubs in meeting the costs of providing that service. The assistance is not intended to reimburse clubs for trading hours lost or for the use of their rooms and facilities.

Clubs often contribute far more than mere facilities: they contribute food and drink to volunteers and/or evacuees. It is more than appropriate that under our memorandum of understanding ClubGRANTS is able to provide funding to cover such costs. As we move closer to our summer months we are aware that bushfire danger is approaching with the additional threat of the storm season. Under the MOU this partnership between government, our clubs and our emergency services will be extremely valuable and will give communities, particularly those in the Blue Mountains, Wollondilly or the Warrumbungles that have been devastated recently by fire, some certainty that we are prepared to help, to invest to make sure their evacuation centres are up to speed.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr TROY GRANT: This Friday is the one-year anniversary of the devastation of the fires we saw on our televisions and that hit close to the heart of this Parliament. Those incidents remind us of the pivotal role many clubs played during those difficult times. They were the safe havens for our communities, particularly in the Blue Mountains and into the Bathurst electorate. Those images reflected the worst nature had to offer. For many, these centres acted as a temporary home, their only source of nourishment, the keeper of the only possessions they were able to salvage, and a place where they felt safe amongst adversity.

As I said, this partnership will provide much-needed certainty and relief to those communities and local clubs. Clubs are not big, corporate players who are just putting money into their pockets. In fact, they are the largest, not-for-profit organisations with a significant reach into all our communities and the hearts of our

community members. This memorandum of understanding [MOU] undertaken by the Government gives those clubs and the community the certainty they need. Our MOU is framed under the theme that resilient clubs make for resilient communities, and a resilient Government is backing them all the way.

HUNTER REGION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. On 19 August the Premier promised to go door to door in the Hunter to rebuild trust. Given the pledge was made 56 days ago, has the Premier been back to the Hunter?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will remain silent. I call the member for Fairfield to order for the first time. The Leader of the Opposition is already on three calls to order. Members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am incredibly proud of what this Government has delivered for Newcastle and the Hunter region. The Leader of the Opposition is making pie-in-the-sky promises because this Government has delivered for that region and he is desperately playing catch-up. In simple terms, when the Leader of the Opposition came up with this convention centre plan he forgot about funding. I have explained to the shadow Cabinet the need for funding. The Leader of the Opposition also has an idea about the heavy rail system. I have to give him credit because he has taken a long time to come up with this position. He says that he wished he had taken a position on the heavy rail line when he was the Minister for Transport. The great news is that he now has come up with a plan. He will plant some trees on the heavy rail line and he will slow the trains down. No wonder it took him 10 years to come up with that. It is unbelievable, although the shadow Minister loves it.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. It was a yes or no question. Has the Premier been to the Hunter or not? It has been 56 days and there has been no sign of the Premier in the Hunter.

The SPEAKER: Order! Questions do not necessarily have a yes or no answer. The member for Maroubra cannot dictate the answer in that manner. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I have been there a lot more than the member for Maroubra.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Leader of the Opposition needs to understand that when he comes up with a policy first and foremost he must have funding. It is pretty simple. He needs to stop producing glossy brochures and do some hard work. The people in the Hunter and across every community in this State expect a lot more from the Opposition.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They expect Opposition members to roll up their sleeves, produce plans and work hard. We are very proud with what we have done in the Hunter.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Newcastle Inner City Bypass was the missing link. The Government provided \$280 million to deliver it. We have identified a clear plan to revitalise Newcastle, which is something the Opposition did not do.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama and the member for Kogarah will cease their private conversation.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Critics call the Leader of the Opposition's plan "pie in the sky". We understand the reason for that.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Property Council of Australia said that another generation of Newcastle is disappointed and that "Labor's announcement that it will build three new level crossings and slow trains down will create gridlock in the city." The people of Newcastle expect much more from the Opposition. If the Opposition wants to have any credibility in Newcastle and other electorates across this State it will have to learn to do the work. If it does not, it will get what it deserves. It does not deserve the support of any community in New South Wales.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Opposition has individual members announcing policies on a convention centre and then the Leader of the Opposition backs the member for Shellharbour over the member for Wollongong.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury has been interjecting and not listening. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: It is to help the Premier. Yes or no?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Premier has concluded his answer.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr JOHN BARILARO: My question is addressed to the Fit for the Future Minister for Local Government. How is the Government addressing the local government infrastructure backlog?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I thank the member for Monaro for his question and for his excellent work representing his community. He understands that local infrastructure is required to ensure that we provide services to our communities.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Today I am pleased to state that the Government has announced round three of the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme. Under this initiative 31 successful projects have been announced across 31 local government areas. The projects range from almost \$1 million through to \$45 million. These projects would not have occurred without the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme. Councils had an infrastructure backlog totalling \$7.4 billion. Members on the other side of the House did nothing to address that backlog when they were in government.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The members opposite allowed councils to flounder and provided zero support for them. The Opposition's record in local government is woeful and members should hang their heads in shame. The Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme subsidises the cost of finance for councils to help them repair, rebuild and reduce their infrastructure backlogs. In total, the scheme has unlocked almost \$1 billion worth of infrastructure, which includes 168 projects across the State.

Members on this side of the House are partnering with councils across New South Wales so that they can deliver better quality services to the communities they represent. In rounds one and two of the scheme, rotting bridges were replaced with safer bridges. Unsafe roads are now being repaired. We are providing community infrastructure such as seawalls, stormwater and sewage systems, water treatment plants, libraries, playgrounds, sports fields and airports across New South Wales so that councils are fit for the future. A few months ago the member for Ballina and I inspected the new building at Ballina airport. The building has been upgraded under this program. Importantly, the airport has the capacity for 500,000 passengers a year.

Temora Shire Council in the Riverina has built a purpose-designed medical complex to provide much-needed medical services to its community. I have inspected the new pool that is being constructed in

Shoalhaven City Council and I have visited Cootamundra in the electorate of the Minister for Primary Industries. In the electorate of the member for Wollondilly, a new bridge is being constructed. These projects are happening because this Government is working with councils. In the last round 69 applications were received.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The Government is fixing high-risk areas such as footpaths and supplying town water in round three. Parkes Regional Airport is being upgraded; there will be major rejuvenation of main streets in Gundagai and Tenterfield shires; and fast-tracking of work will occur on a number of roads, for example, 111 kilometres in the Wingecarribee shire. Seiffert Oval, in the electorate of the member for Monaro and Queanbeyan's most significant sporting complex, is to be reopened and repaired, after being closed to the public because of its deteriorated condition and failure to meet fire ratings. The Government has committed \$120 million to these projects until 2025. This is a crucial scheme to help councils manage and maintain local infrastructure. Indeed, it is a key commitment of this Government, but there is more. The Fit for the Future package also will help councils with a cheaper financing authority. The Government is getting on with the job.

Question time concluded at 3.21 p.m.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Reports

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, of the following reports:

- (1) "Investigation into the Conduct of a RailCorp Manager and a Housing NSW Employee", dated October 2014
- (2) "Investigation into Concerns that Sydney Local Health District Engaged Consultants at the Yaralla Estate because of Political Donations and Links to the Liberal Party", dated October 2014

Ordered to be printed.

REGISTER OF DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 21 of the Constitution (Disclosures by Members) Regulation 1983, the Register of Disclosures by Members of the Legislative Assembly as at 30 June 2014 (Volumes One and Two).

Ordered to be printed.

COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 68A of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, of the report entitled "Review of the 2012-2013 Annual Reports of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption", Report 5/55 dated September 2014, received out of session and ordered to be printed on 22 September 2014.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Government Response to Report

The Clerk announced the receipt of the Government's response to Report 14/55 of the Public Accounts Committee entitled "Polygeneration in New South Wales", received out of session and ordered to be printed on 29 September 2014.

INDEPENDENT TRANSPORT SAFETY REGULATOR**Report**

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, of the Report of the Independent Transport Safety Regulator entitled "Implementation of the NSW Government's Response to the Final Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Waterfall Rail Accident, Reporting Period: April 2013—March 2014", received out of session and ordered to be printed on 8 October 2014.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report**

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 62/55", dated 14 October 2014, together with the minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 61/55 dated 16 September 2014.

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

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SENTENCING OF CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT OFFENDERS**Report**

Mr Troy Grant, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Every Sentence Tells a Story—Report on Sentencing of Child Sexual Assault Offenders", dated October 2014.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Troy Grant.

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

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 282 (2) I advise the House that on 18 September 2014 Lee Justin Evans was elected Chair of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Police Integrity Commission and the Crime Commission.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND REGULATION**Chair**

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 282 (2) I advise the House that on 18 September 2014 Geoffrey Lee was elected Chair of the Committee on Environment and Regulation.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON LOOSE FILL ASBESTOS INSULATION**Deputy Chair**

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 282 (2) I advise the House that on 18 September 2014 Niall Blair was elected Deputy Chair of the Joint Select Committee on Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation.

PETITIONS

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

Kiama Rail Service

Petition requesting additional carriages and seats on the 4.24 p.m. rail service from Central station to Kiama station, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Elizabeth Bay Marina

Petition calling for an open and transparent public tender process for development of the Elizabeth Bay Marina, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital Parking Facilities

Petition requesting additional parking facilities at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

Berry Ambulance Station

Petition requesting the construction of an ambulance station at Berry, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

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**.

Byrrill Creek Dam

Petition requesting that the construction of the Byrrill Creek Dam proceed, received from **Mr Geoff Provest**.

Container Deposit Levy

Petition requesting the Government introduce a container deposit levy to reduce litter and increase recycling rates of drink containers, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

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

HuntFest

Petition opposing the Narooma HuntFest event, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

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. Adrian Piccoli—Wollombi Public School—lodged 17 September 2014 (Mr Clayton Barr)

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson—Slaughterhouse Monitoring—lodged 12 August 2014 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Business Lapsed

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 2928 to 2930, 2933, 2934, 2936, 2937 and 2938 to 2985 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Registered Clubs

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.26 p.m.]: This motion should be accorded priority because clubs are the lifeblood of communities. Clubs provide a meeting place, they put money back into the community and they employ local people. Clubs make a social contribution of \$1.2 billion, including \$100 million in ClubGRANTS funding. They employ more than 42,000 people across the State, including 20,000 people in regional New South Wales. Clubs make an economic contribution of \$3.2 billion each year; that is, 0.7 per cent of our gross State product. Clubs deserve to be supported, and that is exactly what this Government has been doing since coming to office.

Last weekend I had the privilege of attending the 2014 Annual ClubsNSW Conference, where the Premier and the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing renewed their commitment to the club movement and signed a memorandum of understanding [MOU]. This MOU will ensure that clubs will continue to be successful in serving the community. Clubs are uniquely placed to support the community through good times and poor. For example, they fund sporting clubs, community groups and schools. They provide refuge and support to people in times of trouble as well as a social hub during good times. We must continue to support our clubs.

I well know the depth of support that clubs provide the community because it is through the generosity of ClubsNSW that I will be taking six students from Western Sydney to the battlefields of the First World War as part of the Centenary of Anzac essay competition. Other members in this place also have called on the club movement to support various youth initiatives, such as the member for Castle Hill who has launched a leadership program that will include students walking the Kokoda Track.

When in government Labor ripped money away from clubs to fund its failed promises. Twice Labor failed to realise that clubs provide the community with essential community services. We only begin to appreciate the importance of clubs when we realise that there are 5.7 million club members in New South Wales. To put that into perspective, that is one member for every adult in the State. Clubs provide the State with major economic benefits. Members of this House should be given the opportunity to assert our commitment to clubs. We want to recognise the vital work that clubs do in our community and to support that work. The memorandum of understanding between the Premier and ClubsNSW will provide certainty. This motion should be accorded priority in order to support our communities and to support those who support our communities.

Federal Funding

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.29 p.m.]: This motion deserves to be accorded priority because this State has a Premier who talks tough but who does absolutely nothing when it comes to standing up for the people of this State. We have a Premier who referred to the Federal budget as a "kick in the guts" for the people of New South Wales. Just two days later we saw the Premier standing with the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott. It was his first opportunity to put his views to the Prime Minister about the budget. When asked by a journalist if he stood by his comments that the budget was a kick in the guts, what did he say?

He said, "There are difficulties for the Federal Government to deal with and they've got to solve those problems." It was tough, hard-hitting stuff! Then the Premier demanded that a Council of Australian Governments [COAG] meeting be held. He pulled together the Premiers from all over Australia on a Sunday afternoon and they had a group hug. He demanded that there be a COAG meeting. Guess what? There was no COAG meeting. We have the toughest Premier in the Commonwealth of Australia! We can see that he is someone who Tony Abbott listens to!

Mr John Barilaro: Have a look at your numbers, mate.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Bye, bye, mate. Finally, the COAG meeting was held and this issue was not on the agenda. There was nothing about health, there was nothing about education. Some \$25 billion has been cut in the Federal budget from New South Wales health and education. The Government's own reports highlight the fact that with a general practitioner [GP] tax of \$6, not \$7, half a million extra patients will present to our emergency departments. And yet there has been not a peep from our Premier. The emergency departments at Canterbury, Concord and Royal Prince Alfred hospitals wrote to the Government saying that they will not be able to cope if a GP tax is put in place by the Federal Government. What did we see from the Premier last Friday at the COAG meeting? We saw absolutely nothing, because he will not stand up to his mate. He will not put the interests of the people of New South Wales ahead of those of the Liberal Party, as we have already seen.

In New South Wales we have a Premier who is prepared to talk tough for his seven-second sound bite but when he has the opportunity to confront the Prime Minister he does nothing. What do we hear from the Premier and the Minister for Health about this \$7 GP tax? They say, "It is hypothetical." This is despite the fact that Tony Abbott, Joe Hockey and Peter Dutton have all said that they are committed to their budget, and that budget includes a \$7 GP tax. It is not hypothetical, it is real. It is a tax that will impact on our health system, and the impact will be devastating. But the most devastating thing is the pathetic and weak response from the Premier of New South Wales.

Mrs Roza Sage: Blah, blah, blah.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Bye, bye, member for Blue Mountains.

Question—That the motion of the member for Baulkham Hills be accorded priority—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 56

Mr Anderson	Mr Flowers	Mr Rowell
Mr Aplin	Mr Fraser	Mrs Sage
Mr Ayres	Mr Gee	Mr Sidoti
Mr Baird	Ms Gibbons	Mrs Skinner
Mr Barilaro	Ms Goward	Mr Smith
Mr Bassett	Mr Grant	Mr Souris
Ms Berejikian	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Speakman
Mr Bromhead	Mr Hazzard	Mr Spence
Mr Brookes	Mr Holstein	Mr Stokes
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Humphries	Mr Stoner
Mr Conolly	Mr Issa	Mr Toole
Mr Constance	Mr Kean	Ms Upton
Mr Coure	Mr Marshall	Mr Ward
Mrs Davies	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Webber
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Edwards	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Elliott	Mr Provest	Mr Patterson
Mr Evans	Mr Rohan	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 22

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

Pair

Mr Roberts

Mr Lalich

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Before I call the member for Baulkham Hills, I remind members that three of them are on three calls to order and quite a few of them are on two calls to order.

REGISTERED CLUBS**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.43 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that clubs are the lifeblood of communities, providing jobs to 42,000 people, including more than 20,000 in regional New South Wales, and contributing more than \$3.2 billion a year to the State's economy.
- (2) Supports the Government's memorandum of understanding with ClubsNSW that will provide certainty for thousands of clubs and employees across New South Wales.
- (3) Calls on the Opposition to support our clubs.

As I mentioned when debating why this motion should be accorded priority, clubs truly are the lifeblood of the New South Wales community. They provide unique sporting facilities, careers and jobs. They act as social hubs where people make friendships and they bring the community together. In fact, it has long been said that the club is the community's lounge room. They are not-for-profit organisations that ensure the community is well looked after by providing necessary services that the Government may not be able to provide.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. If members wish to have discussions they should leave the Chamber.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I note that among members on this side of the House are a number of club directors and former directors. The member for Lane Cove was a club director. The member for Oatley is the vice-president of the Oatley RSL and Community Club, yours truly is a director of Castle Hill RSL Club and a number of other Government members serve their clubs. That is in contrast to members opposite, most of who are banned from their clubs. The Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing has reminded me that he was a director of the Tenterfield Golf Club, where he got his handicap down to 72. The memorandum of understanding that the Minister announced in the Chamber will ensure that clubs can continue to be successful. It freezes the rate of tax most affecting clubs, which in this State provide a social contribution of \$1.2 billion, to ensure that they can continue to successfully support communities. It also reduces the red tape involved in club mergers.

Importantly, the memorandum of understanding recognises clubs' vital role in supporting communities and emergency services during times of disaster. We recall the Blue Mountains bushfire tragedy last year during which time clubs played an important role as emergency and evacuation centres. Together the New South Wales Government and ClubsNSW will look at how ClubGRANTS can be expanded to increase the role of clubs in times of need. Whether it is improving facilities to cope as an evacuation centre, improving generators to

support emergency services or expanding dams to allow them to assist in firefighting efforts, there are opportunities to expand the utility of clubs in times of distress. However, that does not diminish the role of a club in building a sense of community by creating gathering points to celebrate in good times and support other community organisations. Esprit de corps is important in times of distress and as part of the fabric of New South Wales society.

Clubs are also able to provide practical support. Mittagong RSL provided 8,700 meals to firefighters who were saving homes. Penrith Panthers supported interstate firefighters and provided accommodation. Halekulani Bowling Club raised \$9,370 to repair the community radio station transmitter. In January 2013 the Milton Ulladulla Ex Servos Club became an evacuation centre. Clubs have proven that they provide for essential community needs in bushfires. The memorandum of understanding will ensure that clubs continue to be well equipped. I am proud of the contribution that clubs make in my electorate. The five clubs in my electorate are: Castle Hill Country Club, Muirfield Golf Club, Northmead Bowling, Recreation and Sporting Club, Baulkham Hills Sports Club and The Hills Club. They employ 154 people and service 13,000 members.

Together those clubs make a social contribution of \$2.9 million to my community. That figure does not include the vital contribution that clubs outside my electorate make to the broader Hills community. The Castle Hill RSL Club, of which I am a director, provides \$250,000 each year to support veterans. Furthermore, it provides support on Anzac Day. Across the State many other clubs do the same. Clubs provide 719 bowling greens, 353 golf courses, 100 tennis facilities, 96 sports fields and gyms and swimming pools. They encourage the sense of community that we love as Australian citizens. They encourage a healthy and active lifestyle no matter a person's age or physical condition. ClubsNSW is a proud sponsor of Wheelchair Sports NSW.

This year \$100 million was delivered by clubs in ClubGRANTS funding. Cessnock Leagues Club awarded the Bucketty and District Rural Fire Brigade \$2,000 grant. Ballina RSL Club awarded the local surf lifesaving club \$20,000. In Western Sydney the Campbelltown Catholic Club has partnered with Youth Solutions to develop the Safe Celebrations Project. Labor has failed to support clubs. It twice attempted to use clubs as a revenue source. It crippled clubs with its tax rises and ripped funds out of the community. It put the continued existence of clubs at risk. The memorandum of understanding provides certainty to clubs. We have done this because we recognise that clubs are important to building strong communities. [*Time expired.*]

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.48 p.m.]: As somebody who has had the honour of being the patron of a number of clubs in my community I am delighted to speak on the motion moved by the member for Baulkham Hills. I heard the member for Tweed calling out about Bankstown Sports Club. That is one of the clubs of which I am honoured to be the patron. I am also the patron of Baulkham Hills Sports Club—the member for Baulkham Hills must be delighted by that news. Members on this side of the House are supportive of our clubs. Each of us can boast about the amazing work that clubs do for our communities. Not long ago I had the pleasure of attending the ClubGRANTS scheme cheque presentation at Revesby Workers Club.

Mr Troy Grant: Where did that idea come from?

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: That scheme was formerly known as the Community Development and Support Expenditure [CDSE] scheme, as I am sure the Minister knows. It has been in place for close to 10 years. As a result close to \$1 billion has been given to many communities across our State. Each and every year, almost \$100 million is provided, thanks to the clubs, to sporting, cultural, community and social organisations throughout our State. The process assists the channelling of much-needed funds across a whole range of recreational, sporting and cultural opportunities and activities through various programs and projects organised by associations and schools.

The ClubGRANTS scheme, which was known previously as the Community Development Support Expenditure scheme, receives advice on dispersal from committees. Each club provides a representative to committees who contributes a great deal of time and effort to consideration of which programs and projects are worthy of financial or in-kind support. It is with pleasure I inform the House that I am the patron of a number of clubs in my community, which includes the Bankstown Sports Club. I acknowledge that recently in relation to ClubGRANTS hosted by ClubsNSW, the Bankstown Sports Club was one of five finalists for the People's Choice awards.

There can be no doubt that the Bankstown Sports Club has supported the Bankstown community tremendously in various ways over the years. It also hosts an organisation known as the Recreation, Sports and Aquatics Club [RSAC]—an organisation that supports people with a disability by providing them with sporting

opportunities. Thanks to the Bankstown Sports Club the RSAC has been provided with a permanent home within the club's facilities. The club also provides the RSAC with direct and in-kind support every year to ensure that its great work continues, not just in Bankstown but also in the Canterbury and St George areas—I know that the member for Oatley, Mr Coure, is aware of that—as well as in many regional areas.

There is no doubt that Labor is supportive of clubs in New South Wales. I acknowledge the chairman, Peter Newell—which, sadly, the member for Baulkham Hills neglected to do—the chief executive officer, Anthony Ball, the executive, the committees, managers and staff of ClubsNSW and congratulate them on their support for clubs throughout New South Wales. They do a great job in ensuring that our clubs are represented in engagement with all levels of government. Clubs in New South Wales provide enormous opportunities for employment and skills development for young people particularly. Clubs employ more than 40,000 people across the State. As has been rightly mentioned, half those opportunities are provided in regional and rural communities that rely heavily on employment within the clubs industry. It is important to recognise the financial and employment support provided by clubs to communities throughout New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.53 p.m.]: It is with great pride that I express my support for the motion. All clubs in New South Wales do a fantastic job. I remind members that it was this Government that developed the memorandum of understanding [MOU] with ClubsNSW. I congratulate the new Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing and the former Minister, George Souris. Many years ago when he was the shadow Minister, George Souris approached the clubs movement and developed an MOU. As has been mentioned previously in this House, I was a manager of a club.

Mr David Elliott: Which club?

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: As a matter of fact, I was the manager of a number of clubs. I was the assistant manager at the Revesby Workers Club and at the Tweed Heads Bowls Club, which is a great club. I stood outside Parliament House with approximately 14,000 protesters who could all remember what the Labor Party tried to do—increase taxes. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I am sure you remember the campaign, Axe the Tax, that would have been conducted in Lismore. What a terrible thing that proposal was. It is an absolute sham for Labor Opposition members to say they support the clubs movement. The clubs movement has never been as strong as it has been since support has been provided by this Government.

I remember being part of a delegation consisting of the Hon. Brian Pezzutti and a number of other club managers that met with Bob Carr and Michael Egan in an attempt to push our case for the clubs. I congratulate Anthony Ball, Peter Newell and the Hon. Pat Rogan, who know all about that. The then president of ClubsNSW was Pat Rogan, a former member for East Hills, who is absolutely devastated and gutted to this day by the actions of the Labor Party. He is a great man and he has left a great legacy. The clubs movement has moved on because of the common-sense approach adopted by this Government. The Minister spent two days talking to representatives of the clubs on the Gold Coast. Not one Labor member even attended the State conference that all club representatives attend.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Bankstown has had her opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: The member for Bankstown may wish to poke fun at her local club, but if I were she, I would not be putting my nose into her local club, knowing that she does not support them and that Labor has a history of trying to gut the local clubs movement. That is why Labor does not enjoy the support of club managers. Clubs are a vital part of our local communities. Even in my town there are 14 clubs that employ 845 employees and have more than 100,000 members as well as 800 volunteers. The clubs in my electorate make social contributions worth approximately \$30 million. The number one club in my electorate is probably the Twin Town Services Club, which is operated by Rob Smith, a great chief executive officer. My former club, the Tweed Heads Bowls Club, provided great support for all the bowlers. My penultimate club, the Revesby Workers Club, is a great club for its local community. Those clubs are not supported by Labor but by this Government.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [3.56 p.m.]: Mr Deputy-Speaker—

Mr Geoff Provest: Shellharbour Workers! Come on, tell us how much you support them.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Tweed has made his contribution to this debate.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I support the motion moved by the member for Baulkham Hills. As we know throughout every 12-month period, clubs in New South Wales support not-for-profit organisations across the State. We also know that building solid partnerships with local community groups that support strong and lively communities can be nothing but an asset to local communities. The Opposition recognises the substantial and unique economic and social contributions made by clubs to our communities. Indeed, many clubs in my electorate of Shellharbour have played a pivotal role in ensuring that not-for-profit groups benefit from ClubGRANTS.

The clubs in my electorate are the lifeblood of our communities. I am pleased that under this agreement local clubs will now play a role to support emergency services by providing shelters for communities during natural disasters and other emergencies. We only need to reflect on last October's devastating bushfires to see a great example of the role that clubs can and will play in providing temporary accommodation for people and families who have been affected adversely by natural disasters. The clubs in New South Wales employ thousands of people throughout the State, but that is more important in regional and rural areas of New South Wales particularly where the local club is the backbone of each community.

In regional and rural areas of New South Wales, the clubs effectively are the community's lounge room, and they play a vital role in those communities. I take this opportunity to mention that, despite Government members claiming that Labor members do not care about clubs, the member for Maroubra was the deputy director of the Randwick Rugby Club and played a role in ensuring that the club has fared well. Labor has always been a friend to all New South Wales clubs. Clubs across New South Wales are institutions in our communities. They are a way of life. We were all brought up with clubs within our community.

Mr Troy Grant: Labor members can make themselves look silly. They do not need any help.

Ms ANNA WATSON: You are making yourselves look rather silly—Huey, Dewey and Louie over there.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members will direct their comments through the Chair.

Ms ANNA WATSON: We know that our local communities benefit from the many services that clubs have to offer in all our electorates. I do not think that a member in this Chamber would disagree with that. In my electorate the Warilla Bowling Club holds the International Indoor Bowling Championships, with flow-on effects to accommodation and hospitality. [*Time expired.*]

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.59 p.m.], in reply: I fail to see as remarkable the involvement of the member for Maroubra in the club movement, given that the Randwick Labor Club is nothing more than a pre-selection college. It does nothing for the New South Wales community other than produce failed candidates, wannabe candidates—

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 76. I did not refer to the Randwick Labor Club; I referred to the Randwick Rugby Club. The member for Baulkham Hills needs to listen.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I stand corrected. However, for the Labor Party to claim that it has some sort of ownership of the club movement because there is a Labor club here or a workers club there fails to acknowledge the fact that those clubs are simply holding grounds for wannabe candidates and failed politicians. They have provided no contribution to the New South Wales community. I find it appalling that members opposite contributed to debate in this House—and this is something to which the member for Tweed referred—in the full knowledge that the Labor Party tried to destroy the club movement on no less than two occasions in its last term. Bob Carr showed absolute contempt for the club movement. He ignored the fact that many of our children's sports organisations and community activities rely on—

Pursuant to sessional order business interrupted and motion lapsed.

Pursuant to sessional order government business proceeded with.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AMENDMENT (BUSH FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION) BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anthony Roberts, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [4.02 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The bushfire season is upon us once again. It commenced on 1 October and will end on 31 March next year. My colleague the Minister for Emergency Services has advised the people of New South Wales to be ready for the bushfire season. Indeed, the Rural Fire Services Commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons, has said that forecasts indicate that this season will be more problematic than the last. Australia is one of the most bushfire-prone countries on earth. With more than 30 million hectares of bushfire-prone land, ranging from forested areas along the coastal strip to expansive grass and scrubland areas west of the Great Dividing Range, New South Wales has a long history of fire.

In rural and urban areas throughout New South Wales, bushfires pose a risk to life, property and the environment. They can be caused by deliberate or negligent actions, incidents such as lightning strikes, sparks from farm machinery, and electrical incidents such as trees falling on powerlines. In 2013 our State experienced one of its most challenging bushfire seasons yet. Fires began well before the officially declared bushfire danger period, starting with emergency declarations in early September 2013. Between 1 July 2013 and 31 December 2013 some 5,700 bush and grass fires burnt across the State. A total of 1,157 of those fires occurred in October alone, resulting in the destruction of almost 7,000 hectares of vegetation, the loss of 217 residential properties and damage to another 129 properties.

The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that everything is being done to minimise the risk from bushfires to human life and property. In November 2013, in response to the early and ferocious start to the bushfire season, the Government announced a package of measures to streamline hazard reduction processes, strengthen offence provisions and protect emergency services workers. These included the introduction of offence provisions for littering involving cigarettes and matches, including an aggravated offence of littering on days when a total fire ban is in place. We also acted to remove obstacles to enable home owners to better manage fire risks on their properties. In June this year amendments were made to the Rural Fires Act to allow landowners to undertake other vegetation clearing works to better protect their properties from the threat of bushfire, while balancing legitimate environmental objectives.

The bushfires last year remind us that maintaining our electricity infrastructure requires constant vigilance and action to ensure that it does not become a source of danger. The October 2013 Salt Ash Fire near Port Stephens may have been started by a fault in a high voltage private powerline. It has also been alleged that the Springwood-Winmalee fire may have been sparked by vegetation on private property falling onto powerlines. We often take for granted the safety of our electricity system. We are so used to the sight of poles and wires that bring electricity into our homes, workplaces and businesses that we forget that electricity—although safe when carefully maintained—is an extremely powerful form of energy. Overhead powerlines can clash with vegetation or be brought down by strong winds, falling trees or branches. Power poles and their fittings—for example, cross-arms—can fail due to these reasons, as well as through lack of maintenance. All these conditions can create a serious safety and bushfire risk.

Electricity assets coexist with trees and other vegetation under normal conditions but in certain circumstances the interaction of trees and electricity infrastructure can have serious consequences. Electricity assets can be owned by both network operators and private landowners. It is the responsibility of the person who owns the electricity asset—whether a network operator, or a private landowner—to maintain that asset. Network operators are generally responsible for the poles and wires in our streets which deliver electricity to homes and businesses across the State. As part of their operations, the network operators monitor and maintain their infrastructure and take active steps to ensure that potential threats, including faults, trees and vegetation are identified and managed.

Just as network operators must maintain the powerlines and poles that they own, customers with privately-owned powerlines and poles are required to do the same. Private electricity infrastructure starts at and includes the first low-voltage pole on a landowner's property. All the wires, poles, fittings and attachments beyond this are usually considered private and part of the property's electrical infrastructure, including those between different buildings and structures on the same property. Property owners have a legal obligation to maintain their electrical infrastructure to ensure that they are free from any defects that may cause a fire or any

other safety hazard. This may include deteriorated or overloaded wires, damaged poles and fittings or trees too close to powerlines. If powerlines or poles cause injury or damage to property, the landowner may be held legally responsible.

Protecting the State from bushfire hazards arising from electricity infrastructure and the potentially devastating consequences of those bushfires is a massive task. It is a task that requires constant vigilance and timely responses, from the time that a risk is identified to its removal. All network operators in New South Wales have in place bushfire risk management plans. In implementing these plans, network operators do a lot to minimise the bushfire risk from electricity infrastructure, including undertaking land and helicopter patrols across bushfire zones to check for hazards from powerlines. Operators regularly undertake action to maintain safe distances between powerlines and trees on public property in their distribution area, through tree trimming and vegetation management programs. They provide detailed information to customers on electrical safety and bushfire risk management via brochures, customer notifications and websites.

At the beginning of each bushfire season, operators place bushfire safety brochures in the letterboxes of thousands of residents across New South Wales. When undertaking their own bushfire mitigation and powerline maintenance work, network operators' staff and contractors often identify defects and vegetation risks on private powerlines and poles. They then notify owners or occupiers that the hazards need to be removed or repaired. The Government is aware of the need to ensure that the State is not threatened by unnecessary hazards from electricity infrastructure that may spark bushfires. The fires last year identified that existing measures in place to minimise the risks of bushfires started by electricity infrastructure, quite frankly, are not sufficient. At present, under the Electricity Supply Act, network operators are empowered to direct landowners to remove trees and vegetation that threaten electricity assets owned by network operators that are located on private property.

Under the Electricity Supply (Safety and Network Management) Regulation, network operators are able to disconnect the electricity supply in order to avert the threat of fire or other danger to people and property. In most circumstances, before disconnecting, a network operator is required to notify landowners of the faults in their electricity assets, and any steps they could take to rectify these faults to avoid disconnection. However, while disconnection may avert the threat, it is not usually a desirable outcome for the owner or occupier of the property. The Government, therefore, is of the view that these arrangements desperately need to be updated. This is because of the significant threat of bushfires created by trees and vegetation interfering with electricity assets or faults in private electricity assets in bushfire-prone areas of the State.

In particular, other than disconnection, nothing in the Electricity Supply Act allows network operators to take any action where they can see that private electricity infrastructure poses a bushfire threat. Instead, action is available only if a bushfire threat is posed by a network operator's assets on private property. Further, for instance, the current provisions dealing with network operators' assets do not impose a clear and enforceable time frame for work to be undertaken once a hazard has been identified. The Act simply allows landowners a "reasonable time" to undertake work to remove a threat to electricity infrastructure located on their property. Whilst this may be appropriate under certain circumstances, it is simply insufficient when facing the potentially catastrophic threat of bushfire.

If a landowner fails to remove a hazard, the rights of the network operator to step in and undertake the required work are not sufficiently clear. This is particularly so in relation to the ability of the network operator to enter onto private property to undertake work on and around private electricity assets. This bill proposes a new notification and bushfire hazard reduction system in bushfire-prone areas of New South Wales. The new system will enable action to be taken quickly and efficiently to remove bushfire threats associated with electricity assets on private property, irrespective of who owns the asset. The amendments address concerns raised by network operators about accessing privately owned land for the purposes of hazard reduction, rectification work and confirmation of when work to manage bushfire risks has been completed. They also make clear who should bear the cost of such work. I will now turn to a more detailed discussion of the bill.

The new measures proposed in the bill will apply to bushfire-prone areas of the State. Bushfire-prone areas are identified under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The current arrangements for vegetation management and fault rectification will continue unchanged for the remainder of the State. The bill will empower network operators to issue a notice to the occupiers or owners of a property to remove hazards on their property that represent a bushfire risk from electricity infrastructure. This includes the trimming or removal of vegetation that endangers electricity infrastructure and work to repair a fault in private electricity infrastructure that has the potential to spark a bushfire. The amendments do not change any existing liabilities for the cost of repairing faults or removing vegetation to avoid bushfire threats. They simply ensure that the work will be done.

The bill requires a notice issued by a network operator to a landowner to include specifics of the required work. This includes why the work needs to be done and the standard to which the work must be completed. The notice must identify also whether the owner or the network business is responsible for the cost of the work. The notice must advise the owner of the network operator's hardship policy for assisting customers who have difficulties paying the cost of the work. The notice also must advise the owner that any complaint or dispute regarding the notice can be referred to the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW. The amendments allow a notice to be issued to either the owner or the occupier of a property. This will save operators the time and cost of having to track down the owner of a property and will facilitate the swift removal of hazards. However, once a notice has been issued, the duty to respond to the notice is with the owner of the property.

Also, if the liability for the cost of the work is not with the network operator, it is the property owner who will be responsible for the cost of the work, not the occupier. These obligations already exist but are not clearly defined in the current Act. Importantly, the new system will impose, for the first time, clear time frames for the owner to respond to a notice and to undertake the required work. Upon receipt of a notice, the owner will have 30 days to advise the operator that he or she is willing or unwilling to undertake the work. The owners can arrange for the work to be done privately or engage the network operator to do the work for them. Alternatively, if an owner does not want the work to be done, he or she can nominate to have the electricity supply to the premises disconnected.

If the owner undertakes to do the work, a further 30 days is allowed for completion of the work, allowing a total of 60 days from the date of the notice to the removal of the hazard. But if the owner is unwilling to undertake the work or does not respond to the notice within 30 days, then the network operator is authorised to enter onto the premises to carry out the required work without providing further notice. The amendments allow for some flexibility in the time provided for completion of the work at the discretion of the network operator. The express time frames in the bill have been formulated in recognition of the fact that when it comes to removing threats of bushfire, time is of the essence. Until action has been taken to remove the risk, the danger remains. The proposed changes are a careful balance between the rights of landowners and the interests of the broader community in minimising the risk from bushfire, which we all know is real and has potentially catastrophic consequences for human life and property.

The amendments allow for a network operator to recover the reasonable cost of the work from the owner if it undertakes work on the owner's behalf. The allocation of costs arising from bushfire hazard reduction work under the new system is consistent with the current arrangements under which landowners are responsible for the costs of maintaining their own electricity assets. The Government is firmly of the view that the cost of doing bushfire hazard reduction work around private electricity assets should not be borne by network operators, as these costs would be passed on to electricity consumers across the State in the form of higher electricity charges. To protect those suffering financial hardship, the amendments require all network operators to have in place a hardship policy to assist owners who are experiencing difficulties in paying the cost of the work.

Landowners' concerns in regard to notices can be referred to the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW. To support this, the amendments direct that every notice issued includes a clear reference to the Ombudsman. The bill also includes exemptions from approvals requirements under other legislation. This will free both landowners and network operators from the need to obtain approvals that may otherwise be required before the necessary bushfire mitigation work could be undertaken. The justification for the exemptions is to facilitate the swift removal of bushfire hazards within the 60-day time frame for the completion of work. Without the exemptions, this may not be possible. Legislation for which exemptions would be provided includes the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the Native Vegetation Act 2003. The exemptions are in line with those recently introduced under the Rural Fires Amendment (Vegetation Clearing) Act 2014.

There are a number of safeguards in the bill to prevent the misuse of the exemptions. First, landowners must receive a notice from a network operator before the exemptions are available to them. Secondly, the notice will specify the exact work to be done. In the absence of a notice, landowners wishing to undertake bushfire hazard reduction work around electricity assets work must either rely on the provisions introduced under the Rural Fires Amendment (Vegetation Clearing) Act 2014 or obtain the approvals required under relevant legislation. I am proud to say that broad consultation with stakeholders has been undertaken on the bill. Network operators, the Local Government and Shires Association, the NSW Farmers Association, and the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW have been consulted on the proposals and have indicated support for the objectives.

The amendments in this bill create a more efficient and effective system for bushfire hazard reduction around electricity infrastructure in the bushfire-prone areas of our State. The measures in the bill give the

highest priority to bushfire mitigation activity and the interests of the broader community over that of landowners who have, for whatever reason, failed to undertake the necessary action. The Government does not apologise for that. In the face of the devastating power of bushfires, the interests of the many outweigh the interests of the few. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Anna Watson and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY (MINES) AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anthony Roberts, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [4.20 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Work Health and Safety (Mines) Amendment Bill 2014 makes amendments to the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act 2013. The Act is due to commence in the very near future and the amendments will ensure that the Act will work as intended. While individually the amendments may not appear to be major, together they will ensure that the meaning of the Act is clear, that roles and responsibilities are clear and that any ambiguities and wording are rectified. They will also close possible loopholes in the work health and safety legislative framework. The Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act provides for the regulation of health and safety in the New South Wales mining industry. This is a significant industry, and the nature of the work and the number of people it employs demand that we have a legislative framework that means that mining workplaces are safe.

The figures give a good idea of the size of the industry. Currently, mining in New South Wales employs about 35,000 people directly and more than 85,800 people indirectly. The safety of the large numbers of our community who work in our mines, therefore, makes these amendments important. The first amendment in this group clarifies the relationship of the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act with the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and the Work Health and Safety Regulation. Although the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act is specifically aimed at work health and safety in mines, the Work Health and Safety Act also applies to that work environment.

The Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act provides that it is to be read as if it was part of the Work Health and Safety Act. For example, if a certain term is defined in the Work Health and Safety Act, the definition also applies to the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act. However, it is not clear whether this provision encompasses the regulations to both Acts and it is obviously important that this is clear. It is therefore proposed to amend the wording of the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act to clarify that the references in both Acts include references to the other and to both of the regulations. This amendment will provide certainty about the application of both the Acts and the regulations and ensure they work together for mine safety.

The second amendment addresses a quite different aspect of the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act. This is the issue of the definition of "mine holder". Currently the Act does not include the operators of tourist mines in the definition. Tourist mines are former mines where mining hazards still exist. New South Wales has about 10 tourist mines and, because of these hazards, it is important for public safety that they have a mine operator and safety management system. The definition must be clear so that tourist mines meet safety requirements under the Act. The bill therefore amends definition of "mine holder" so that it is clear that a person conducting a tourist mine comes under the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act. The amendment is also in keeping with the goals of national mine safety harmonisation.

The third amendment provides for a safety regulator to make a direction that a mine needs more than one mine operator. This might come about because of the complexity of the operation. On the other hand, because of the nature of the mining activity, several mines may need only one operator. This power exists in the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act 2002 and has been effective in ensuring complex and interconnected mining risks are adequately managed. By including it in the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act, this strong safeguard for safety management will be ongoing.

The fourth amendment in the bill is to the definition of "injection of minerals" in mining regulations. As the definition currently stands, activity that is not associated with mining and is therefore not intended to be regulated may be caught by the definition. For example, sand or brine are considered to be minerals under the legislation and so the return of salty water to the ground by farmers could be unintentionally caught by the current definition. The definition makes it clear that mining operations only include injection of minerals where the primary purpose is to inject or return a mineral to the ground.

There is an apparent ambiguity in the legislation over some activities that may seem to come under the mine safety legislation. Under the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act, certain activities are excluded because they are subject to regulation over separate safety laws. However, as currently drafted, the exclusion provisions in the Act may give rise to unintended interpretations. For example, one interpretation could be that a quarry where minerals are extracted for use in constructing public roads may be excluded from the operation of the Act. However, it is not the intention of the Act to exclude such a quarry.

Similar issues arise in relation to other activities. Amendments are therefore proposed to clarify the particular activities to which the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act does not apply. The last amendment in this group addresses the transitional provisions in the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act. These currently provide for amendments of a savings or transitional nature to be made to the Act, and the Work Health and Safety Act via the regulations up to 31 March 2015. The amendment to this regulation-making power will omit the date and thereby extend the period in which savings and transitional regulations can be made. It is clear that the amendments I have outlined do not change the intended policy intent of the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act, but they do help to qualify and strengthen the Act through giving clear effect to its intent.

I now turn to two different amendment proposals to the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act. The first of these addresses the issues of certain authorisations made by WorkCover under the Work Health and Safety Act. It has become evident that they may not be valid mining workplaces. These authorisations include high-risk work licences, registration of plant, general construction induction, training cards and licensing of asbestos removalists and asbestos assessors. The Government's policy intent has always been that WorkCover, as the regulator of the Work Health and Safety Act, could make such authorisations to be applicable at all workplaces, including mining workplaces. For example, a person who obtains a high-risk work licence should be able to use that licence at any workplace. They would not require a separate licence solely for a mining workplace. Amendments are therefore proposed to retrospectively clarify that previous authorisations made by WorkCover are valid at mining workplaces. The amendments will also provide that WorkCover can be the regulator for such authorisations and other prescribed powers or functions for all workplaces in the future.

The bill will also amend the Work Health and Safety Regulation to clarify that WorkCover can be the regulator for such authorisations at all workplaces. This amendment will remove the necessity for both regulators to issue authorisations and for them to have to keep two sets of registers. It makes good sense and reduces regulatory duplication for Government, workers and operators, and reduces costs. It has also become evident that the scope of the work, health and safety regulator's jurisdiction at coal workplaces needs to be addressed. The regulator has jurisdiction at coal workplaces, which are places to which the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act applies. That Act applies to colliery holdings, including coalmining leases registered in the colliery holding by administrative means. The colliery holding is an area that can incorporate coalmining leases and freehold land where coalmining operations are to be carried out by a single mine operator.

To ensure there is no regulatory gap because of administrative defects, the amendment will ensure that all coalmining leases are taken to have been in a colliery holding. This will retrospectively validate any regulatory actions undertaken by NSW Trade and Investment under the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act 2002, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 and the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 in relation to coalmining lease areas that were not included in the register of colliery holdings. The amendment does not reflect a policy change by this Government. The Government's intent has always been that NSW Trade and Investment is the specialist work health and safety regulator for all coal workplaces, including all coalmining lease areas.

The primary policy aim of the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act is to regulate for the safety of persons engaged in the mining industry and mining operations. The proposed amendments are being made to ensure that the provisions of the Act are clear and will be implemented as intended. If the amendments are not made, the current provisions in the Act may be exploited with potential unwarranted outcomes for mine safety. The amendments will enable the industry and the regulator to operate under the regulatory framework with certainty. I commend the bill to the House.

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

HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mrs Jillian Skinner, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research)
[4.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to bring before the House the Health Practitioner Regulation Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. The bill makes minor amendments to the Health Practitioner Regulation (Adoption of National Law) Act 2009 so as to modify the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW). It also makes amendments to the Health Services Act 1997 and the Private Health Facilities Act 2007. The bill proposes amendments to make improvements to the New South Wales health practitioner regulatory processes in three respects: to enable greater oversight of impaired practitioners; to ensure that those practitioners who are deregistered following disciplinary proceedings are not able to circumvent the regulatory process and reregister themselves or practise in other health services without adequate oversight; and to improve the transparency of the complaints process by strengthening mechanisms for patients and complainants to obtain information about the outcome of their complaints.

New South Wales has a robust legislative regime for managing complaints, and overseeing the capacity and performance of registered health practitioners. The strength of the current legislation is due largely to a process of ongoing reform and improvement over more than 30 years through a number of royal commissions, special commissions of inquiry and independent reviews established by government. Each set of reforms introduced over the years has focused on improving safe practice of clinicians and protecting the public. Until 2010 the regulation of health professionals—both accreditation, and registration and management of complaints—was conducted at the State level. In 2010 the National Regulation and Accreditation Scheme [NRAS] came into effect through the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law. This law was initially passed in Queensland then adopted by each State Parliament, sometimes with variations. The NRAS established National Health Practitioner Boards and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency to operate the system across Australia.

New South Wales joined NRAS as a "co-regulatory" jurisdiction. While it adopted the accreditation and registration parts of the National Law, it did not adopt the National Law provisions for complaints and performance. The New South Wales Parliament instead varied the National Law it adopted by adding a new part 8, which sets out the New South Wales regulatory provisions that apply to complaints and performance in New South Wales. The current bill involves amending those New South Wales-specific provisions in part 8. The New South Wales regulatory provisions retain the NSW Health practitioner councils, and New South Wales complaints programs and processes. New South Wales also retained the Health Care Complaints Act and the Health Care Complaints Commission. I will now turn to the proposed amendments.

The bill proposes a new section 176BA, which will impose a positive obligation on New South Wales health practitioner councils to notify the employer of both conditions imposed on a health practitioner's registration after a disciplinary or complaints process and conditions imposed through an impaired registrant's process. Impaired practitioners are recognised in the Act as requiring additional assistance and oversight to ensure that where they continue to practise, it is with support and supervision to ensure that the safety of the public is protected. Health programs managed by NSW Health practitioner councils provide supervision and support to practitioners who are identified as having impaired performance as a result of anything from physical infirmity or mental illness to drug and alcohol abuse. They may come to the attention of the program via self-notification, reporting by colleagues of a concern about a possible impairment or where issues raised about their practice are not sufficiently serious to warrant formal investigation but have the potential to place them at risk.

Once referred to the program, any action necessary to protect the public is determined. This most commonly involves the imposition of conditions on the registrant's registration, but can include suspension for a period of time. Conditions may include urine drug testing—generally for at least 18 months—regular reviews and assessments. When the practitioner fails to comply with conditions or when other concerns about conduct are raised the practitioner can be referred into the complaints process. The details of conditions placed on a practitioner's registration are generally available publicly on the national health practitioner registers on the

Australian Health Practitioner Registration Authority website. However, the details of health conditions are generally not available. The national registers simply state the registrant is subject to "health conditions", without providing detail as to the nature of the conditions. This was designed to ensure some protection for the practitioner of the release of sensitive information to the public.

The councils currently do not have an express statutory power to inform employers of health practitioners of the conditions imposed on the practitioner. However, where the conditions arise from a disciplinary process, they are effectively publicly available so the councils will provide information to a known employer from the register. For health conditions the publicly available information is limited, so employers will not necessarily receive the detail of any health conditions imposed. The amendments I am proposing recognise that to ensure the safety of patients, employers of health practitioners need to be aware of the detail of health conditions to assist them in the oversight or supervision of the practitioner.

Under the changes, councils will be required to notify a nominated recipient of the employer or accreditor in the private sector when health conditions are imposed on an impaired practitioner, when changes are made to those conditions and when the practitioner has breached the conditions. However, I am mindful that some of the information relating to health conditions is sensitive—personal information to the practitioner, including possibly that the practitioner has a mental illness. Therefore the amendments incorporate strong protections, including an offence, to ensure that the nominated recipient of the information can only use and disclose that information for the supervision or oversight of the practitioner or ensuring the safety of patients.

In order to underline the seriousness with which we consider that compliance with health conditions imposed on a practitioner should be viewed, the bill proposes a new section 150FA, which provides for an NSW Health practitioner council to designate specific impairment conditions to be "critical impairment conditions". A breach of a critical impairment condition would result in automatic referral to the Health Care Complaints Commission for investigation. While a critical compliance order could attach to any condition, it is likely to focus on those relating to drug and/or alcohol testing.

I am also proposing to improve the transparency of the complaints process by strengthening mechanisms for patients and complainants to obtain information about the outcome of complaints, including where matters have been referred to a council from the Health Care Complaints Commission. The proposed amendment at section 145BA of the national law requires councils to provide a notice to a complainant of an outcome of a complaint. The council may include such information in the notice of the outcome as it considers appropriate but must not disclose confidential information, unless it considers that the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in protecting the confidentiality of the information and the privacy of any person to whom it relates.

The bill also includes two provisions to deal with recent interpretations of the law which, to a degree, have undermined its effectiveness and provided grounds on which a health practitioner who has faced disciplinary proceedings may seek to avoid the intent of the national law. The proposed amendment to section 149C of the Act will close a loophole whereby registered health practitioners are voluntarily deregistering themselves in anticipation of a finding of the tribunal that they will have their registration suspended or cancelled. Where this happens the deregistered person could avoid a prohibition order being placed on them by a tribunal preventing them from providing any "health service".

Under a prohibition order, in addition to no longer being able to practise in his or her profession, the person cannot provide health services outside the scope of the health profession in which he or she was formerly registered, such as in another profession or service for which no registration is required. An example of where a prohibition order could be used would be to prohibit a deregistered medical practitioner or psychologist who has convictions for sexual offences against clients setting themselves up to practise under titles such as psychotherapist or counsellor. Please excuse my voice; I have laryngitis.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Stay away from hospitals; they are very bad for you.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am sure the member for Macquarie Fields would treat me if I went to hospital. I know I would be in very good hands with Dr McDonald. He is a very good doctor, much better than he is as the shadow Minister for Health. He is a very good doctor and I am pleased he is joining the health workforce again. As the law currently stands, if they remove themselves from the register prior to a finding a prohibition order is not available. On occasion, the tribunal has stated that a prohibition order would have been

considered if that option was available to it. The amendment will ensure that where a person poses a substantial risk to the health of members of the public the tribunal can prohibit or restrict their provision of a health service by way of a prohibition order.

I also have proposed amendments to the national law in light of a recent Court of Appeal decision to ensure that any practitioner who is subject to a disqualification period or has had their registration cancelled must apply to the tribunal for a reinstatement order before being able to directly seek re-registration from a national board. Although the national board can conduct an investigation into an applicant for registration, an investigation of the practitioner is not automatic. As such, there are concerns that the process of applying for registration is not as robust as applying for a reinstatement order and that public safety may be jeopardised.

Further, this was the original intent and application of the legislation. It is only as a result of the Court of Appeal case of *Health Care Complaints Commission v Do* in September of this year that the requirement for a reinstatement order was confined to situations where a practitioner wishes to re-register during a "disqualification period". The purpose of the legislation was that this process would apply even after such disqualification periods expire. This amendment will commence on assent and transitional provisions are included in the bill to capture those practitioners who have already had their registration cancelled or disqualified.

Finally, the bill proposes amendments to the Health Services Act to permit public health organisations to share and exchange certain information about health practitioners with private health facilities if the public health organisation reasonably considers the practitioner is practising at the facility that they are sharing information with and that the disclosure is necessary because it raises serious concerns about the safety of patients. The information that can be disclosed is information about the variation, suspension or termination of a practitioner's clinical privileges where that practitioner is a former employee or contractor of the public health organisation. An equivalent amendment is also made to the Private Health Facilities Act to permit private health facilities to share and exchange information with other private health facilities or a public health organisation if the same requirements are met.

The Ministry of Health has consulted widely on the content of this bill, including discussions with the Health Care Complaints Commission and the Health Professional Councils Authority, which provides administrative and policy support to all the New South Wales professional councils and operates the impairment programs on their behalf. These agencies are supportive of the changes. There has also been consultation with the Australian Medical Association (NSW), the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation, the Health Services Union and the Australian Private Hospitals Association. I consider the current drafting provides a good balance between ensuring the safety of patients and the transparency of the complaints process, without unduly overriding the rights of practitioners to a degree of privacy to deal with sensitive personal issues. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Dr Andrew McDonald and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

ELECTION FUNDING, EXPENDITURE AND DISCLOSURES AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Mike Baird, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Western Sydney) [4.47 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I have made it clear time and again that I am determined to restore the public's trust in New South Wales politics and I will take whatever action is necessary to increase the transparency and accountability of the election funding system in this State. The New South Wales Government already has taken a number of steps this year to address concerns that political donations unfairly influence decision-making in this State. In particular, this Government has addressed a "gap" in election funding regulation that arose following the High Court's decision to strike down the Government's 2012 corporate donation bans.

The Government has introduced new institutional arrangements for the oversight of elections and election funding matters and has established an expert panel on political donations to consider and report on options for the reform of election funding laws. The expert panel is due to deliver its final report at the end of the year, and I thank its members for the work they are undertaking. Following recent stakeholder consultations, the panel has released an interim report indicating its in-principle support for some important reforms.

The panel has signalled that it "favours a number of measures to improve transparency, accountability and integrity of the election funding regime", including: tougher penalties for breaching election funding laws; a new general anti-circumvention offence provision directed at those who seek to evade election funding laws; a pre-election donations disclosure in early 2015 by recipients of political donations; and an extension of the limitation period for prosecuting offences against election funding laws from three years to 10 years. Consistent with this report, and in light of ongoing community concern, I believe that the time for further action is now. The election funding system that underpins the 2015 State election should benefit from the interim recommendations of the expert panel that we entrusted with this important task.

To this end, the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment Bill contains a number of amendments to the regulation of election funding in New South Wales in advance of the upcoming election. These reforms are closely aligned with the expert panel's interim recommendations and also include some additional measures. Reflecting the expert panel's suggestion, one key aspect of the bill is that it will require the recipients of political donations before the 2015 election to make an additional one-off disclosure of political donations received during the period from 1 July 2014 until 1 February 2015. These disclosures will be due to the Election Funding Authority [EFA] within seven days after the end of this period and the EFA will be required to publish these disclosures within seven days after they are made.

The Government supports moving towards even greater transparency in the future, as recommended by the expert panel, and it will take this first step in advance of the 2015 election. To help ensure compliance with this important transparency measure, the offences that apply under section 96H of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 in relation to ordinary disclosures will also apply to political donations received during the additional relevant disclosure period and to the additional disclosure requirements. The bill also contains a number of ongoing reforms that are directed at deterring contravention of the Act.

The expert panel has made clear its view that there should be "more serious offences and penalties for flouting election funding laws, including penalties sufficient to trigger disqualification of members of Parliament". The Government strongly agrees with this proposal. Ensuring that the election funding regime is complied with fully and truthfully is vital to ensuring the effectiveness of election funding regulation in New South Wales. It is important that those who are subject to obligations under the election funding laws approach these obligations faithfully and with an awareness of the gravity of these requirements.

Accordingly, this bill will increase the penalties for numerous offences relating to dishonesty or attempts to avoid the election funding laws, including by adding a penalty of imprisonment to various offences with the requisite mental element. These amendments will help make sure that the penalties for contravening election funding laws are commensurate with the nature of the offence and will enhance the deterrent effect of these offence provisions. Likewise—again reflecting the expert panel's interim report—the bill includes a new "anti-avoidance" provision. This provision will make it a separate indictable offence to enter into or carry out a scheme for the purpose of avoiding political donation or electoral expenditure prohibitions or requirements. This new offence will carry a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment.

However, as the expert panel has recognised, if an offence is committed against the Act it is also important that the Act allows sufficient time for prosecutions to be undertaken. Presently, section 111 (4) of the Act provides that proceedings in respect of an offence against the Act or the regulations may be commenced within three years after the offence was committed. The bill will extend the limitation period to 10 years after the offence was committed, with this extended limitation period to apply prospectively. In addition to the amendments I have just outlined that are intended to help deter contravention of the Act, the bill also includes a number of reforms to the public funding scheme that applies in New South Wales. Some of these reforms will apply on an ongoing basis.

In particular, the bill will increase the value of funding that may be claimed by a party from the Administration Fund—from which registered parties and independent elected members can seek annual payments for administrative expenditure—where there are more than three elected members endorsed by the party. The bill will raise the value of payments from the current amount of \$86,800 per member in excess of three to \$100,000 per member in excess of three, with this amount to be adjusted for inflation in future years. This amendment is designed to better reflect the administrative and operational costs of political parties.

Paired with this reform the bill will also double the current value of policy development funding that may be claimed by parties not entitled to administrative funding. A related reform contained in the bill is an amendment to the definition of "electoral communication expenditure" to include expenses associated with third party market research and the campaign travel costs of candidates and their staff. This will more accurately capture the true expenses associated with running an election campaign. Many of the public funding amendments made by the bill will apply for the 2015 State election only. This recognises that the expert panel is yet to give a firm indication of its position on this issue while acknowledging that there is an urgent need for reform before the 2015 election.

There will be a further opportunity to introduce additional reforms for subsequent elections once the expert panel's final report is released at the end of the year. One important component of these reforms is the reduction in political donation and expenditure caps. The bill will rein in expenditure on electoral communication and tighten the existing limits on political donations by returning the electoral communication expenditure caps and the political donations caps for the 2015 State election to those which applied in 2011. These caps have been adjusted for inflation since 2011 and thus exceed their original value.

The bill will further reduce the electoral communication expenditure caps that currently apply to third party campaigners to \$250,000 if the third party campaigner is registered and \$125,000 if they are not. At present the monetary value of the expenditure caps applying to third party campaigners is \$1,166,600 if the third party campaigner is registered before the capped expenditure period and \$583,300 in any other case. To provide fairness for the reduced third party campaigner caps, third parties will have additional time to become registered for the 2015 election until 1 January 2015.

The bill will also overhaul the system for determining the amount of funding that can be claimed by parties and candidates from the Election Campaigns Fund for the 2015 State election. The Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act allows parties and candidates to claim back a proportion of their expenditure on electoral communication during the campaign period. The proportion of expenditure that can be claimed reduces as the spending of a candidate or party approaches the applicable expenditure cap. The bill will replace this "sliding scale" with a funding model based on a "dollar per vote" system, which reflects models used in other Australian jurisdictions whereby the amount an eligible party or candidate can claim will depend on the first preference votes they received in the election.

Under this interim scheme, parties that meet the eligibility criteria for receiving funding will be able to claim \$4 per first preference vote in the Legislative Assembly and \$3 per first preference vote in the Legislative Council. Eligible parties that do not have any candidates elected in the Legislative Assembly election will receive \$4.50 per first preference vote in the Legislative Council only, with no funding for first preference votes in the Legislative Assembly. Eligible Independent candidates will be able to claim \$4 per first preference vote in the Legislative Assembly or \$4.50 in the Legislative Council.

Payments under the new scheme will be up to the value of the applicable expenditure cap and dependent on actual expenditure. This is considered a fairer funding model as the amount of funding that candidates or parties are entitled to receive is more directly related to their electoral results. Candidates and parties will be required to make more responsible expenditure decisions which are based on an assessment of their prospects at the election. The bill contains a package of reforms in response to concerns about election funding in New South Wales that are to be implemented in advance of the 2015 State election.

These amendments build on a number of election funding reforms already enacted by the Government this year and are guided by the interim recommendations of the expert panel on political donations. I again thank the panel members for the work they have done. I recognise that further reforms may yet be required once the expert panel has released its final report. We look forward to the panel's final recommendations for reforms which will ensure the suitability and effectiveness of New South Wales election funding laws in the long term and ensure confidence in politics in this State. However, this Government has been moved to action now to ensure that we have tougher penalties, more transparency, less influence from donations and more public funding. This will ensure that the 2015 State election is conducted under a fairer and stronger election funding regime. I commend the bill to the House.

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

MULTICULTURAL NSW LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Victor Dominello, read a first time and printed.****Second Reading**

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Veterans Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [4.59 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Multicultural NSW Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, which amends the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000. This bill will give greater emphasis to the need for all citizens of New South Wales, regardless of nationality, cultural origin or religious affiliation, to have a collective responsibility to work together for our common welfare and future as Australians. Many metaphors have been used to describe multicultural practice. The melting pot and the patchwork quilt immediately come to mind. For me, Australia's journey in multicultural practice is akin to the life of a river. There is a Korean proverb that says, "A great river does not refuse small streams". This is a wonderfully profound proverb in the context of Australia and our increasingly diverse State. Australia is the great river. Over the years, she has accepted streams of people from all around the world, including from England, Ireland, Armenia, China, India, Italy, Korea, Lebanon, Poland and, in recent times, Africa.

Every time a new stream comes into the river it makes the river richer as it brings in new nutrients, new foods, new songs, new histories and new lessons. In return, the river provides direction, safety, and a place to call home. With every stream, the river becomes larger, deeper and more diverse. In terms of diversity, Australia on any view is truly one of the world's most majestic rivers, and New South Wales is unquestionably the most culturally and linguistically diverse place in that river. Over the past 40 years, we have welcomed more than 1.35 million overseas migrants. Each year, around 70,000 people from many countries settle in this great State. They come to our shores to make a better life for themselves and their children.

When the original New South Wales Ethnic Affairs Commission was established in 1979, the emphasis of our multicultural policy was to assist individual ethnic groups to integrate into New South Wales society and to address barriers to their participation. Although our commitment to the benefits of a multicultural society has not changed over the ensuing years, our approach has. In 2001 the organisation was renamed the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW and the legislation was amended to underline that all citizens of New South Wales have rights and responsibilities in a multicultural society and need to recognise the importance of shared values within a democratic framework governed by the rule of law.

In 2014 it is timely to re-examine this legislation to ensure it accurately reflects who we are and who we want to be. We should continue to celebrate the unique cultures, traditions and languages of our ancestors but we need to do more to promote initiatives that bring people from diverse backgrounds together as Australians—and that is exactly what this bill does. I will now outline the key provisions of the bill. The bill makes it clear in the reordering of the elements in the preamble, that while different linguistic, religious and ancestral backgrounds will continue to be recognised and valued, we must also ensure we pursue a commitment to New South Wales and Australia as being part of a cohesive and multicultural society. The commitment is defined in proposed section 3 (2A) as including a commitment to the common values and things that bind Australians together, such as a volunteering ethos, participation in Australian national days and events and recognition of the heritage of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The bill will commence on proclamation.

To ensure that the principles set out in new section 3 are not seen as merely ideological statements, the reference to "multiculturalism" in that section and elsewhere throughout the Act will be amended to "multicultural". The principles are substantially the same, with the recognition and value of different linguistic, religious and ancestral backgrounds remaining paramount. However, the order in which they appear has been changed to reflect the importance to ensure that we celebrate our diversity and the things that unite us. The definition of "cultural diversity" will be amended by removing the term "racial and ethnic backgrounds" and replacing it with "ancestral background", wherever occurring. This has been done to remove any possible pejorative connotations that may be associated with the term "ethnic" and to reflect the question asked routinely by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the national census when inquiring as to each person's background.

The bill proposes to rename the Community Relations Commission as Multicultural NSW. During consultations for a recent review of the organisation, many respondents stated that the term "Community Relations" was too broad and caused confusion with other government organisations, such as Family and Community Services, and that the term "Commission" suggested an authoritative and investigative body similar to a royal commission or commission of inquiry. Adopting the name Multicultural NSW also will highlight the change from existing governance arrangements to those more in keeping with modern practice. Under the current Act the full-time chairperson of the commission is also the chief executive officer of the organisation. The bill will give effect to the change brought about by the administrative orders following the retirement of the former long-time chairperson Dr Stepan Kerkyasharian in January this year.

There is now a clear delineation between the roles of the full-time chief executive officer, who is a public service employee responsible for the management of the organisation, and the part-time chairperson of the advisory board, who is appointed in keeping with the boards and committees framework of the New South Wales Public Service Board. It is important to note that Multicultural NSW will continue to be subject to the control and direction of the Minister, except in relation to the contents of any advice, report or recommendation it makes. Similarly there is no attempt in the bill to fetter the advisory board, which will be allowed to continue in its role as an independent expert body. Part 3 of the bill deals with the objectives and functions of Multicultural NSW and the advisory board.

In relation to the objectives of Multicultural NSW, new section 12 reorders the existing provisions and includes a reference to combating racism as an example of how to promote mutual respect for and understanding of cultural diversity. It also includes the promotion of rights and responsibilities of citizenship and unity and a strong commitment to New South Wales and Australia of all people in a cohesive and harmonious multicultural society. New section 13 reflects the current functions and activities of Multicultural NSW and broadens the function of supporting community initiatives to include support for women and girls and other groups of diverse backgrounds. This legislative reform is supported by Multicultural NSW's strategic plan, *Harmony in Action*, which I announced on 20 August at the Community Relations Commission Symposium.

Key reforms under *Harmony in Action* include a revitalised grants program, a stronger focus on the beliefs and values that unite us all as Australians and a refocused and formalised community engagement strategy which will engage across multicultural communities to promote social cohesion. Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner, Tim Soutphommasane, congratulated Multicultural NSW and the New South Wales Government on the leadership in producing the new strategic vision for Multicultural NSW. He stated, "You have my full support for your efforts to engage, enable and enrich the people of New South Wales. After all, those of us who are friends of multiculturalism have an enduring collective responsibility—to tend to our cultural harmony."

Under new section 13 (1) (g), Multicultural NSW is to assist and develop programs for, and assess the effectiveness of, public authorities in observing the multicultural principles in the conduct of their affairs. One way that government agencies demonstrate that they comply with this requirement is through the implementation of a multicultural plan under the Multicultural Policies and Services Program. Reporting on the achievements of these plans enables Multicultural NSW to prepare a report on the state of community relations across the sector. The bill will enable this report to be prepared by Multicultural NSW for a financial year rather than a calendar year and provides that it be furnished to the Minister not later than the end of February in the year following the end of the financial year to which the report relates.

The bill also will constitute and confer functions on the advisory board of Multicultural NSW. New section 8 retains the current maximum number of advisory board members at 15, with two of those being representatives of the youth of New South Wales and the chief executive officer being made a non-voting member of the advisory board. The Minister will be required to have regard to a number of factors when appointing members to the advisory board. This will ensure that the advisory board consists of a range of skill sets and points of view as well as being broadly representative of our diverse communities.

New section 13A confers on the advisory board the functions of advising Multicultural NSW or the Minister on any issue relating to the objectives or strategic directions of Multicultural NSW it considers appropriate or that is referred to it by either the organisation or the Minister and to review and provide advice to Multicultural NSW on the state of community relations in New South Wales. Amendments to current schedule 1 will enable the chairperson to be removed by the Governor, the appointment of deputies for members and the establishment of three-year terms for all members, including the chairperson. Reappointment will be possible for no more than three terms or nine years in total, provided the relevant eligibility criteria are met. This will enable fresh insights and experiences to be brought to the advisory board, as appropriate.

The bill generally mirrors the existing provisions relating to the members of the advisory board and its procedures. These include remuneration, vacancy in office, filling of vacancies, and disclosure of pecuniary interests and of the effect of being the holder of another office, to members of the advisory board. Two changes to the existing provisions are that the office of the advisory board member will be declared vacant if the person is absent from three—previously four—consecutive meetings, when the absence is unreasonable in all the circumstances. Also as the role of the chairperson is now part-time, it is no longer necessary to have a nominated deputy and in the case of the absence of the chairperson, any member of the advisory board can be elected to preside at a meeting of the advisory board. Finally, schedule 1 item [57] to the bill contains savings and transitional provisions relating to the commencement of the bill and schedule 2 makes consequential amendments to a number of other pieces of legislation which are needed as a result of the reforms contained in the bill.

Multicultural practice is not like a natural forest—it is more like a garden. It is a human construct. If it is properly nurtured and developed, it will produce a cornucopia-style bounty that will benefit us all. If it is not cared for challenges quickly arise. The purpose of the bill is to ensure that multicultural practice in New South Wales remains current and adaptive to our changing environment. We should not take for granted the success of our harmonious multicultural society and we should not assume that what we have done in the past will continue to work in the future. We need multicultural New South Wales to be innovative and forward-thinking in setting policies so that we can continue to lead the way in the promotion of multicultural practice around the world. As outlined in the Multicultural NSW Strategic Plan, multicultural New South Wales will become a multicultural policy centre of excellence by providing research, information and advice on multicultural issues including, but not limited to, initiatives to empower and support women and girls, initiatives to combat racism and opportunities to increase volunteering and civic engagement.

I thank the multicultural communities that have been with me on this journey over the past 3½ years, for their input into this important piece of reform. I also thank Hakan Harman, Chief Executive Officer of Multicultural NSW; Dr Hari Harinath, Chair of Multicultural NSW; the advisory board members, past and present; the former chair, Vic Alhadeff; and the staff at Multicultural NSW, particularly Marie Swain. I thank them for their commitment and dedication in developing this bill. I also thank Stepan Kerkyasharian for his leadership and guidance as chair of the Community Relations Commission over the past 24 years. I thank the members in my ministerial office, particularly my Deputy Chief of Staff, Jane Standish and my Chief of Staff, Verity Lomax, who worked tirelessly to make sure this reform was driven and realised. I thank them for their time, knowledge and commitment. I commend the Multicultural NSW Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 to the House.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (RED TAPE REDUCTION) BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Paul Toole, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) [5.14 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am proud to introduce the Local Government Amendment (Red Tape Reduction) Bill 2014. The bill proposes a number of amendments to the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. It represents the first step in the delivery of the most comprehensive reforms to local government seen in this State for a generation. The proposals in the bill comprise the early amendments to the Act and regulation foreshadowed by the Government in its response to the recommendations of the Local Government Acts Taskforce. The proposals are the first legislative changes being made in the program to create Fit for the Future local government. The Fit for the Future program, announced by the Government on 10 September, is the most significant investment the State has ever made in the local government sector, to ensure New South Wales has strong, modern councils to deliver the housing, jobs and local infrastructure that people need.

The Fit for the Future program includes a commitment to introduce a new, enabling principles-based Local Government Act that will seek to prescribe outcomes rather than processes—outcomes that will enhance

local governance and benefit local communities. In particular, the Act will be designed to enshrine integrated planning and reporting principles as its central framework; reduce unnecessary red tape and prescription; enhance community engagement; embed the principle of fiscal responsibility; improve financial and asset planning; and strengthen representation and leadership.

The changes proposed in this bill represent a significant down payment on the achievement of these important legislative goals. They are designed to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden on councils and to cut the red tape that sometimes hinders the capacity of councils to operate in a way that is more cost-effective and collaborative and best adapted to meet local needs. The changes will also allow councils to engage more effectively with their communities, utilising technologies more appropriate to the twenty-first century and will support councils to become fit for the future.

First, the bill seeks to promote regional and collaborative procurement by removing the existing prohibition on the ability of councils to delegate the acceptance of tenders. Under the Local Government Act, councils are required to invite tenders before entering into certain contracts. The Act states that where a council is required to tender prior to entering into a contract, only the elected council can accept or reject a tender. This prevents councils from being able to delegate this function to a regional organisation of councils or any specialist procurement service providers engaged by groups of councils to undertake complex procurement on their behalf. This means that, in practice, where councils undertake joint procurement requiring a tender process, each of the participating councils is required to separately resolve to accept the tender. Given the differences in the meeting cycles of councils, this is a process that could take up to two months.

The proposal contained in the bill to remove the restriction on the delegation of the acceptance of tenders will allow group purchasing by councils, without the need to go back to each individual council for endorsement. This will allow regional organisations of councils and future regional joint organisations to enter into contracts on behalf of councils—something that is essential for ensuring efficient local government that is fit for the future. Importantly, the capacity to undertake group purchasing will deliver benefits in economies of scale, greater purchasing power and the capacity to utilise procurement to drive regional economic development strategies.

Second, the bill seeks to lift the prescribed tendering threshold for councils to the same \$250,000 threshold that applies to State government agencies, for those councils that have demonstrated that they have sufficient scale and strategic capacity to become fit for the future. Councils are exempt from the requirement to invite tenders in relation to contracts involving an estimated expenditure or receipt of an amount of less than \$150,000. The prescription of this threshold is premised on an assumption about the potential risk to all councils, regardless of their size or capacity, posed by a financial outlay in excess of this sum and a view that the most appropriate means of addressing this risk is by forcing councils to comply with the onerous and overly prescriptive tendering requirements currently prescribed under the Act and regulation. In local government, one size does not fit all and it should be noted that councils will have in place internal procedural requirements to ensure that procurement involving outlays below the prescribed tendering threshold is still undertaken in a manner that ensures the delivery of value-for-money outcomes based on principles of transparency, competition and probity.

The third of the proposed amendments reflected in this bill is designed to allow New South Wales councils to support registered Australian Disability Enterprises by being able to procure their services directly without having to go to tender. The New South Wales Government is working to increase government-purchasing opportunities to support businesses that employ people with a disability. These businesses are known as Australian Disability Enterprises. The Public Works and Procurement Regulation 2014 seeks to deliver this policy objective by simplifying the purchasing of goods and services by State government agencies from approved Australian Disability Enterprises.

This means that New South Wales government agencies may purchase goods and services directly from approved Australian Disability Enterprises on the basis of a single written quote, including goods or services provided through whole-of-government contracts. Councils currently are not able to support this policy objective by being able to procure directly from registered Australian Disability Enterprises without having to go to tender. The amendments proposed in the bill will enable councils, like State government agencies, to support registered Australian Disability Enterprises by removing the requirement to invite tenders in relation to contracts for the purchase of goods and services made with an entity approved as a disability employment organisation under the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912.

The fourth of the proposed amendments is designed to ensure that councils continue to enjoy the efficiencies and cost savings associated with being able to procure goods and services under State Government prequalification schemes without the need to tender. The Local Government Act exempts councils from the requirement to tender where they enter into a contract under a standing offer or prequalification scheme established by the Federal and New South Wales governments and certain prescribed entities, such as Local Government Procurement and Procurement Australia. As a result of recent changes in State Government procurement practices, many prequalification schemes established by the New South Wales Procurement Board no longer specify a rate.

Questions have been raised about whether councils can still use prequalification schemes established by the New South Wales Procurement Board and other prescribed entities where no rate is specified. Potentially, this would prevent councils from being able to continue to use State Government prequalification schemes, thereby precluding them from achieving the efficiencies and cost savings delivered by use of these standing offers. The bill addresses this risk by clarifying that the current exemption from tendering will continue to apply where councils use standing offers or prequalification schemes established by any entity nominated in the Act or prescribed by the regulations even where no rate is specified.

The fifth set of amendments is designed to facilitate more effective engagement by councils with their communities by updating the notification requirements prescribed under the Act and regulation to allow the use of twenty-first century technologies that are better aligned to contemporary behaviours and expectations. There are a range of circumstances in which the Local Government Act and regulation currently require councils to give notice to their communities or particular sections of their communities by advertising in newspapers. Given the reduced circulation of newspapers and the increased use of other forms of social media and other electronic means of communication, this is no longer an effective way for many councils to communicate or engage with their communities. It is also one that needlessly imposes a significant red tape and cost burden on many councils without necessarily achieving the desired outcome of communicating or engaging with the audience at which the message is targeted.

Therefore, it is proposed to update the advertising requirements in the Act and regulation by requiring councils to publish advertised information on their websites and either in a newspaper or in such other manner as the council considers appropriate for the purposes of bringing the advertised matter to the attention of all potentially interested persons. It is important to note that these amendments reflect the proposed approach for the development of a new Local Government Act that will see outcomes rather than processes being prescribed. The final set of proposed amendments seeks to reduce the frequency with which councils are required to adopt policies governing the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities to their councillors from annually to once in each term of the council within the first 12 months of the council's term. The current requirements that these amendments seek to improve on again reflect a disconnect between prescribed process and actual outcomes.

The Act currently requires councils to annually adopt a councillor expenses and facilities policy and to exhibit it prior to doing so even where no changes are made. Councils also are required to forward a copy of the policy or amendment together with the details of all submissions received to the Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government. These requirements were designed to operate as pre-internet transparency and accountability mechanisms. The existing requirements for annual adoption and notification needlessly impose a red tape burden on both councils and the Office of Local Government that does little to add to accountability or transparency in the payment of expenses and facilities to councillors. A number of alternative mechanisms ensure accountability and prevent misuse more effectively and in ways that impose less administrative burden on councils.

In particular, the Office of Local Government has issued guidelines to regulate the content of councillor expenses and facilities policies. Under the Act, council policies are required to comply with these guidelines. The regulation places limits on the payment of certain types of expenses and the use of council-owned vehicles. Additionally, under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, councils now are required to publish their policies on their websites where they are accessible to anyone at any time, and councils are required to publish detailed information about the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities to their councillors in their annual report. It is therefore proposed to amend the Act to require councils to adopt an expenses and facilities policy once in each term of the council within 12 months of an ordinary election. The policy is to be adopted at an ordinary council meeting that is open to the public. Councils are to place the policy on public exhibition for 28 days prior to adopting the policy and to consider submissions made by the community prior to adopting the policy.

Where councils make a substantial amendment to the policy, the council is to put the amended policy on public exhibition for 28 days and to consider any submission made by the community prior to adopting the policy. The amended policy is to be adopted at an ordinary meeting that is open to the public. Councils would no longer be required to provide copies of their policies to the Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government. Each council's policy will be accessible to the Office of Local Government and, more importantly, to members of the community on its website.

To conclude, I am confident that councils and local communities will welcome the proposed amendments contained in this bill. The amendments, if passed, will deliver immediate benefits to councils in red tape reduction, improved efficiencies and lower compliance costs. Importantly, they also will deliver benefits to local communities in greater transparency, and more effective and meaningful engagement and communication by their councils. Importantly, the amendments proposed in the bill are the first step in creating legislation that will support Fit for the Future local government better able to meet the needs of local communities. I commend the bill to the House.

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

MENTAL HEALTH AMENDMENT (STATUTORY REVIEW) BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Jai Rowell, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health) [5.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Mental Health Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2014 on behalf of the Liberal-Nationals Government. The purpose of the bill is to amend some sections of the Mental Health Act 2007 to reflect contemporary language, improve operational clarity and oversight arrangements, and to align it with best practice in mental health. The Government has undertaken an extensive roots and branches review of the legislation together with extensive consultation. Eight community consultation forums took place across New South Wales. More than 500 people attended these forums and 95 written submissions were received from consumers, families and carers, health professionals, service providers, carer networks, emergency services, academics and government agencies. The review and consultation were undertaken to ensure that the Act is fit for purpose and that it offers adequate protections to the rights of those with mental illness in New South Wales whilst also providing adequate protection to such persons in the community from potential serious harms caused by mental illness.

The outcome of the review was that the policy objectives of the Act remain largely valid and provide an appropriate legislative framework for the mental health system going forward. Broadly, the view expressed during the consultation process was that the structure of the Act is robust and, on balance, the content of the Act is supported. However, this Government has heard and acknowledges the community's clear desire for change in line with world's best practice and our mental health reform agenda. The community has stated that there needs to be increased acknowledgement of recovery focused treatment as a key objective of the Act, greater access to emergency mental health care, particularly in rural and regional areas, and improved assistance to consumers and carers to navigate the mental health system. We have listened.

The bill acknowledges recovery in the treatment of mental illness and provides that consumers of mental health services actively participate in treatment decisions and have their views and preferences respected as much as possible. These changes align with current national and international trends towards a more consumer-led approach to mental health treatment. It is vitally important that individuals with a mental illness are involved in their treatment decisions.

This bill proposes to amend section 68 of the Act to add an additional principle of care and treatment, which clarifies that every reasonably practicable effort should be made to obtain the individual's consent to treatment and recovery plans. Further, the principles of care and treatment will now expressly provide that the capacity of individuals to consent should be monitored. There are unfortunate circumstances where a person

with a mental illness does not have the capacity to consent to the principles of care and treatment. This Act provides that in these situations the individuals should be supported to understand their treatment and recovery plans.

New South Wales will maintain the concepts of "risk of serious harm" and "no other appropriate care of a less restrictive kind being reasonably available" as the thresholds for involuntary treatment in the Act. However, in recognition of the importance of individual-led treatment, the bill provides that every effort should be made to obtain the consent of individuals who have capacity and those who can be supported when developing treatment plans and recovery plans for their care, and have their wishes considered by clinicians when their treatment plans are being developed. We have heard feedback from carers that they often feel ignored and frustrated when trying to navigate the mental health system to ensure that their loved ones receive the support and care that they need. We have listened.

Carers and families play a vital role in monitoring, treating and supporting those with a mental illness. This bill recognises the importance of carers and families in these roles and strengthens the provisions relating to their role within the Act. The aim of the changes is to enable greater carer involvement in treatment decision-making and provide better dissemination of information. This includes being entitled to provide input to clinical decisions about their loved ones.

Further, the bill clarifies that the current rights of primary carers regarding access to information will apply when a consumer is on a community treatment order. The primary carer provision in the Act at section 71 will be amended to replace the term "primary carer" with the term "designated carer" to reflect the fact that this position does not always provide a primary care role for the individual. Consumers will now be able to nominate up to two designated carers and specify their access to information. This reflects the common occurrence that people with a mental illness often have more than one carer providing them with support.

In addition, the bill identifies a new type of carer at proposed section 72A—the principal care provider—who is the person primarily responsible for providing care to the individual. The principal care providers will be entitled to receive information, such as admission and discharge advice, which is important for their role in supporting the individual experiencing mental illness. This extends the principles of the Act that require carers to remain informed. Authorised medical officers will be responsible for making reasonable attempts to identify the principal care provider.

All persons in New South Wales have a right to seek mental health treatment. However, the decision to admit a person for treatment is a clinical judgement made at the time of presentation. During the review some stakeholders raised concerns that, on occasion, there are poor outcomes for persons who are taken to declared mental health facilities and who are involuntarily admitted or who are discharged into the community. The specific concern raised was that the views of others, such as families, carers and police and ambulance officers, are not always adequately taken into account by the assessing medical practitioners when making decisions regarding involuntary treatment under the Act.

The bill addresses these concerns and the amendment to proposed section 72B strengthens mental health assessment processes by requiring clinicians, when determining whether a person should be detained in a mental health facility, to seek and consider the views of consumers, carers, family members, treating community psychiatrists or general practitioners and emergency service providers where it is reasonably practicable to do so. This amendment ensures that, where reasonably practicable, a decision regarding involuntary treatment under the Act is made using a combination of the clinical expertise of the assessing medical practitioner and information provided by those listed above who play a role in caring, treating and monitoring the individual suffering from the mental illness.

The bill proposes a new requirement at section 9 of the Act for voluntary patients who have been in the mental health facility for more than 12 months to have a Mental Health Review Tribunal hearing. This hearing will review the case and determine whether the person has the capacity to consent to stay as a voluntary patient and whether the patient is likely to benefit from further care or treatment as a voluntary patient. It is vitally important that all patients, whether voluntary or involuntary, know their rights. Under the current legislation, all involuntary patients are to be provided with a statement of rights. Under proposed section 74A, all voluntary patients will also be provided with a statement of rights that articulates their rights regarding the provision of treatment, access to information and advocacy, and appeal mechanisms. We have heard feedback about the issues faced by emergency services personnel at the coalface when trying to ensure that those requiring mental health care receive the treatment that they require. We have listened.

The bill clarifies functions and increases access to timely assessment and emergency mental health care, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. Under the proposed new provisions at section 19A and section 27A of the Act, more clinicians will be empowered to undertake assessments under the Act, including medical practitioners from another facility or local health district and accredited persons. Accredited persons are experienced and specially trained and appointed health practitioners who may be nurses, psychologists or social workers who supplement the numbers of doctors in emergency departments and community settings.

The issue of accredited persons undertaking Form 1 assessments for continued detention and examination at a declared mental health facility was raised repeatedly during consultations as a possible solution to address access equity problems, particularly in regional and rural areas. Another way we are increasing access to timely assessment and emergency mental health care is by increasing the numbers of declared mental health facilities and the use of video-link technology to facilitate assessments under the Act and prevent unnecessary long-distance transports. Under section 27A of the Act where authorised medical officers who are not psychiatrists are making decisions via audiovisual link or accredited persons are making decisions—for example determining whether a person is mentally ill or mentally disordered—they must consult with a psychiatrist if it is reasonably practicable to do so. This will ensure that appropriate governance arrangements and clinical supervision of practitioners occur when mental health assessments are undertaken under the new provisions of the Act.

The Government is working to ensure prompt action to increase the number of declared mental health facilities across New South Wales, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. This will ensure that those who face mental ill health and their carers do not have to travel as far to access mental health treatment. I thank the NSW Police Force and the Ambulance Service of NSW for working with the Ministry of Health to identify priority sites for inclusion as declared mental health facilities. One of the most heartbreaking elements of mental illness is its effect on young people in our society. The bill strengthens provisions with regard to young people being treated under the Act. This includes requiring that all young people—those who are 16 years and under—must be represented by a lawyer when they are subject to a Mental Health Review Tribunal hearing.

If legal representation is not available, a hearing may proceed at the discretion of the Mental Health Review Tribunal where it is deemed to be in the person's interest to proceed. This may include, but not be limited to, where the tribunal would be discharging the young person at the hearing and waiting for legal representation would unduly delay the release of that young person. The bill also provides that when electroconvulsive therapy is proposed for a person under 16 years of age an assessment by a psychiatrist with child and adolescent expertise must be provided.

It is important to note that electroconvulsive therapy for people under 16 years of age is used very rarely, but the Government wants to ensure that a psychiatrist with expertise with young people undertakes an assessment of the patient when it is. Further, the bill requires the Mental Health Review Tribunal to conduct a hearing that considers the appropriateness of the treatment for a young person, even if the young person has provided informed consent for the treatment. Whilst the Mental Health Act may be an appropriate mechanism to effectively deal with a number of issues in mental health, in many cases such issues can be more appropriately dealt with through policy or regulations; both of which offer more flexibility and capacity for amendment than legislation. In addition, legislation is often not the most appropriate mechanism for promoting best practice and clinical standards.

As a result, some issues raised during the review are being addressed through policy mechanisms, and policy is also being used to support the amendments made to the Act. An example of one such issue where it was determined that legislative changes were not required is the current ban on psychosurgery within the Act. Extensive consultation found broad support for retaining the current prohibition on psychosurgery within the Act and for retaining the current process whereby regulatory exemption to the ban may occur for certain procedures and conditions. Should evidence emerge in the future that supports the efficacy of any psychosurgery procedure in the treatment of mental illnesses or mental disorders, regulatory exemption and supporting policy can be considered.

The Government is committed to reforming the mental health sector and aligning it with world's best practice. The Government is committed to future proofing the system by building the capacity of the workforce, and strengthening clinical and legal oversight and governance of decisions made under the Act. We will increase access to timely assessment in more locations and provide an opportunity for the people experiencing mental illness to drive their own health care and outcomes. I commend the bill to the House.

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

CRIMES (HIGH RISK OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL 2014**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 17 September 2014.**

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.44 p.m.]: I support the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Amendment Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to amend the scheme for the supervision and attention of high-risk sex offenders and high-risk violent offenders as set out in the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006 as follows:

- (a) by providing for the Supreme Court to make, on an ex parte basis, emergency detention orders in relation to a high risk offender the subject of an extended supervision order or an interim supervision order who, because of altered circumstances, cannot be provided with adequate supervision under the extended supervision order or interim supervision order,
- (b) by clarifying that an interim supervision order is suspended during any period that the offender is in lawful custody,
- (c) by supplementing the list of conditions that may be imposed on an extended supervision order (which is not exhaustive) to add conditions requiring the offender to report to police, to provide information about association with children, to comply with requirements relating to internet access and use and to provide employment and financial information to a corrective services officer,
- (d) by increasing the penalty for failing to comply with an extended supervision order or interim supervision order,
- (e) by establishing a High Risk Offenders Assessment Committee, the functions of which include reviewing the risk assessments of sex offenders and violent offenders for the purposes of making recommendations about the taking of action under the Act, and
- (f) by requiring agencies involved in the supervision and management of offenders to co-operate with, and provide assistance to, the Assessment Committee and each other.

The Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006 aims to protect the community from high-risk sex and violent offenders, and encourage these offenders to undertake rehabilitation. The State can apply to the Supreme Court under the Act for a continuing detention order or extended supervision order for an initial period of up to five years. In this bill a number of amendments are proposed to enhance community safety through improved supervision and monitoring of offenders subject to extended supervision orders.

In his second reading speech the Hon. Brad Hazzard, MP, Attorney General, and Minister for Justice, outlined that the bill sought to enhance community safety through improved supervision and monitoring of high-risk sex and violent offenders. He outlined that the provisions draw on elements of the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements that have been operating in the United Kingdom since 2000. In recent times we have seen many cases of high-risk sex offenders being released from jail only to commit further serious sexual offences, and high-risk violent offenders committing further violent offences, including rape and murder. The bill aims to address the shortcomings in our present system. If these people reoffend when released their time in custody can be extended.

I can remember when I was working at the Parramatta Psychiatric Centre a paedophile there said quite openly that he had no intention of changing and no intention of not continuing to offend. In his words, it was not an offence; it was a beautiful way of life—it was loving and quite normal for children and men to have sex, and he would continue doing so. That person had been in and out of jail for sexual offences relating to children. He was in the psychiatric institution to be rehabilitated, but it just was not going to happen. He was the type of person for whom nothing was going to change his ways. Robert "Dolly" Dunn was another person who believed that what he was doing was quite normal. This legislation enables jail authorities to identify those for whom rehabilitation is not working or those who refuse rehabilitation.

This legislation encourages offenders to seek rehabilitation and treatment. If they can be treated then they may be released. But if they cannot and they are identified as being a risk then they will remain in custody. If they are released, extended supervision orders can be put in place. There have been other offenders whose cases are relevant. I remember the case some years ago of a person who had a psychiatric disorder. His son had died at about eight years of age and he could not cope with it. He heard voices and he believed that he had to kill eight people—one for each year of his son's life. He murdered two people, and he had every intention of carrying out a further six murders, which the voices were telling him he must commit. It would have been wrong to release him into the community when he openly said he intended to commit these murders.

Those are just two relevant cases, but there are many others. We remember the case of the young Irish lady in Melbourne who was raped and murdered. We remember the relevant case from the North Shore of Sydney. This legislation aims to address the shortcomings in our system. We have to admire the Attorney General for bringing the legislation forward and this Government for actively doing something about it. I see that the former Attorney General is in the Chamber. I know that he will support this legislation. When he was the Attorney General he worked to bring forward this extremely important legislation, which will ensure the safety of the community.

Two hundred years ago people convicted of crimes were transported and the public did not have to worry about them—they never came back; that was it. We impose sentences that have a defined period of time—criminals do their time and then they are released. But that does not work for people who are at serious risk of reoffending, often because of mental health issues or other issues in their lives. Those people can be and should be identified in jail. This bill will allow us to take action to keep them in jail for a further period of time and allow for continued high-level supervision. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [5.53 p.m.]: I support the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Amendment Bill 2014. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006 to enhance community safety through improved supervision and monitoring of sex and violent offenders at a high risk of reoffending. The Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006 aimed to protect the community from that small group of serious offenders who resist rehabilitation during their time in custody. This is something I have always considered incredibly important, even more so after my eyes were opened through my experience as a member of the committee looking into the sentencing of child sexual assault offenders. I can see how serious an issue this is and how important this amending bill is.

This Government is committed to ensuring that the community is protected from the high risk of reoffending posed by such individuals. This bill supports the Government's targeted approach to managing the risk posed by high-risk offenders and gives agencies the tools to respond quickly to any change in circumstances that increases risk. The introduction of a High Risk Offenders Assessment Committee, comprising members from Justice, law enforcement and relevant human services agencies, is a key feature of this bill. I thank those members in advance for the work they will undertake. The committee will be responsible for the ongoing review, assessment and management of high-risk offenders. The proposed amendments will require those agencies to cooperate and share relevant information with the committee and each other to better support and manage offenders.

The bill also provides for the Supreme Court to make an emergency detention order on an ex parte basis when a supervised high-risk offender cannot be supervised adequately in the community because of altered circumstances and consequently poses a high risk of committing a serious offence. The introduction of such orders is an additional necessary tool to help manage offenders who are being supervised in the community. This covers situations where there has not been necessarily a break of the supervision order but rather a change to the supervised offender's circumstances. This change will ensure that the offender can be kept safely in custody while the problem created by the change in circumstances is sorted out. Sometimes this may mean finding the offender a new place to live. Detention is only to be used as a last resort while the situation is being addressed. In any event, an emergency detention order cannot exceed 120 hours from the time it is made.

On the other hand, if there is a breach, this bill will increase the penalty for a breach from a maximum of two years imprisonment to five years imprisonment. The bill also aims to update the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006 such that any time spent in lawful custody, except when the offender is sentenced for a fresh matter, will not count towards the three-month limit for interim supervision orders. A condition may also be imposed requiring an offender to report to police and advise them of the supervision order, and his or her residential address. Further, any conditions that normally would be imposed under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000, which is suspended when an offender is subject to a supervision order, may be imposed as a condition of a supervision order.

As mentioned previously, an emergency detention order can only extend for 120 hours from the time it is made. These time limits ensure that the offender's loss of liberty will be for the shortest period possible before they are either released back into the community on the original supervision order or given an opportunity to appear before the court to be heard in response to either an application for an interim detention order or breach proceedings. Other government agencies, relevant organisations and independent experts may also be appointed to the committee to assist with the management of risk and the supervision of high-risk offenders in the

community. Subcommittees can also be formed to exercise specific functions of the committee. The committee will facilitate interagency cooperation, coordination and information-sharing to support ongoing oversight of the management of supervised high-risk offenders.

The committee will also develop best practice standards and guidelines for the exercise by three relevant agencies of their high-risk offender function and identify any gaps in resourcing, service provision and training. These provisions recognise the crucial role that the agencies have in managing the risk posed by this small number of offenders and the need for these partnerships to continue for the period that high-risk offenders are under State supervision. This cooperation can include developing multiagency management plans and joint programs to assist and support high-risk offenders under supervision. These provisions draw on elements of the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements that have been operating successfully in the United Kingdom since 2000.

We must ensure that the right practices are put in place to limit the offender's loss of liberty while ensuring the safety of the community as a whole. We need to ensure that all circumstances are accounted for when a high-risk offender is released into the community. It is only by working together, and sharing information and prior learnings that we can ensure the community is safe and protected, and that we can limit the number of these criminals who reoffend when they are released. I thank the Attorney General for his work on this bill and his staff for the time they have put in. This is an important bill and it is in the best interests of the community. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping) [5.59 p.m.]: The Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Amendment Bill 2014 seeks to deal with a problem that is difficult to solve. It is the problem of identifying the more dangerous prisoners, the prisoners who are likely to adhere to the terms of parole if they are granted it and the prisoners who will lose their dangerousness through rehabilitation and programs such as the Custody Based Intensive Treatment [CUBIT] program for serious sex offenders or other programs for high-risk violent offenders. Over the past 10 years in this State and elsewhere various attempts have been made to contain the small number of dangerous prisoners. I will give the example of one prisoner who went through the CUBIT program and was released on parole in August 2012. He appeared to be complying with parole, but 10 or so months after being released he attacked a 30-year-old woman at a Hunters Hill bus stop.

The man had already served 22½ years of a 24-year maximum sentence. I will not name him because he is now facing serious charges. The man first became eligible for parole in January 2005 after serving 15 years in prison. The parole authority rejected him six times until parole was granted in August 2012. He had committed a vicious murder that had a sexual aspect to it. In hindsight it is a pity that he was not given a life term when sentenced for that crime. When he was released he was not subject to a detention order or extended supervision order. I believe attempts were made to have such orders imposed but the applications did not succeed. That man is just one example of a number of prisoners in the system who must be considered separately from the normal prisoner.

The legal community holds a strong view that a person who commits a crime and does their time is then released from custody on parole or under supervision. In most cases that process succeeds. But in cases where it is unlikely to succeed this legislation will allow the Supreme Court to make, on an ex parte basis, emergency detention orders in relation to a high-risk offender who is the subject of an extended supervision order or an interim supervision order and who, because of altered circumstances, cannot be provided with adequate supervision under the extended supervision order or interim supervision order.

When I was Attorney General we had a situation that I am sure was one of the factors that informed the decision to introduce this amending bill. It involved prisoners who were held in institutions that could not handle them and in the end the institution had to get rid of the prisoners. The people were under extended supervision orders. The question really should have been why they were not under an extended detention order, which would have provided more protection. The people had deteriorated while they were under supervision and that is what led to their being expelled from their accommodation. That situation demonstrates why we need to provide institutions with an opportunity to urgently apply to the court for interim orders so that they can get some control of prisoners.

Increasing the penalty for failing to comply with an extended supervision order or an interim supervision order from two years to five years makes considerable sense. That is because some serial offenders in the system were given extended supervision orders or extended detention orders initially and then supervision orders. When they are released they then breach the orders and are returned to detention for a maximum of a

couple of years and sometimes less than that. The courts need greater sentencing discretion so that we do not have to watch those people all the time. It costs the State a fortune to supervise some of those offenders. Although it is money well spent, we would be better off to be clever about it and give ourselves greater powers, such as those contained in this smart legislation that the Attorney General has introduced.

There have been a number of infamous cases involving serious sex offenders. In this State a man by the name of Tillman has been the subject of various applications to the court. He was originally placed on an extended detention order but, sadly, the courts seem to have shied away from those orders in recent times. I urge the courts to give more consideration to using extended detention orders because of the difficulty in stopping people on extended supervision orders from reoffending. Other examples include the well-known paedophile Colin Fisk, the man Wilde, the man Richardson and of course Mr Fardon in Queensland. Mr Fardon has been the subject of various attempts to keep him in custody. He might be out of prison at the moment; he has certainly been in and out in the past year or so. It was Mr Fardon who opened up this type of legislation nationally. The original serious sex offenders legislation brought in by Queensland was aimed at Mr Fardon.

The High Court held that it was reasonable legislation that did not offend the Constitution or the Kable considerations, so the other States followed suit. This power is useful, but it sometimes has to be tightened up. This bill seeks to do that by setting up a High Risk Offenders Assessment Committee to supervise people who are the subject of supervision orders. The bill will also enable the sharing of information between agencies, which the State does not always do well. Police intelligence, Corrective Services, the parole authority and the Serious Offenders Review Council [SORC] have to share information so that we are able to get the full picture about a person to know whether they will be a danger.

In 2013 I introduced legislation that gave coverage to offenders under the age of 18. There have been several under-age offenders who have been seen to be high risk. One was convicted of the murder of a three-year-old when he was 13. Last time I heard of him he was in Supermax in Goulburn and aged about 20. That young man's own psychiatrist said that he could not say the young man would not be dangerous in future towards people who were weaker than him. He was a big fellow. When he was 13 he looked about 18 and he kept on growing. He was a big, strong man who had been in all sorts of trouble in the prison system, including the attempted murder of other prisoners and violent attacks on several prison officers.

The above example demonstrates that there are people in the system who must be looked at carefully and who may ultimately need to be locked up for a very long time, if not forever, when they have not been sentenced. Of course, a juvenile who is convicted of murder cannot receive a life sentence. That is why the high-risk offenders legislation the Government introduced aimed to cover some younger dangerous offenders. These are unfortunate cases and, as the member for Menai said, they are quite rare. But there are some people from whom the community needs to be protected. It is one of the chief aims of government to maintain the protection of the community. I am sure that the Opposition, Independent members and The Greens will join in supporting this worthy legislation to the hilt.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.08 p.m.]: I speak in favour of the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Amendment Bill 2014. When it comes to the criminal justice system I have always been a supporter of victims' rights and of our right to live in a safe community. Too often we have seen the rights of criminals placed above the rights of victims and their families. It is unfortunate that there are a small number of people who, despite their period of incarceration, continue to be a threat once released. Those high-risk offenders pose a great threat to the community. It is unfortunate that we must continue to monitor these offenders, particularly due to the monstrous nature of their crimes. The bill ensures that we have a strong regime in place for the prevention of serious sex crimes and serious violent crimes committed by high-risk offenders. This ensures that the public is safe.

The Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act allows the State to apply to the Supreme Court for a continuing detention order or an extended supervision order. Those orders extend beyond periods during which a high-risk sex offender or a high-risk violent offender is subject to incarceration or supervision. Continuing detention may be sought while the offender is still in custody, or when a person has breached a supervision order, or when a supervision order no longer provides adequate protection. The Act makes it clear that continuing detention is a last resort. Either order will be made only once the court is satisfied that there is an unacceptable risk of committing additional sex or violent offences. Last year Justice Richard Button placed an extended supervision order on Robert Stanley Steadman, despite, in Justice Button's words, it being a "significant erosion" of the 69-year-old's liberty. The order was necessary because Steadman showed "no, or virtually no, insight into his longstanding proclivity to commit sexual crimes against young girls".

In the words of Justice Button, Robert Steadman "has a chronic tendency to commit sexual offences against female children that has existed for well over 50 years" and that "there is a complete and longstanding lack of insight into the issue, and an entrenched refusal to seek to deal with it". He was convicted in 1958, when 14 years old, for indecently assaulting a six-year-old girl. In 1993 he was convicted of aggravated sexual intercourse without consent with an 11-year-old girl. In 2009 he was found guilty of aggravated indecent assault and the indecent assault of three girls, two aged nine and one aged 10. The most appropriate way to manage perpetrators like Robert Steadman is to either monitor them or place them into detention. I reiterate that it is unfortunate we are forced to protect the community in this way from these individuals. However, the orders balance the rights of the perpetrator with the need to protect the community from violent individuals.

The bill creates a statutory obligation on agencies to cooperate, share information and provide support and assistance in relation to high-risk offenders to manage their risk in the community. The cooperation of agencies will help to ensure that high-risk offenders are best able to be managed and that they are in an area where they are of least risk to the community. These provisions draw on elements of the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements [MAPPA] that operate in the United Kingdom. Under MAPPA, justice and law enforcement agencies work with human services agencies to formally assess the risk and develop multi-agency management plans. The management plans are tailored to individual offenders and cover matters such as accommodation, conditions, reporting requirements, monitoring of offenders and disclosure of information to members of the public for their protection.

The proposed statutory obligation on agencies to cooperate will not require agencies represented to direct their resources in a particular way. However, it will require agencies to be part of case management planning and oversight through the High Risk Offenders Assessment Committee. This is important because courts are required to consider the safety of the community and if the offender can be managed in the community. Agency input assists in determining if offenders can be appropriately incorporated into the community. For example, if there were no appropriate housing, then perhaps a continuing detention order may be more appropriate. This information can be provided only by Housing NSW.

Those who are placed under extended supervision orders are those who are extremely violent or who continually place the community at risk, despite previous incarceration. The obligation to cooperate will ensure that the management plans of offenders are as effective as possible. Both orders are important to ensure that the community is protected from extremely violent offenders. All governments have a responsibility to ensure a safe and civil society. The Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Amendment Bill fulfils this responsibility. We are ensuring that high-risk offenders are monitored, thereby reducing the probability that they reoffend and helping to reduce the incidence of the most heinous violent crimes and sex-related incidents. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.14 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Brad Hazzard, in reply: I thank the member for Liverpool, the member for Gosford, the member for Drummoyne, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Menai and the honourable member for Epping for their contributions to the debate and note that I also made a contribution to the debate. On behalf of the Attorney General, I wish to address some matters that have been raised in debate by members. In relation to the introduction of emergency detention orders, the order is intended to allow for short-term detention when necessary in extraordinary cases. The "altered circumstances" which form the basis of the emergency detention order application will not necessarily amount to a breach of the supervision order. Rather, "altered circumstances" can cover a situation where a high-risk offender is being supervised in the community and, through no fault of their own, a situation arises which means the offender poses an imminent risk of committing a serious offence. An example could be flooding of their accommodation. In those circumstances short-term detention may be necessary to ensure community safety until suitable alternative accommodation can be found for the high-risk offender.

In response to a concern raised that the emergency detention order may be made on an ex parte basis, the bill contains a number of important safeguards. First, emergency detention orders can be applied for only by the Attorney General. Secondly, applications must be accompanied by a sworn affidavit of the Commissioner for Corrective Services, or an assistant commissioner. Evidence must be given to the court of why there are no other practicable and available means of ensuring community safety, other than detention of the offender. Thirdly, an emergency detention order can last only for at most 120 hours. It cannot be renewed on the same set of circumstances. Fourthly, there is a right of appeal to the Supreme Court against the granting of an emergency detention order.

These safeguards ensure that the offender's loss of liberty will be for the shortest period possible before that person either returns to the community under supervision or is given an opportunity to appear before the

court to be heard on any application brought by the State under the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006. The emergency detention order therefore will provide enough time for the State to resolve the imminent risk posed by a high-risk offender to ensure the community is protected. I confirm that the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act 2006 will be reviewed in 2017 to determine if the policy objectives and the terms of the Act remain valid. This statutory review of the Act will include the provisions being introduced by this bill.

This bill makes significant amendments to the Crimes (High Risk Offenders) Act to strengthen the procedures and options in place for the supervision and detention of high-risk sex offenders and high-risk violent offenders. The reforms in this bill will ensure that the State has the necessary tools to assess and respond to the risk posed by this cohort of offenders and will improve monitoring and supervision of them in the community. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Geoff Provest, on behalf of Mr Brad Hazzard, agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

MINE SUBSIDENCE COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 11 September 2014.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.19 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. The Opposition does not oppose the bill. The bill contains a number of miscellaneous amendments to miscellaneous legislation that have no common theme to unite them, apart from the fact that they all relate to the State's criminal law. The Attorney General presents the bill as part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program. It is an efficient way of making a number of different amendments in the one amending bill, rather than introducing a multitude of different bills.

The first amendment deals with the definition of "consent" in sexual assault offences. This was, of course, a matter of considerable controversy when the statutory definition was introduced a number of years ago. The amendment extends the statutory definition in section 61HA of the Crimes Act to apply to attempts to commit sexual assault offences. This was a recommendation from the statutory review of the consent provisions carried out by what was then the Department of Attorney General and Justice. The review was dated October 2013. The background to the introduction of this statutory definition is conveniently set out in an extract from the statutory review:

The policy objective of the amendment was to give clear guidance as to what constitutes consent. It was to provide a more contemporary and appropriate definition of consent than that found in the common law. This was so particularly in the adoption of an objective fault test that requires a person to have reasonable grounds for their belief that another person consents to sexual intercourse with them. The test reflects the increased equality in today's sexual relationships, and the dialogue that should take place between individuals prior to sexual intercourse to reach a necessary mutuality of understanding in relation to consent. In this way, section 61HA represented a significant reform in the prosecution of sexual assault cases in New South Wales, adopting the reforming approaches in other common law jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand.

I note that in submissions to the review, the Law Society of New South Wales, Legal Aid New South Wales and the Public Defenders restated their opposition to the statutory consent provisions. The first recommendation of

the review was to "amend the Act to include attempts to commit the offences to which section 61HA applies". This is said to flow from a Court of Criminal Appeal case of *WO v Director of Public Prosecutions (NSW)* [2009] NSWCCA 275. The Court held in that case that the statutory definition of "consent" did not apply to an offence of attempting to commit an offence of sexual assault but only applied to the substantive offences referred to in section 61HA (1). This was an issue particularly highlighted in the submission of the Judicial Commission of New South Wales to the statutory review. The trial court ruled that the statutory consent provisions did apply to the attempt offence. These matters were also raised by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions [ODPP]. The relevant section of the review arguing for the recommendation is as follows:

The ODPP identified the issue of section 61HA not applying to attempts in the context of such offences appearing on the same indictment as substantive offences. This scenario requires the judge to give the jury two different definitions of consent: the statutory definition in relation to substantive sexual assault offences to which section 61HA applies and the common law definition in relation to attempts to commit those offences.

The review concludes that the Act should be amended to provide for the statutory definition of consent in section 61HA to apply to attempts to commit the offences referred to in the section. This is because, as argued by the DPP, the Crown is required to establish a lack of consent when prosecuting an attempt to commit a sexual assault offence: a complainant in such circumstances should be allowed the same protections as the section affords complainants in prosecutions for the substantive offences to which it applies. It would also simplify the directions a judge is required to give to a jury in the circumstances highlighted in the ODPP's submission.

The second amendment in the bill also results from the recommendations of the statutory review into the consent provisions. The second recommendation reads as follows:

Amend section 61HA (5) (c) to replace the word "medical" with the word "health" so that it applies to all health procedures, not just those carried out by medical practitioners.

The rationale for this was expressed by the statutory review to be as follows:

NSW Health raised a concern about the specific wording of section 61HA (5) (c) that states a person does not consent to sexual intercourse if he or she is under a mistaken belief that it is for medical or hygienic purposes. Their submission proposes replacing the word "medical" with the word "health", so that it applied to all health procedures, not just those carried out by medical practitioners. Although the review is unaware of any issues arising at trial in relation to the use of the word "medical", nevertheless the proposed change is supported as it meets the aim of section 61HA's provisions to give clear guidance as to what constitutes consent, by setting clear parameters in its statutory definition.

The bill also amends section 93FB of the Crimes Act. This section deals with the possession of dangerous articles, other than firearms, in a public place. The amendment is to extend the prohibition of dangerous articles to include flares or distress signals. The Attorney says this was a proposal from NSW Police to capture within the section night-time flares that do not smoke but burn with a very bright light and are capable of burning material and causing eye damage. This is said to address their use at sporting events. I make two points about that. First, this does not criminalise their use at sporting functions but their possession and, second, it is not altogether clear that this is not already caught by section 93 (1) (a) (i).

The Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act is amended by allowing regulations to make provision for forms for an application for an apprehended personal violence order. It seems that the application form allows more information and detail to be recorded than would normally be expected. There is also a warning about false claims. These are said to arise from a review of the Act dealing with the issue of frivolous and vexatious applications. That review, which I read some time ago, does not justify the occasionally extreme fulminations that one hears about frivolous or vexatious applications. I particularly draw the attention of members to the research done by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] on this subject published in the *Crime and Justice Bulletin* dated May 2012 and the comments I made about it in this place in October 2013.

An amendment to the Crimes (Forensic Procedures) Act gives retrospective validation to certain forensic procedures carried out before 24 December 2013. A police officer who carries out such a forensic procedure and who has completed a forensic procedure training course conducted by the NSW Police will be taken to be appropriately qualified to carry out that procedure. The Attorney puts this as correcting a technical oversight. The Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act is amended so that when an aggregate sentence is imposed for a punishment of different offences by the court a written record is made of the discrete sentences that would have been imposed if there were no aggregate sentence.

The Criminal Appeal Rules are amended by updating a reference. The Criminal Procedure Act is clarified so that the Local Court can hear and finally determine a matter in the absence of the accused on the first

return date or any subsequent day if satisfied the accused had reasonable notice. Section 282 is amended to remove the requirement that a court must obtain the consent of an accused person to the summary disposal of proceedings if a scientific certificate is tendered in the proceedings by the prosecution.

The Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act is amended so that offences involving the manufacture, production, possession or supply of substances listed in schedule 9 of the Poisons Standard under the Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods Act are to be dealt with summarily. Substances represented to be a schedule 9 substance are taken to be one. Schedule 18 provides a two-year limitation period for commencing proceedings for offences under the Graffiti Control Act. This is an extension from the limit of six months. A statutory review of the Graffiti Control Act found that police largely refused to use it and proceeded under the Crimes Act instead, so one wonders what the practical consequences of this amendment will be.

The Inclosed Lands Protection Act is amended to create a new offence of entering inclosed lands in contravention of a re-entry prohibition. The section establishes a regime for re-entry prohibitions to be issued by the responsible authority for an organised event. The Telecommunications (Interception and Access) (NSW) Act is amended to align the definition of "certifying officers" for the Police Integrity Commission [PIC], the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and the NSW Police, with the corresponding definition in the Commonwealth legislation.

The final amendment is to the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act and implements recommendations from the Ombudsman and a statutory review. It extends a prohibition on disclosing information to a person who is a lawyer from whom a monitor seeks advice and that information is obtained from monitored communication between a detained person and their lawyer. That is, the prohibition applies to the police officer's lawyer where the police officer is listening to a detained person and that person's lawyer. The police officer is already prohibited from disclosure. The Opposition does not oppose the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.28 p.m.]: I contribute to the debate on the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. As the Minister said in his second reading speech, the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 amends crime-related legislation as part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program. The amendments are mainly technical, minor or uncontroversial and are aimed at improving the administration of criminal legislation in New South Wales. I will touch on a number of points contained within the legislation, the first being the extension of the time period to prosecute graffiti offences. The bill amends the Graffiti Control Act 2008 to extend the time frame within which proceedings under the Act can be brought from six months to two years.

Acts of graffiti can be charged under the Graffiti Control Act 2008 or as a more general property damage offence under section 195 of the Crimes Act 1900. Bringing prosecutions under the Crimes Act has no time limit; however, the current time limit under the Graffiti Control Act is six months. In 2013, the Department of Justice conducted a statutory review of the Graffiti Control Act. The review found that police brought many graffiti offences under section 195 of the Crimes Act 1900 and that the offence provisions under the Graffiti Control Act had been used comparatively infrequently. The Graffiti Control Act is central to the New South Wales Government's commitment to combat graffiti vandalism.

Undoubtedly, Mr Acting-Speaker, the great electorate of Clarence would suffer graffiti vandalism from time to time as does my electorate of the Tweed. Such vandalism denigrates local communities and removing it imposes many millions of dollars annually on local councils and private citizens across this fine State. In 2011, the Government implemented its election commitment and amended the Act to provide that young people charged with a graffiti offence must appear before a court. The 2011 amendments also require that courts imposing a community service order on graffiti offenders must make graffiti clean-up a condition of that order. In addition, the amendments gave courts the power to impose driver licence orders on graffiti offenders, including orders extending the time that a young offender is required to remain on a learner or provisional licence.

This further amendment is consistent with this Government's commitment to encourage more graffiti charges to be brought under the appropriate Act. The nature of charges should not be dictated simply by the limitation period, particularly for graffiti offences. Police have access to increasingly sophisticated forms of evidence with which to prosecute graffiti offences, including electronic evidence such as camera recordings and photographs taken by graffiti offenders. However, this evidence often comes to light more than six months after the alleged offence. Graffiti offences should be dealt with under the Graffiti Control Act, and this amendment reinforces the role of the Act in the fight against graffiti vandalism.

It would be remiss of me not to note the fine work of the NSW Police Force and eyewatch, which is an initiative of this Government, in setting up a Facebook-based page to enable Neighbourhood Watch groups to post updates on graffiti vandalism. I am a great supporter of Neighbourhood Watch. As an example, in the past 12 months the Tweed-Richmond local area command registered just on one million hits on the website. Residents, ratepayers, consumers and people in local communities can make online postings. A number of my Neighbourhood Watch groups take photographs of various graffiti tags and post them to eyewatch. This has enabled our local police to track some offenders. Eyewatch is a very valuable tool.

I note also that later this month my electorate will host the Australasian meeting of Neighbourhood Watch. Groups from New Zealand and around Australia will come to the Tweed. Deputy Commissioner Nick Kaldas will be present, along with Inspector Carlee Mahoney, whose expertise includes cybercrime. It looks to be a very big turnout. Eyewatch provides communities with the ability to communicate with local police to bring offenders to justice and also make their communities safe. The bill makes amendments to a number of other issues and extends the current statutory definition of consent to cover offences of attempted sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault in company.

Section 61HA commenced on 1 January 2008 following the 2006 Report of the Criminal Justice Sexual Offences Taskforce. A majority of task force members supported the new definition, including the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Violence Against Women Specialist Unit, the Office for Women—now Women New South Wales, Women's Legal Services NSW, Victims Services, the NSW Rape Crisis Centre, and the NSW Police Force. Section 61HA now has both subjective and objective fault elements—that is, a person may be shown to have known that someone did not consent to sexual intercourse if they knew or were reckless as to that fact, or they had no reasonable grounds for believing the person consented.

The policy objective behind section 61HA is to give clear guidance as to what constitutes consent. It provides a more contemporary and appropriate definition of consent than that previously applicable under common law. The statutory test reflects the increased equality in today's sexual relationships and the dialogue that should take place between individuals prior to sexual intercourse to reach a necessary mutuality of understanding in relation to consent. In this way, section 61HA represented a significant reform in the prosecution of sexual assault cases in New South Wales by adopting the reforming approaches in other common law jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand. A review of the consent provisions of the Crimes Act was conducted in 2012 by the then Department of Attorney General and Justice. A key recommendation of that review was the extension of section 61HA to cover attempts to commit the offences specified.

Extending that section actually means that a complainant in such circumstances is given the same protections as the section affords complainants in prosecutions for the substantive offences to which it applies. This change corrects an anomaly in the Crimes Act and reflects this Government's continued commitment to improving the effective and efficient operation of the State's criminal laws. Finally, the bill contains two provisions that will enable New South Wales police to deal more effectively with antisocial and potentially dangerous behaviour of certain fans at sporting venues.

The bill amends section 93FB of the Crimes Act, which provides that it is an offence to possess a dangerous article other than firearms in a public place. "Dangerous article" is currently described as anything capable of discharging by any means any irritant matter in liquid, powder, gas or chemical form, or any dense smoke. Unfortunately, at a number of various sporting events and gatherings people have been put at risk by certain irresponsible individuals who believe it is appropriate to set off such devices. The bill also introduces an offence of aggravated trespass under the Inclosed Lands Protection Act. All in all, this is a minor and uncontroversial technical bill, but it is not minor to many people, particularly victims of aggravated sexual assaults. I am proud to support the Government's legislative changes which will assist in keeping the good people of New South Wales safe.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [6.38 p.m.]: I support the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. In his second reading speech the Hon. Brad Hazzard, the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice, stated:

The purpose of the bill is to make miscellaneous amendments to criminal legislation as part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program.

Mr Hazzard further stated:

The bill amends a number of Acts to improve the efficiency and operation of the State's criminal laws.

The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to amend the *Crimes Act 1900*:
 - (i) to apply the statutory definition of **consent** to attempts to commit sexual assault offences, and
 - (ii) to negate consent to sexual intercourse in circumstances where consent has been given under a mistaken belief that the sexual intercourse is for health purposes, and
 - (iii) to make it an offence to possess a distress signal or distress flare in a public place without a reasonable excuse,
- (b) to amend the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* to provide a regulation-making power to prescribe the form of the application notice in respect of an application for an apprehended personal violence order,
- (c) to amend the *Crimes (Forensic Procedures) Act 2000* to deem certain members of the NSW Police Force who carried out forensic procedures under that Act before 24 December 2013 to have been appropriately qualified to carry out that forensic procedure,
- (d) to amend the *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999* to require a court that imposes an aggregate sentence when sentencing for two or more offences to make a written record of the sentence that would have been imposed, and the non-parole period that would have been set for any offence to which a standard non-parole period applied, for each offence had it imposed separate sentences,
- (e) to amend the *Criminal Appeal Rules* to update a reference to legislation,
- (f) to amend the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986*:
 - (i) to clarify that the Local Court can hear and finally determine a matter in an accused person's absence on the first return date or on a subsequent day when the matter is listed for mention or hearing if the accused person has been given notice of the proceedings, and
 - (ii) to remove the requirement that a court must obtain the consent of an accused person to the summary disposal of proceedings if a scientific examination certificate is tendered by the prosecution in the proceedings,
- (g) to amend the *Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985*:
 - (i) to make offences involving the manufacture, production, possession or supply of schedule 9 substances summary offences (including offences already committed), and
 - (ii) to provide that a substance that is represented as being a schedule 9 substance is deemed a schedule 9 substance,
- (h) to amend the *Graffiti Control Act 2008* to specify that the limitation period for bringing proceedings under that Act is 2 years,
- (i) to amend the *Enclosed Lands Protection Act 1901* to create a new offence relating to entering enclosed lands that are an event venue while an organised event is being held there in contravention of a re-entry prohibition,
- (j) to amend the definition of **certifying officer** in the *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) (New South Wales) Act 1987* to make it consistent with the *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979* of the Commonwealth and to update certain references relating to the New South Wales Crime Commission,
- (k) to amend the *Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002* to prevent the disclosure of certain communications made between a detained person and that person's lawyer.

The bill extends the limitation period to prosecute graffiti offences from six months to two years. The extended limitation period is a good idea when one considers the cost to communities, councils and businesses that have to clean up graffiti. It may take some months to catch an offender and this means that police have six months to charge a person who commits an offence or to summons that person to court. Another amendment enables offences relating to synthetic drugs under the *Drugs Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985* to be dealt with summarily in the Local Court. We all know that synthetic drugs are a problem in our community. When the Liberal-Nationals came to office 3½ years ago, synthetic drugs were unheard of in New South Wales. The Legal Affairs Committee was established to conduct hearings and investigate the use of synthetic drugs.

The committee heard anecdotal evidence about the problems in mining communities in Western Australia. I was privileged to be a member of that committee, as were the member for Castle Hill and the member for Campbelltown. We travelled to the Hunter Valley and spoke to various people from the mining community, the hospital, health communities and the drug institution. The mining community said that synthetic drugs were a real problem. The hospital staff said there was a huge problem and many of the drug addicts in the

institution said that when they could not get their drug of choice, they turned to synthetic drugs. Some gave evidence that their mental health conditions related to the use of synthetic drugs rather than the use of other drugs.

Ultimately the committee made a number of recommendations and all those recommendations were adopted and introduced by this Government. During the latter stages of its investigation the committee heard that a young fellow who thought he could fly jumped off a balcony and died, and another man died on a road at Nelson Bay as a result of taking synthetic drugs. The will of the communities was galvanised when they realised the extent of the problem. The Government's adoption of the regulations to make synthetic drugs unlawful in this State was a great outcome for the committee inquiry. There were a number of amendments and different pieces of legislation, and the Legislation Review Committee studied six areas of the bill that it considered might trespass on people's rights and liberties. Retrospective application was considered, as well as the right to a fair trial, time limits, onus of proof and access to justice.

All those issues were flagged but only access to justice was referred back to Parliament for further consideration. The bill amends the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 to prevent the disclosure of certain communications between a detained person and the detained person's lawyer. The amendment is part of an overall scheme that restricts the detained person's access to justice by providing that he or she can only consult a lawyer about certain matters. The bill highlights this Government's determination to be part of the fight against terrorism at a national level as it works hand in hand with police and the Federal Government. It wants to be tough and to give police the powers they need to be able to combat terrorism. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [6.48 p.m.]: I support the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 and listened intently to debate relating to the proposed changes. The bill will amend a number of crime-related Acts as part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program. The amendments are mainly technical, minor or uncontroversial. They are aimed at improving the administration of criminal legislation in New South Wales. Indeed, for some time now the community has sought the exercise of such a common-sense approach. The community has been calling for a reduction in red tape in order to allow authorities such as the NSW Police Force, the Attorney General and others to get on with their jobs because an enormous amount of frustration results from procedures that restrict their good work. Common-sense amendments to crime-related legislation as part of this regular legislative review is a way in which the Government can work with the community and get out of the way in some instances in order to allow the process to take its course.

I note the comments of the member for Myall Lakes in relation to synthetic drug offences under the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 being dealt with summarily in the Local Court. As members well know the Local Court has the power to impose a maximum penalty of two years in jail. In the electorate of Tamworth we had a serious issue as to the availability of synthetic drugs, so much so that a petition was circulated throughout Tamworth and Gunnedah. That petition was ultimately tabled in this Parliament and the Government moved quickly to adjust the laws to ensure that synthetic drugs were banned and offences imposed particularly for supply.

The number of incidents in my electorate and the availability of synthetic drugs from totally inappropriate locations highlighted to me how dangerous those drugs are. I thank the former Minister for Fair Trading, Mr Anthony Roberts, for his swift action in having his teams carry out sweeping raids to ensure that those synthetic drugs were removed from the shelves to protect our community. Drugs are the scourge of our community and we must do everything we can to pursue zero tolerance for their recreational use. Having synthetic drugs listed under the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 to be dealt with summarily in the Local Court is a common-sense approach. Councils and businesses are constantly battling graffiti—

Mr Bryan Doyle: It is a crime.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I note the interjection of the member for Campbelltown, a former highly decorated police officer who is well respected by police. Under the bill the limitation period to prosecute graffiti offences will be extended from six months to two years. This is because it can take some time to identify tags and track them through social media and the like. Graffiti Removal Day 2014 is fast approaching. I encourage everyone to roll up their sleeves, grab some cleaning fluids and a scrubbing brush and/or paintbrush and get involved. Last year in Tamworth—and we are hoping to do it again this year—a group of minimum security prisoners assisted in the removal of graffiti. I had high visibility vests—

Mr Geoff Provest: Orange overalls.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I note the interjection of the member for Tweed. My office paid for high visibility vests with the slogan "Giving back to Tamworth" on them. In that way Corrective Services could give back to the community because everyone could see that slogan as the inmates were scrubbing—a great initiative. Graffiti and synthetic drug offences are only two of the common-sense amendments included in the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.55 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Brad Hazzard, in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Liverpool, Myall Lakes and Tamworth for their contributions to debate. The Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 makes a number of important amendments to the criminal laws of this State. The amendments will ensure that criminal laws and procedures continue to be as effective as possible. The amendments will also support the effective administration of justice in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Geoff Provest, on behalf of Mr Brad Hazzard, agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE MOBILE OFFICE

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [6.57 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House about a recent mobile office I held at Port Kembla in my electorate of Wollongong. I regularly hold mobile offices around my electorate to give members of my community, many of whom are unable to get into my office for a variety of reasons, an opportunity to come and speak with me face to face to discuss any problems or issues they may be having. In some cases they just come for a chat to get to know their local member of Parliament.

Mr Geoff Provest: Do you give out coffees as well?

Ms NOREEN HAY: I often get and often give out coffees. I am a staunch believer that there is no substitute—and the member for Tweed might learn from this—for personal one-on-one interactions with constituents, and last week in Port Kembla my mobile office once again demonstrated to me how true that is. More than 50 community members and business owners attended the mobile office. They raised a variety of issues but all had one particular and very real concern in common—namely, their personal safety and the safety of their houses, businesses, cars and property. Unfortunately, it has been well known for many years throughout the Illawarra that Port Kembla, as a port town, has attracted street workers. Back in its heyday, Port Kembla was a thriving town supported by many local migrants who were all employed by BHP and who lived locally. Port Kembla was particularly frequented by sailors. It was a very industrial port.

Mr Paul Toole: I bet it was.

Ms NOREEN HAY: What would the member for Bathurst know? His electorate is far from the ocean. Sailors would come into port at Port Kembla quite often after being at sea for long periods. As times changed Port Kembla fell on hard times. This was not helped by the privatisation of the port by the current Government.

Mr Geoff Provost: You took the money though.

Ms NOREEN HAY: We did not get any money. The Government took our money and ran with it. Members opposite should pay attention as I talk about these poor people and their plight. BHP retrenched thousands of workers over the years and many shops in the town closed. Unfortunately, the port became infamous for its seedier side. It is a real shame that Government members should be so mean and nasty about the people struggling in Port Kembla.

In recent years, however, we have seen a positive resurgence in Port Kembla, with new shops springing to life in Wentworth Street, which is the main street—with everything from recycled wares to the most gorgeous wedding dress shops; Tonitto Continental Cakes; trusty Bowden's Discount Chemist, which has been there for many years; the regional office of Scouts Australia; and community-focused precincts such as the Red Point Artists Association, and their premises is home to an excellent cafe, a gallery and many little studios. The new business owners, along with new and old residents, all raised the issue of the desperate need for closed-circuit television [CCTV] cameras along Wentworth Street in an attempt to curb antisocial behaviour and the effect of drugs on young people—unfortunately a scourge that is plaguing many communities today.

Prostitution is known as one of the oldest professions in the world. However, things are different today, and many of the girls are on the streets not to make a dollar but rather to secure a hit of the drug they need. Many of them have mental health issues and drug and alcohol addictions and are forced onto the streets to feed these addictions or to make ends meet. I think it is appropriate at this time to talk about the mental health problems that affect many in our community.

Whilst this situation is extremely desperate and sad, the people who are dedicated to seeing the town of Port Kembla thrive once more have the right to feel safe at work, on their way home or at home; the right to know that their cars and shopfronts will not be vandalised; and the right to know that men cruising the streets are not chasing away their livelihood. That is why they have banded together and with one voice asked me to take up their issue and their pleas for CCTV cameras to be installed in Wentworth Street. I believe, as do they, that these cameras would deter antisocial behaviour, and in all likelihood deter the "johns" driving up and down Wentworth Street—which just entrenches the bad reputation of the area and makes life very difficult for people struggling to make ends meet.

BATHURST ELECTORATE JOBS

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) [7.02 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak in this House about the number of jobs that have been created in the electorate of Bathurst recently. It has been a fantastic few weeks, and it continued today with the announcement of a Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme [LIRS] grant for works on the Mayfield Road at Oberon. That will help tourism in the area and bring visitors to the region. There will be \$1.6 million for that particular project. I see the member for Campbelltown in the Chamber and I note that an \$8.5 million project has been announced for his electorate.

These projects are happening because this side of the House has created an environment that is allowing investment to occur in regional communities. There has been \$85 million allocated for works on the Great Western Highway, and the roadworks at Kelso are starting tomorrow morning. This area was neglected for nearly two decades—for two decades no money was spent on this section of road. It was too hard. It could not be done. Now we have finished the plans and the design work, and we will see the physical works commencing. This is fantastic for the area. This is a fantastic investment.

In other exciting news, Nestle Purina PetCare today announced the creation of an additional 100 jobs in Blayney, a small town in the Central West. The company has invested \$65 million in upgrading its plant, which has created these additional jobs. Already the factory has had \$100 million invested in it since 2011, making it a state-of-the-art pet food facility. The new facility, officially opened today, will produce "wet" pet food to be sold in pouches in Australia and exported to Japan, China and other countries in Asia. The plant has created 100 new full-time positions on top of the existing 200 employees. The factory has been around since 1989. It is very important to see a business like this continuing to invest in a community like Blayney.

Only last week the Government announced the creation of another 55 jobs at the Office of State Revenue in Lithgow. There are currently 211 employees there, and that figure will now increase to 266—an increase of almost 26 per cent for the workforce of the Office of State Revenue call centre in Lithgow. This is incredibly good news for the community where these additional jobs are being created. It is important for retail

businesses and for the local economy. I know that the 37 people who have been employed in the past fortnight are absolutely over the moon at being able to find employment in the local area and work in the call centre. Another 18 positions are yet to be filled. These 18 positions will be filled in the coming weeks. It is an incredible opportunity for employment in the Lithgow area and it is important for the local economy.

In other good news, last Thursday I went to an official opening at Westfund's head office in Lithgow. It has just spent \$1.5 million refurbishing its main office. This is terrific news. It is important to note that Westfund is based in Lithgow. It has around 80 employees and has been in that community for many years. It has to compete against large private healthcare funds like Bupa. The board and staff have done an incredible amount of good work in that community. They invest back into the community by sponsoring major community events. So this is all exciting news. I know that the Government has many more plans to continue to invest in the electorate of Bathurst, which will continue to see more jobs being created. The economic environment has really turned around in the Central West. The economic environment has turned around in the electorate of Bathurst. We are seeing investment and new jobs being created. And what a great race we saw on the weekend at Mount Panorama. I am sure members enjoyed the fantastic spectacle of racing at Mount Panorama. It is all happening in Bathurst.

ST GREGORY'S COLLEGE CAMPBELLTOWN

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [7.07 p.m.]: "What you sow, so shall you reap", is the motto of St Gregory's College in Campbelltown—that great opal of the south-west and the very best part of the Macarthur region. I recently had the privilege of attending the twenty-first annual St Gregory's College Celebrity Sports Dinner, which is one of the major fundraising events for the college. The event is conducted by the St Gregory's College Foundation, which was established in 1983 to help provide the very best physical and educational environment for students. The foundation is led by a dedicated board of directors which includes Chairman Bruce Hanrahan, Damien Millar the school's principal, Martin Bullock, Jack Hughes, Dugald Powe, Tony Mackey and Mrs Rebecca Purcell.

Usually the event is held in the spacious Brother Luke School Hall. However, due to renovations, this year it was held off site at The Cube at the Campbelltown Catholic Club. This year's event was hosted by Jimmy Smith—a famous old boy of the school, National Rugby League player and rugby league commentator—and Sarah Ryan, OAM, a former Australian sprint freestyle swimmer who won relay medals, including a gold and two silvers, at three consecutive Olympic Games from the 1996 Atlanta Olympics to the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Our special sporting guest for the night was a superstar of Australian football: former Socceroo veteran and all round top bloke Brett Emerton. He played for Sydney FC, Feyenoord Rotterdam, the Blackburn Rovers and the Australian national team. He is the third most capped player for Australia. Able to play as a wide midfielder or defender, Brett Emerton was known for his speed, ball control and creativity. It should be noted that he started his football career with the mighty Ingleburn Gunners Soccer Club, and he also played for the Macarthur Rams Football Club. He is a wonderful inspiration to local footballers at Campbelltown. When asked about the favourite moment of his career, Emerton said that Australia's dramatic qualification for the 2006 FIFA World Cup was one of the undoubted highlights. He said, "To represent your country is something very special and hard to describe to other people. To qualify for the biggest tournament in the world and go there ... was a real honour."

The theme for the night's festivities was recognising local sportspeople who have achieved amazing things in their chosen sporting fields. The sporting alumni of St Greg's is a mixture of sporting celebrities from all codes. Each table hosted a sporting celebrity and at our table we were honoured to have young Abbey McCulloch, the 23-year-old wing defence for our New South Wales Swifts netball team. Abbey is also a well-respected teacher at Leumeah High School. Abbey is a highly accomplished young netball player who, amongst her achievements, has played for the New South Wales Waratahs on 33 occasions and the Queensland Firebirds. She is currently playing for the Swifts. Abbey always dreamed of playing for the Swifts and as a midfield defender she has earned a reputation for being a hard worker who trains as hard as she plays.

A silent auction was held on the evening. Perhaps the hottest item up for bidding was item 3, which was an invitation for four guests to accompany me at lunch in the Strangers Dining Room during a parliamentary sitting week and to experience the wonders of question time. I am looking forward to hosting the lucky winner, Kay Canham, and her friends at Parliament House. St Gregory's College was established in 1926. It focuses on achieving a sense of community, places a special importance on students, and has a committed,

professional and generous staff. It is a place where boys are given the opportunity to develop their strength, talent and character to become great citizens and great men. It is my privilege to support the college and to have attended the twenty-first annual celebrity sports dinner. I wish the college all the best for the future.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [7.11 p.m.]: I thank the member for Campbelltown for his commendation of St Gregory's College and the wonderful work it does. I note the incredible contribution the school has made to the local Campbelltown community and more broadly. I understand that the Minister for Education received his education at St Greg's, about which the people of New South Wales should be very proud.

TRIBUTE TO HAJJ MUSTAFA "MAX" ANNOUS

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [7.12 p.m.]: It is with a great deal of pride and sadness that I pay homage to Hajj Mustafa Annous, a special person in the Canterbury, Lakemba and Bankstown area who passed away on 11 October. I extend my condolences and give my respect to his sons, daughters and Mrs Annous. The Annous family are pillars of our community. Max, as he was known, was one of those people who has been woven into the narrative of modern Australia. Max arrived in Australia from Lebanon in 1967. He worked on the Snowy Mountains hydro and later the New South Wales railways. Never shy of hard work, Max provided for his growing family but was not content only to provide for his family. He saw a need in his new community in Australia. He embraced the ethos of a fair go and extended a helping hand to all.

Max was passionate about children's safety and was well known in Lakemba. He was a notable member not only of the Muslim community but also of the Australian community. One of Max's outstanding attributes was his lifetime commitment to voluntary work. Max joined the Lebanese Muslim Association in 1967. Significantly, that was the same year as the referendum for Aboriginal citizenship. In the 1970s he began helping victims of the war in Lebanon to settle in Australia. Max and his family assisted countless families to find accommodation and to settle into their new country, which they soon called home. Many families will remember how Max made that little bit easier the arduous task of resettling after escaping war and conflict. For many he restored their faith in humanity.

Mr Annous was an incredibly humble man who never sought accolades, but for his selflessness accolades did flow. He was the Canterbury 2006 Senior Citizen of the Year. In 2000 he received the Commonwealth Recognition Award for Senior Australians. In 2003 he was awarded of the Centenary Medal and in 2004 he was awarded the Certificate of Appreciation from the Parliament of New South Wales for his outstanding contribution to the Canterbury-Bankstown community. One of the outstanding things about Mr Annous was his extreme generosity. His life experiences humble us. He raised money for Wiley Park Girls High School, specifically for the volleyball team.

On Saturdays he regularly hosted magnificent roundtable discussions at his dining table with local members of Parliament, mayors, local councillors, religious leaders, police and members of the business community. I had the great privilege of attending some of those roundtable meetings. The food provided by Mrs Annous and her family was magnificent. The discussions were sometimes serious, sometimes lighthearted and always full of love. Max believed sitting down, talking, sharing stories and sharing love was the way forward. Max always believed talking was the way to resolve issues and he put that belief into practice.

In 1987 Mr Annous was a member of the Lebanese Police Consultative Committee. Through this project Max sought to resolve misunderstandings between police and members of the Lebanese community. The results of that work are still evident today. Mr Annous was held in high esteem by local police and played an important liaison role in fostering understanding between police and the Lebanese community. My community of Canterbury is extremely proud of Max Annous. The broader Australian community to which Max and his family have given so much can also be proud.

Max served for many years on the organising committee for the hugely successful Haldon Street Festival. Like Max, the festival is truly a celebration of the beauty of our modern multicultural nation. I extend my condolences to Max's wife and children and I invite the Parliament to join me in paying homage to him. Max Annous was an amazing Australian. His passing is sad but his legacy is joyous. We are all truly poorer for his passing yet blessed by the riches he brought to so many lives.

SUMMER SAFETY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [7.17 p.m.]: With the weather warming up it is clear that summer is well and truly on its way and, with it, the dangers of fire season. The potent mix of prevailing hot,

dry weather and high winds makes the threat of fires across New South Wales very real. My electorate is characterised by pristine bushland with a significant number of residences backing onto the Garigal and Ku-ring-gai national parks. I urge residents to prepare themselves and their homes for the summer season.

Across New South Wales more than 70,000 volunteer firefighters from 2,100 brigades in 143 rural fire districts are operational and ready to fight fires in more than 95 per cent of the State. Their efforts, along with those of emergency personnel from the State Emergency Service [SES] and ambulance services are commendable. I applaud the State's emergency response workers, many of whom reside in my electorate of Davidson. In my electorate I have two resident rural fire brigades, Belrose and Davidson, with a combined membership of 174. The electorate also houses the commendable Belrose ambulance station, which is serviced by the neighbouring SES units of Manly, Warringah-Pittwater and Ku-ring-gai.

Protection is a shared responsibility. While our firefighters and emergency services workers do much to keep the community safe, the community also has a role to play. Whether or not homes back onto bushland, residents can employ simple steps to help protect their families and property from fire. Minimising the impact that the hazards of summer present can be as easy as ensuring that rubbish is removed; leaves are cleared from gutters, roofs and downpipes; screens and shutters are installed to prevent sparks from entering homes; areas of access beneath homes are fireproofed; and the free Bush Fire Survival Plan from the Rural Fire Service is downloaded from its website.

Summer also brings with it other hazards. The heat takes a toll on our bodies and increases the risk of dehydration, particularly for elderly people and children. Fluid intake, especially water, should be increased. People should opt for lighter clothing, take cool showers if needed, and wherever possible stay in air-conditioned or cool areas. Residents should remember to adopt a slip, slop, slap mentality. Sun protection is not just about being lathered in sunscreen when we head to the beach. Up to 80 per cent of ultraviolet radiation can penetrate through light cloud cover, so even if the sun is not shining directly people can be quite exposed. It is wise to limit sun exposure during the hottest hours of the day, which are between 11.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m.

Over the summer months, with many families heading to the beaches and pools to cool down, drowning is a real risk to children. Recently I attended the official Raising of the Flag ceremony to mark the start of the New South Wales Surf Life Saving season at the North Steyne Surf Life Saving Club. I am fortunate to have the headquarters of this movement in my electorate in Belrose. Parents should maintain a watchful eye, keep younger children clear of deeper waters and unsupervised pools, and limit beach swimming to between the flags. But even in the most carefully supervised situations accidents can occur, which means that parents should brief themselves on basic resuscitation techniques. By planning ahead and with a little care, we can all have a wonderful summer season. I hope we all do.

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order matter of public importance proceeded with.

CARERS WEEK

Matter of Public Importance

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [7.22 p.m.]: I certainly consider it an honour to bring to the House this evening this matter of public importance to recognise the more than 857,000 carers in New South Wales. We all understand that during our lifetime many of us in this Chamber and in the other place are likely to be a carer for a family member or friend, or in fact may require care ourselves. I have certainly undertaken that role and considered it a privilege to do so and, like other carers, I did it unconditionally—with passion, with sincerity and with love.

My parents, John and Alison, continue to be carers. There are no words to describe their unwavering devotion, their dedication and their commitment to ensuring that my brother, Phillip, has the best possible opportunities in his lifetime. My experience has taught me that carers like my parents are simply extraordinary people. When I hear of their stories and the challenges they face and then of the scope of their involvement in the lives of individuals and the broader community, I simply listen in awe. I refer to my inaugural speech in this House some 3½ years ago when I spoke about my mother and my father so that members may then understand, as I do, the calibre of these carers:

... there are no words to describe the pivotal role she [my mother] has played in so many people's lives. Her nurturing role extended much further than our household—for some 25 years she devoted many hours of service to our isolated community as a

volunteer ambulance officer. I grew up with two sisters and one brother, but that is the simple description of our family unit. The door of our home was always open—to friends, family and neighbours. Some stayed for a cuppa, to catch up on news, to get some advice or to garner support; others stayed for years.

They came to live with us so they could have a better start in life, get a better education, or just because they were in need of a place that provided love, care or stability. And while providing so much love to so many people, my parents have also provided 24-hour care for my brother, Phillip, who was born with cerebral palsy. [Fifty] years ago there were no respite houses or group homes, little financial support from the Government, and certainly no support networks for carers—we all grew up as carers and today I am a better person for it. When my first child, Ben, was born in Alice Springs my only wish was that I could be half the parents they were.

During my time as the local member for Port Macquarie I have met some equally amazing carers and so this week we should all take the opportunity to celebrate each and every one of them. Carers Week, which is celebrated across the nation, provides us with this opportunity to support and recognise the more than 857,000 carers in New South Wales and the some 2.7 million carers across Australia, who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends. They may care for someone who has a disability, a mental illness, a chronic condition, a terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue, or who are frail aged. This equates to nearly one in 10 people who are looking after a family member or a friend. Significantly, it is estimated that more than 100,000 carers in New South Wales are younger than 25 years.

In 2010, it was estimated that, without carers, it would cost taxpayers around \$40 billion to replace the unpaid work they provide. I am really proud to be a part of this Government that is acknowledging this work that carers do. I acknowledge the Minister for Ageing, the Hon. John Ajaka, and his commitment to ensuring that carers of all ages and backgrounds are supported. This is demonstrated by the launch in August of the New South Wales Carers Strategy, which has been endorsed by the Minister. It is a five-year plan that outlines the priorities and shared vision of our community with the aim of improving the position of carers in this State. As Minister Ajaka highlighted in the foreword, the Carers Strategy builds on what the New South Wales Government already is doing to raise awareness and recognition of the challenges that carers face, and complements reforms in the areas of disability, mental health and ageing.

The strategy focuses on five key areas: employment and education, carer health and wellbeing; information and community awareness, carer engagement, and improving the evidence base. It works towards positive and, I believe, certainly achievable outcomes for carers, including carers having choices and opportunities to participate in paid work and young carers having the opportunity to complete school and transition to further education and employment; carers experiencing good health and wellbeing; carers being able to easily access information when they need it; and, importantly, carers feeling that the broader community understands their experience. Of course, carers must be involved in decisions that affect them and the people who they care for. The outcomes represent goals that we should all be striving to achieve. As members of Parliament, I think we can work towards achieving those goals.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [7.27 p.m.]: I join with the member for Port Macquarie in celebrating carers in New South Wales. I say to the member for Port Macquarie that I think she is very blessed to have grown up in the family she grew up in. I could see by her speech how deeply it has affected her and how much it has meant to her. In the limited time available for my speech, I will concentrate on young carers. The member for Port Macquarie alerted us to the fact that there are more than 800,000 carers in New South Wales, which is a significant number, and that 100,000 of those are under 25 years of age. Last week I had the wonderful experience of going to the Redfern Community Centre and sitting down with a group of young Aboriginal women, all of whom had caring responsibilities. Many of them had informal caring responsibilities. I think it is important during this discussion to recognise that there are formal arrangements for carers but that many carers' arrangements are informal.

I suspect that if we closely examined this issue, we would find many of the members in this Chamber, including those who are present this evening, have been carers in their lives. It is one of the wonderful things about our community that whether it is our daughter, our aged parents, our nieces or nephews, or our neighbours who have some challenges, we all have that capacity for caring, whether it is formal or informal caring. While I was sitting with those young women at The Block in Redfern—many of whom were as young as 15—they said that they had become carers for their siblings and that many of them had become carers for extended family.

It is important to acknowledge that often an enormous amount of sacrifice comes with caring. One might have one's schooling interrupted or one's relationships put on hold because the primary thing in one's life is providing care. I got the impression from many of those young girls that they knew that caring was

the right thing for them to do, but that it was also a very challenging thing for them to do. I said to them not to be resentful that this had happened in their lives because, in the long run, it would make them stronger and more compassionate people, and that is what we heard from the member for Port Macquarie tonight.

I know that Acting-Speaker Hay will know young people who care for elderly parents in her electorate. It is in many ways part of the cycle of life. We all know the great work our foster carers do in supporting children who cannot live with their parents safely. We often do not hear about the very young school-aged children who are carers. Just last week I met a 14-year-old boy who was keeping his family together—his mum was struggling in many ways. He was the oldest of the children and I thought that he was the bravest young man I had met for a long time. I feel sure that members will have experienced similar situations in their electorate offices.

In research undertaken in 2001, Carers Australia found that only 4 per cent of young carers aged 15 to 25 were participating in the education system, compared with 23 per cent of the general population. I think that is an important point for us to keep in mind. Carers Australia also reports that it was not because young carers did not place value or importance on having an education, rather their ability to engage with education was affected by their responsibilities at home. I saw that situation in my electorate this week and I know that I am not unique in that experience. While I was looking through the information put out by the Young Carer Network a comment struck me. It was from a 17-year-old male carer, who said:

Kids who have caring responsibilities—they have to drop out sometimes. It's not "I don't want to go to school any more", but it's "I just can't".

I am happy to join with the member for Port Macquarie in speaking on this matter of public importance. It is a significant issue for all of us in the community.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [7.32 p.m.]: It gives me pleasure to speak about Carers Week. Carers are among the unsung heroes in our communities. Everywhere we go and everywhere we speak to people, carers will be among those in attendance. I congratulate the member for Port Macquarie on bringing Carers Week to the attention of the House this evening. I hark back to a couple of my relatives—uncle Charlie and aunty Mima. They had a son who was born with a forceps delivery that unfortunately crushed his head. He became a severely handicapped person who was not expected to live more than a couple of months. Thirty-two years later he passed away. Geoffrey ate very well through a tube and thrived for 32 years. However, Charlie had to lift him in and out of the car—he became a broken man. After Geoffrey died, uncle Charlie lasted only another three months before he passed away, leaving an empty space in aunty Mima's life.

In my community we have many support people and organisations that support carers. Some carers did not plan on being a carer. My father was a carer for my mother, who suffers from dementia. He said that he would never pass away before my mother, but he did. Dad spent every single moment of the daylight hours with mum, holding her hand and spending his time with her. At one stage I said to him, "Dad, you're going to bring about your own end by spending so much time with mum. She doesn't really know you're here." He said, "I have spent 54 years with this woman and that is what she deserves." After dad passed away mum went into a nursing home where we go to visit her.

I congratulate the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Canterbury on highlighting the issue of carers in our community. We need to thank those carers in our midst. It could be us, our brothers and sisters, our aunts and uncles or our neighbours who end up being a carer. We should be aware of the impact that has on the lives of people and of the people for whom they care.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [7.35 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Canterbury for being a part of the discussion this evening and for joining with me and with the member for Heathcote in acknowledging our wonderful carers. It was great that the member for Canterbury was able to share her recent meeting with the young Aboriginal carers in Redfern. I am amazed when I hear of the challenges carers face and I am sure the member for Canterbury was a little in awe and inspired by their stories. From personal experience I agree that carers develop many strong characteristics—compassion, responsibility and dedication, to name a few. If one never experiences being a carer one will not have the opportunity to develop those characteristics to their maximum or reach one's potential. I thank the member for Heathcote for sharing his story of his uncle Charlie, aunty Mima and his nephew Geoffrey. The fact that we all have personal experiences shows that there are many carers in the community.

I finish by acknowledging a carers group in my community of Port Macquarie and an initiative they took last year. During Carers Week last year I had the privilege of launching a wonderful book the group wrote called the *Carer Profile Project*. Carers were encouraged to write their stories and to consider their own needs as they cared for other people, whether they were family or friends. The idea of creating a book of carer profiles came from Jan Dennis. She is a carer whom I consider a friend. Jan cares for her husband, Jules, who fell downstairs in 2001 and hit his head. He was left with an acquired brain injury. I will finish by reading a couple of quotes from the book.

On the day of his injury, my old life ended and my new life as a carer began, adding that nothing in my safe, happy life up until that point prepared me for what was ahead.

She goes on to say:

We have all heard about other people who face enormous adversity and dig deep to find strength and determination in a crisis, but that sort of thing never happens to people like me ... but it did.

When she talks about planning for the future she writes:

Just getting through each week is a challenge and I am fearful of planning ahead as things can and often do change in a heartbeat which results in disappointment.

I congratulate Jan Dennis. I also want to mention Dawn Davies, the convenor of that carers group. I do not think they understand the positive impact they have on the lives of carers in the group by providing an opportunity for support, socialisation and friendship.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): I thank the member for Port Macquarie for bringing the attention of the House to such a worthy cause and for giving recognition to such worthwhile people. Where would we be as a society without all those wonderful carers?

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.39 p.m. until
Wednesday 15 October 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**
