

AUSTRALIAN CELTIC FESTIVAL	1308
BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION AMENDMENT (CHANGE OF SEX) BILL 2014	1285
BOWRAL HOSPITAL 125TH ANNIVERSARY	1349
BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS	1341
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	1283, 1283
CALTEX REFINERY	1358
CAMPBELLTOWN ACADEMIC CHALLENGE	1352
CARDIFF RAILWAY STATION	1348
CENTRAL COAST DIVISION JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE AWARDS	1359
CHANGING PLACES TOILETS	1355
COFFEE WITH A COP	1353
COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY	1331
COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION	1312
COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION AND THE CRIME COMMISSION	1311
COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM	1362
COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS	1348
CRIMES (HIGH RISK OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL 2014	1283
CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014	1283
CRIMINAL RECORDS AMENDMENT (HISTORICAL HOMOSEXUAL OFFENCES) BILL 2014	1293
DEATH OF MAURICE FRANCIS KEANE, A FORMER MEMBER FOR WORONORA	1317
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR	1317
DR ROBERT HERD, PRINCIPAL RESEARCH SCIENTIST	1349
EAST MAITLAND COURT HOUSE CRIMINAL HEARINGS	1304
GARETH MCCRAY, RADIO 2CH ANNOUNCER	1352
GRAND FIESTA KULTURA	1361
HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (AMBULANCE FEES) BILL 2014	1283
HUNTER ARTS AND CULTURE	1321
HUNTER INFRASTRUCTURE	1319
HUNTER JOBS	1329
HUNTER SCHOOLS	1326
HUNTER TRANSPORT	1323
INDIA INDEPENDENCE DAY 2014	1348
KAHAWATI MEDICAL AND PHARMACY CENTRE	1351
LEADER OF THE NATIONALS	1317
LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE	1315
LIVERPOOL WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE	1360
LOCAL GOVERNMENT MAYORAL ELECTIONS	1352
MARINE ESTATE MANAGEMENT BILL 2014	1335
MEDICINAL CANNABIS	1354
MEMBER FOR MIRANDA RETIREMENT	1363
MONEY STUFF CHALLENGE	1349
MORISSET TO WYONG HOSPITAL BUS SERVICE	1327
MOUNT DRUITT TOWN RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB	1350
NATHAN RILEY AND INDIGENOUS MARATHON PROJECT	1351
NEWCASTLE INNER-CITY RAIL CORRIDOR PRESERVATION BILL 2014	1283
NOWRA-BOMADERRY JETS GRAND FINAL VICTORY	1351
ODYSSEY HOUSE	1362
ORANGE NATIONAL HOCKEY CHAMPIONS	1351
PETITIONS	1331
POLITICAL DONATIONS	1318, 1321, 1323, 1325
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	1353
PUBLIC LIBRARIES	1345
QUESTION TIME	1318
REGIONAL RELOCATION GRANTS AMENDMENT BILL 2014	1339
RURAL FIRE SERVICE CADETS	1350
SOUTH SYDNEY RABBITOHS	1356
STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES PRIVATISATION	1328, 1330
SUTHERLAND SHIRE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION	1351

TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT (FEES) BILL 2014	1287
THE SHOPFRONT YOUTH LEGAL CENTRE.....	1349
TRIBUTE TO ERNEST "SOLLY" STEPHENS, OAM	1350
TRIBUTE TO GAYLE FROST	1349
VISITORS	1317
WATER NSW BILL 2014	1333
WHITE BAY CRUISESHIP TERMINAL NOISE POLLUTION.....	1350
WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE	1353
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP	1357
WOOLLAHRA PUBLIC SCHOOL ART SHOW.....	1352

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 16 October 2014

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

CRIMES (HIGH RISK OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL 2014

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (AMBULANCE FEES) BILL 2014

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion, by leave, by Mr Alex Greenwich agreed to:

That, on Thursday 16 October 2014, standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the consideration of the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014 and the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014 to take precedence of all General Business Orders of the Day (for Bills) and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices).

NEWCASTLE INNER-CITY RAIL CORRIDOR PRESERVATION BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Piper, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [10.07 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Having observed the debate on the Newcastle heavy rail line truncation and spoken to many people on the subject over a long period, I felt the compelling need to introduce the Newcastle Inner-City Rail Corridor Preservation Bill 2014. The object of this bill is to preserve the Newcastle inner-city rail corridor for the purposes of public open space, passive recreational activities or public transport after the heavy rail line that currently occupies the corridor is removed. On 14 December 2012 the State Government announced that the rail line into the Newcastle central business district would be cut at Wickham, which is approximately 2.5 kilometres west of the current terminus, and that the section to be removed would be replaced by a light rail service into the city.

In May this year the Government announced its chosen route for the new light rail service. This route is a hybrid of the two original options, which travels partly along the existing heavy rail corridor before deviating into the nearby Hunter Street and then into Scott Street to complete the journey to the east end of the city. The option was introduced late into the debate and bewildered urban and transport planners as to why it would deviate off a dedicated adjacent and existing corridor. Understandably it created much conjecture within the community about the prospect for future development of this land. The community has become increasingly suspicious of the motives behind the choice of the hybrid route over the original stated plan for light rail, which was to run the service along the existing corridor.

The corridor is believed to be largely free of the undermining issues that complicate building projects in much of the inner city and is a tract of land that no doubt developers would love to get their hands on. The support of pro-development interests, including support from the former Lord Mayor and the Hunter Chapter of the Property Council of Australia, for a light rail option that leaves all or the greater part of the corridor open has heightened concerns about the land being used for residential or commercial development once the heavy rail line has been removed. The Minister for Planning gave weight to speculation of this nature when she confirmed to 1223 ABC Newcastle in June that some development was anticipated on the heavy rail corridor. She said:

This is all subject to further consultation with the business community, with residents, with people who commute to the city, but I think you would be unsurprised to think we would probably end up with a combination of public space and some development.

With respect to the Minister, I understand the comment was made very early in her new role. I acknowledge her comments that were quoted in the *Newcastle Herald* several days later when she stated that a conspiracy between developers and the Government was ludicrous. She said:

It makes no sense to take down the dingo fence and replace it with a Berlin Wall of buildings.

She added:

It would go against the entire logic of the urban renewal strategy, and contradict the understanding we have with the community.

Despite this apparent softening of stance, the Government has consistently refused since then to categorically rule out development on the heavy rail corridor post-truncation. Further, comments made by the planning department to a series of questions put by the *Guardian* and published on 22 September suggest that development of part of the corridor is now squarely on the agenda. The department was asked what sort of development proposals the Government would consider for the rail corridor and it confirmed that UrbanGrowth NSW was considering uses that support housing and jobs. It further stated:

Some areas of rail land are degraded and are located between buildings and are perhaps best suited to uses other than public open space.

When asked further whether there were any types of developments that would not be considered, the department declined once again to take the opportunity to rule out housing and commercial development. Its answer, which was evasive, is as follows:

UrbanGrowth is considering all development that is compatible with surrounding land use and is consistent with the jobs and housing targets set in the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy.

There is strong community support for the corridor to be quarantined from high-rise or medium-density development and instead be dedicated for open space and recreational use. I believe this outcome is consistent with the Government's previously stated intentions for the land but it is not clearly articulated in the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy. The introduction of this bill endeavours to end the conjecture once and for all to ensure that the inner-city rail corridor in Newcastle is preserved for open space and passive recreational uses. The bill also provides that if there is a change of heart now or in the future about removing the heavy rail line or routing the light rail down Hunter Street, the land can continue to be used for public transport. The bill deals with the parcel of land between Wickham station and Newcastle station terminus, which is owned by RailCorp and is currently occupied by the electrified heavy rail line and associated infrastructure. It encompasses the length of rail line spanned by Wickham, Civic and Newcastle railway stations.

The corridor is bound by Stewart Avenue—or the A43 as it is known by Roads and Maritime Services—at the western end and Watt Street at the eastern end. The corridor is currently enclosed by fencing, apart from the level crossing at Merewether Street just east of Civic station. The bill will prevent high-rise or medium-density development on the corridor and will allow only limited infrastructure associated with the specified land uses. The term "open space" in the bill refers to areas not built upon and includes parklands and gardens, pedestrian paths and walkways, cycleways and squares or playgrounds. The term "passive recreational use" allows for facilities such as bike hire stations, outdoor exercise stations, public seating and small-scale infrastructure such as kiosks, cafes and other amenities related to the allowable land uses.

Uses or development that will not be permitted on the corridor include high-rise or medium-density buildings, residential accommodation, commercial sports centres or gymnasiums and commercial premises of

any kind other than those relating to passive recreational use. The bill expressly forbids the construction of any building of a size or nature that would preclude reinstatement of public transport along that corridor. The bill makes Newcastle City Council the consent authority for any development of the land and prohibits any development carried out on the corridor from being declared State significant infrastructure under part 5.1 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Newcastle is undergoing significant change. Much of the talk around the revitalisation has been about poor building, shopping centres and exclusive apartments. The bill brings some balance to that conversation. A green corridor along the existing inner-city heavy rail route would be a fantastic community asset for Newcastle and an attraction for tourists and residents of the region. It could be a venue for markets and festivals. It is also in line with the aims of the Cyclesafe Newcastle Network Proposal, a well-supported local campaign that aims to promote a safe network for dedicated cyclepaths across the region. The people of Newcastle support the corridor being retained for public open space and passive recreation. Each time this issue arises in the local media, feedback from readers and listeners is overwhelmingly in favour of the land use this bill will enshrine in legislation.

I am happy to introduce this bill to the Parliament on behalf of the people of Newcastle, who are currently without representation in this place. In doing so, I act also on behalf of the people of my electorate and other electorates in the Hunter. Newcastle is the centre of a vibrant and interconnected region. It is not a silo that exists and operates only for the benefit of those who live within the electorate or its local government boundaries. People in the Hunter have a stake in the revitalisation of Newcastle and people throughout the region want to see the heavy rail corridor retained as a public asset. Opinions vary on whether the rail line should be cut or whether light rail is the best solution to inner-city public transport needs. On the matter of preserving the corridor for open space and public use, the regional voice is almost unanimous, with the obvious exception of the pro-development lobby.

If the rail line is cut and light rail is successfully implemented in Newcastle and its immediate suburbs the availability of the rail corridor land for use as described in this bill would give Newcastle an opportunity to have open space and an aesthetic appeal rivalling great cities in Australia and around the world. It would be a bastard act to lose that opportunity or to steal the opportunity for future Novacastrians to adopt emergent public transport options that serve only short-term interests. I am pleased to commend the bill to the House. I look forward to cross-partisan support for a proposal that is certainly in line with the type of rhetoric and statements that preceded the final decision to truncate the heavy rail line in Newcastle.

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

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION AMENDMENT (CHANGE OF SEX) BILL 2014

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

Second Reading

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.20 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Change of Sex) Bill 2014 would allow married persons who have undergone sex affirmation surgery to update their birth certificates to correctly reflect their sex without divorcing. It is vital that the Births, Deaths and Marriages register is accurate. The State should hold correct personal documentation of its citizens and all citizens should be able to access an accurate birth certificate. Birth certificates are used by employers for police checks and they are used to access services and benefits. Negative consequences result from having a birth certificate that does not correctly reflect one's sex.

The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995 only allows a person to change his or her sex on the Births, Deaths and Marriages Register following gender transitional surgery if that person is not married. This forces trans* people who have had sex affirmation surgery to choose between having a correct birth certificate and staying married to their lifelong partner who has supported them through their transition. This is untenable; it poses a challenging and unfair decision for married couples. An incorrect birth certificate means

disclosing one's former gender when applying for a job and having difficulty accessing medical services. Trans* people often experience discrimination and stigma and it should be their choice who they inform about the deeply personal matter of their transition.

The trans* community is a minority group with alarmingly high attempted suicide rates. An incorrect birth certificate will only contribute to feelings of isolation and social rejection. But divorce is also an undesirable option. Why should a couple divorce when they are in a loving and supportive relationship? Marriage exists to protect and support relationships that provide stability and belonging for the people involved, which is vital to a person who is undergoing gender transition. Divorce involves massive financial and emotional burdens on a couple. Divorce is not free. It must be justified to the courts and the process involves extensive amounts of paperwork. We should not force a couple in a loving and supportive relationship to choose between divorce and an accurate birth certificate. This bill would remove this choice and allow a married person who has undergone sex affirmation surgery to change his or her sex on the Births, Deaths and Marriages Register.

Some members will be concerned that this bill will allow for same-sex marriage; it does not. The bill is constitutional. The Marriage Act 1961 deals with the solemnisation of marriages in Australia, which only permits the marriage between a man and a woman. This bill will have no impact on this. The Marriage Act is not concerned with what happens between a couple after solemnisation. Furthermore, where a married person has undergone a transition his or her marriage is a same-sex marriage irrespective of what is reflected on the register. It is up to State law to ensure that the register is correct. This bill will not affect a large number of people but it is crucial to those it does.

On 1 March the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the case of Elisabeth White and her wife Lisa. They married 22 years ago and have children together. Elisabeth began her transition in 2010 and wants to update her birth certificate. They do not want to divorce but this would mean Elisabeth will have to reveal her personal, medical and emotional history to future employers. That is unfair. The *Sydney Morning Herald* also published a *Washington Post* article on 20 August about Leslie and Deborah who married 23 years ago when Deborah was called David. The decision for David to transition to Deborah was made as a couple and the two remain together.

Many couples stay together after one person transitions and the law should protect the vital emotional support that comes from this union. Forcing divorce upon these couples shows no respect for the sanctity of marriage. I recently met with JoAnna Ferrari, who joins us in the gallery today, who shared with me the different journeys people transitioning gender go through. Of the 200 people she has interviewed, around 80 per cent stay attracted to the same gender they were attracted to before transitioning. For every person the journey is different and the law should not interfere in this cruel way. Australian Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson, speaking to the *Star Observer*, said:

Forced divorce is one of the worst and most egregious ways government can impose itself inside people's relationships.

Gary D Bouma, AM, Associate Priest of St Johns Anglican Parish in Victoria and Professor of Sociology at Monash University, in a letter to the Premier stated:

I know of several loving couples who have made this journey together and whose love and commitment to each other is exemplary. This is not a decision that is made lightly or for frivolous reasons and for the relationship to survive and thrive through such a trial is deep testimony to precisely the commitment honoured in their original marriage and which should be continued to be honoured as marriage as they go forward together in life.

Kelly Glanney from Carmen Rouse Memorial Trust, who also joins us in the gallery today, told me:

No civilised society should require any human being to make this kind of deeply distressing choice—let alone members of a highly marginalised, historically persecuted minority which still experiences unacceptably high rates of self-harm, social exclusion and mental illness.

Kelly has also stressed to me the need for future trans* law reform. She has drawn my attention to the World Health Organization interagency statement titled "Eliminating forced, coercive and otherwise involuntary sterilisation". We need to fully protect trans* people under State antidiscrimination law. There is an immediate need to reform State gender identity laws and allow all transgender people to change their birth certificates to recognise the gender they identify with without being compelled to undergo expensive, invasive surgery, as is now the case in the Australian Capital Territory.

Many trans* people neither want nor require surgery to alter their bodies. Surgical status does not define transgender people. Some people transition through hormone therapy. Some people were born with both male and female attributes and may dispute the sex assigned to them by doctors when they are in adulthood. In fact, advocates tell me that intersex infants can be subject to uncomfortable and invasive tests to determine a sex for their birth certificate because it cannot be changed later in life. The law's restriction on who can change the sex on their birth certificate to those who have had surgery fails to include the vast array of transitions that occur. I call on a future Parliament to amend this anomaly, which is something I am committed to working towards.

The need for this bill and future trans* law reform is clearly demonstrated by one of my constituents, Brianna, who also joins us in the gallery. Brianna has partial androgen insensitivity syndrome and her body is naturally converting testosterone to oestrogen, transitioning her from male to female. Brianna, previously Brian, has never been attracted to men and still is not. Brianna is happily married to her wife. For Brianna's identity documents to reflect the gender that she has now accepted, the law requires her to have unnecessary and invasive surgery and then divorce her partner. Couples like Brianna and her wife are the reason why this and further trans* law reform is so important.

Marriage provides many journeys and where love persists we should protect those marriages. This bill will remove forced divorce provisions from our laws so that married transgender people can update their details on the Births, Deaths and Marriages Register without having to divorce their lifelong partner. The bill also has the support of the Inner City Legal Centre, the Gender Centre, the Carmen Roupe Memorial Trust, Australian Marriage Equality, the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and Transgender Victoria. In closing, I thank Dr Mehreen Faruqi, MLC, from The Greens. We have worked closely together on this bill and this morning she has introduced an identical bill in the other place. We are both committed to trans* law reform and will continue to work on this together in the future. I commend the bill to the House.

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

TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT (FEES) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 18 September 2014.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [10.30 a.m.]: I speak on the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to freeze at 2014 levels the maximum fees chargeable by the Technical and Further Education Commission, or TAFE Commission, for its courses. The fees will remain subject to indexation for inflation. The bill will preserve existing fee waivers, exemptions and concessions. Since those opposite came to Government they have attacked the education system at every turn. We have seen \$1.7 billion cut from education and training, English as a Second Language [ESL] support officers in head office scrapped, TAFE courses closed, fees increased, and TAFE teachers sacked. The Coalition Government failed to stand up to Tony Abbott, who announced in the Federal budget a further \$10 billion cut to New South Wales schools funding.

Those opposite have failed to stand up for our education system. In fact, they appear to be proud of the cuts that have been made to the education sector. The proposed amendments in this bill will ensure that a total exemption will still apply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to students with a disability. Additionally, a total exemption for special access courses will still be in place. Ever-increasing fees at TAFE will result in tertiary education for those who have the money but no further tertiary education for those who cannot afford it. As a result, those without money behind them will not be able to afford to study and receive formal qualifications. They will be left out and will have to fend for themselves. This will promote a clear distinction between those with and those without and will halt any chance of those without rising up and taking charge in a learned career.

TAFE has always been an institution where anyone and everyone, no matter who they are, can study, obtain a qualification and build a career in the profession of their choosing without requiring a huge bank account. Young, struggling students are doing it tough enough without being forced into debt for half of their lives and being locked out of the chance to own their own home due to obscenely high fees. At this rate, the great Australian dream will never become a reality for today's youth. State and Federal governments are

systematically destroying our education system. As a former teacher, I know the importance and value of education. The Federal Government's broken promises on the Gonski reforms and its attack on university fees are unjust and do nothing to help the struggling youth of today to secure the skills and education they require to get a foothold on life and prepare for a future career. The Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. John Robertson, when speaking on the issue of rising youth unemployment, said:

Last week many people were concerned to see the statewide unemployment rate rise to 5.9 per cent—the highest rate since the global financial crisis.

But it is the youth unemployment rate across New South Wales that is truly shocking. The rate of people aged between 15 years and 24 years who are out of a job is 17 per cent in Parramatta; 16 per cent in Blacktown; and 15 per cent in south-western Sydney. Further out of Sydney, we see unemployment rates of 16 per cent in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven; 13 per cent in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie; and 11 per cent in the Richmond-Tweed area; as well as double-digit youth unemployment rates in New England, the Far West, the Central Coast and the Mid North Coast.

The Leader of the Opposition then posed a question to Premier Mike Baird:

What kind of government decides to cut funding to TAFE in the middle of a youth unemployment crisis?

The fee increases have made TAFE courses unaffordable for many, particularly in the Western Sydney and south-western Sydney regions. How does this Government expect to tackle youth unemployment rates when it makes it so much harder for our youth to gain the skills required to land a job? The South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE is crumbling due to this Government's attack on education, with its students being required to travel further to study due to course closures at their local TAFEs. Just the other week 92 teachers were sacked at the South Western Sydney Institute. This is the institute at which I trained from 1998 to 2001 in preparation for the new Higher School Certificate in 2001.

TAFE offered me and my Technological and Applied Studies [TAS] colleagues the chance to be accredited to teach vocational education and training [VET] courses in building and construction and to obtain a certificate IV in workplace assessment. My TAFE story is as a professional seeking further accreditation to help students in south-west Sydney achieve their certificates I and II in building and construction. My personal story at TAFE is but one; many others have taken similar steps in order to progress, retrain and fundamentally improve their qualifications to ensure they are trained to the highest standard and able to deliver the best they can in their given profession.

Fairfield has the highest number of refugees and asylum seekers in the State. What chance do these people have to gain formal qualifications and education when the Government increases fees exorbitantly and closes courses or transfers them elsewhere? The very support and outreach available to these communities is being dismantled, and the Coalition just does not care. Teachers teach and support staff provide guidance. It is simple to figure out why both of these roles are so important. Yet the Government struggles to grasp this concept and it continues to take away the very pillars these migrants require in order to succeed within our education system. I wholeheartedly support TAFE and I commend the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this important matter forward. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [10.37 a.m.]: I support the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014 proposed by the Leader of the Opposition. I support the Technical and Further Education [TAFE] institutes in New South Wales and appreciate the opportunity to make a brief contribution to this debate. This bill will cap fee increases for government-subsidised TAFE courses to no more than the consumer price index. Current arrangements for fee waivers, exemptions and concessions will continue to apply. The approach of New South Wales Labor to our vocational education and training system stands in stark contrast to that of the New South Wales Liberals. Labor never did this; we never gutted TAFE. The Government has sacked TAFE workers and cut TAFE services and funding.

The Government's budget for this year predicts that 23,000 fewer students will be enrolled in TAFE next year. The Government's agenda to drive a stake through the heart of TAFE services in New South Wales is plain to see in my electorate. My electorate has three TAFE campuses at Shellharbour, Yallah and Dapto. The Dapto TAFE campus is being starved to death and hollowed out. It is a deliberate policy by the management of the Illawarra Institute of TAFE and this Government to run down this campus. The only problem is that the Government and the management of the Illawarra Institute of TAFE are too gutless to explain why they are deliberately undermining the Dapto TAFE campus.

The Dapto TAFE campus is located in the Dapto central business district, the heart of a growing population at Dapto, Tallawarra, West Dapto and Yallah. In the next couple of years up to 1,000 additional

housing lots will pop up like mushrooms across the suburb of Tallawarra; an additional 3,000 to 4,000 residents will live there. The commercial land now being developed across West Dapto, mainly for logistics businesses, will offer new forms of employment for many young people in the growth industry of freight. Yet this Government is so short-sighted that instead of investing in the Dapto TAFE campus to offer new education and vocational opportunities in this growth industry, it is slowly strangling the TAFE campus to death.

When the former Labor Government left office nearly 700 students were enrolled at Dapto TAFE. In 2012 the number halved to 348. I have been trying to obtain updated figures, which I am told are still unavailable for 2013 and this year. I have placed questions on notice to the Minister and I hope these vital statistics will be supplied soon. Similarly, staff numbers have fallen from 111 staff in 2010 to just 89 in 2013. Earlier this year the Premier visited Albion Park Rail to jump around and race go-carts. Less than 20 kilometres away, nearly 50 students from Dapto TAFE stood outside their campus to protest that their TAFE was being attacked.

I have had meetings with Illawarra Institute of TAFE officials to discuss my concerns about the future of Dapto TAFE. I know these officials are dedicated to TAFE in the region but they are being forced to implement the Government's so-called Smart and Skilled policy. It is obvious from their body language that they are uncomfortable about having to justify this policy and the cuts to TAFE education that they are being forced to implement. In the end we only get spin from voodoo public relations bureaucrats trying to convince us that falling student and falling staff numbers mean that TAFE is stronger and better than ever.

I will stop nagging this Government about the future of Dapto TAFE when student numbers increase and staff numbers do the same. I have a real concern that the Dapto TAFE campus will be closed and its land sold off. That is the true agenda behind the Government's cuts to Dapto TAFE. New South Wales Labor will invest in TAFE services and its staff. TAFE is a valuable institution. I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Minister for Education and Training have pledged that Labor will establish a comprehensive review of the vocational education system in New South Wales.

There is no more important value for the Australian Labor Party than equality of opportunity for all. We know that members opposite do not believe in this eternally enduring value. We believe that education is the stepping stone to aspiration and lifelong learning. That is why Labor governments have always invested in education from cradle to grave. We built early childhood education centres and created child care opportunities. We established the blueprints for fairer school education funding, from Whitlam's Karmel report to Gonski. We built the TAFE system in New South Wales and increased university places. New South Wales Labor will always stand up for TAFE and education from cradle to grave. I commend the bill to the House and indicate my strong support for it.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [10.43 a.m.]: I realise that we are trying to wrap up the debate on the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014 so I will make my contribution brief. I note the irony of the member for Kiama sitting in this Chamber and not defending TAFE. I have with me statistics that rank the number of persons with trade qualifications by electorate according to the 2011 census. Which member's electorate has one of the top 10 populations with a trade qualification? At number nine out of 93 electorates in New South Wales is Kiama, so I would have thought that the member for Kiama might have defended TAFE in this place. One thing is certain about charging higher TAFE fees: it creates a barrier to participation. It does that by increasing the finances required to go to TAFE.

At number one on the ranking list is the Cessnock electorate. Cessnock has the highest number of people in this State with a trade qualification and what is happening to the Cessnock TAFE campus at the moment is appalling. For the past three years there has been almost no advertising or promotion of TAFE in my electorate. Less than 60 per cent of the Cessnock population is connected to the internet. Members opposite might think that is funny, but the reality is that the only way to enrol in TAFE now is online. That decision of members opposite has immediately excluded 40 per cent of the population of Cessnock from accessing TAFE.

Mr David Elliott: You don't have libraries in Cessnock?

Mr CLAYTON BARR: In his wit and wisdom the member for Baulkham Hills has suggested that people go to libraries. If he knew anything about regional New South Wales he would understand that it is not possible for most people to access a library at a city or major centre. They cannot get to a centre to attend a library in order to access the internet. That is the type of small-minded thinking that has led members opposite to oppose this bill. Members on the other side of the Chamber simply do not get it. They do not understand.

They are primarily white Anglo-Saxon males who have done very well in their lives. They have gone to private schools and then off to university and done incredibly well for themselves. They do not understand the plight of people in regional New South Wales.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: I take offence at what the member for Cessnock has said. The member for Cessnock is straying from the leave of the bill. He is attacking people from regional New South Wales and not being truthful in what he is saying.

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

Mr CLAYTON BARR: The point of this bill is to make TAFE accessible. That is what it is all about. Members on this side of the Chamber will proudly support this bill because we want TAFE to be available and accessible. Members on the other side of the Chamber will oppose this bill because they have got no sense.

Mr John Williams: What about the fee increases when you were in government? They were 11 per cent.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: The member for Murray-Darling has the audacity to interject when he knows better than most people in this Chamber the challenges presented by geographical distance from educational institutions. Let me tell a story about TAFE and the new Leader of the The Nationals, who represents the city and electorate of Dubbo. Dubbo TAFE recently shut down some of its courses, which means that the young people—

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 76. The Leader of The Nationals is not the issue in this debate; the issue is TAFE. I ask you to bring the member for Cessnock back to the leave of the bill.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Cessnock has the call.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I will briefly summarise my point about the Dubbo electorate for the member for Kiama, who will not support and endorse TAFE into the future. Dubbo TAFE used to run courses for qualifications in trades such as mechanics and motor vehicle body repairs. Those courses no longer operate at Dubbo TAFE but the students can access the courses at Parkes. The students spend more than an hour each day each way on dangerous roads travelling at more than 100 kilometres an hour to access Parkes TAFE. They travel in car loads of four or five people for five days in a row. When those young people on their P-plates get fatigued they may ultimately and sadly have a crash that could have tragic consequences. That will be directly related to the decisions being made in this Chamber about TAFE and its funding.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I cannot believe that the member for Cessnock could be so callous as to accuse the Government of causing people to lose their lives because of reforms in relation to TAFE. He should withdraw that comment. It is a disgraceful, gutter argument to make and he should be ashamed of himself.

Mr John Robertson: To the point of order: That is not a point of order. Just sit down and apologise.

Mr Gareth Ward: The Leader of the Opposition should be equally ashamed for saying such a disgraceful thing. You are truly evil.

Mr Paul Lynch: To the point of order: The gross overacting by the member for Kiama clearly is an act of gross disorder.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! That might be the view of the member for Liverpool, but the comments that were made were certainly personal from the perspective of the member for Kiama, as indicated by his response.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: It was not personal. It was about the Government.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Leader of the Opposition should read *Hansard* later. The member for Kiama took a point of order and asked for the comments to be withdrawn.

Mr John Robertson: No, he did not.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Did the member for Kiama ask for the comments to be withdrawn?

Mr Gareth Ward: I did, yes.

Mr John Robertson: Read *Hansard*.

Mr Gareth Ward: You read *Hansard*—or get someone to read it to you.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I heard the member for Kiama ask for the comments to be withdrawn. Does the Leader of the Opposition dispute that?

Mr John Robertson: I will read *Hansard* too.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Kiama asked for the comments to be withdrawn. I will not be challenged by the Leader of the Opposition or any other member in relation to what I heard. The member for Kiama asked for the comments to be withdrawn.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Far from withdrawing the comments, I will repeat them. Let me make it very clear that young people who are forced to travel on high-speed dangerous highways will be put at greater risk.

Mr John Williams: The member for Cessnock would have this House believe that block releases were introduced by this Government whereas the types of courses in which young people are engaged were introduced during the term of the previous Labor Government.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: As the member for Cessnock, I am again standing up for young people in the regions whereas The Nationals and the member for Kiama cannot stand up for their regional communities. I proudly support this bill. I proudly support young people being able to access TAFE as close as possible to their home electorate. I proudly support this bill because the cost of TAFE in the future can be, and will be under this Government, a barrier to participation. We need to empower our young people. They need to be educated and to participate in the workforce. The Nationals and Liberal Party members on the Government side of the House should be disgusted with themselves that they will not support this legislation.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [10.51 a.m.], in reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate on this bill: the member for Tamworth, the member for Keira, the member for Parramatta, the member for Wollongong, the member for Cronulla, the member for Davidson, the member for Lakemba, the member for Miranda, the member for Murray-Darling, the member for Fairfield and the member for Shellharbour. I also thank the member for Cessnock for his wonderful contribution to this debate, which highlighted the importance of this bill and the failure of Government members to ensure that our valuable TAFE system remains accessible by keeping TAFE course fees affordable and providing courses at campuses across the State that people need.

It is very disappointing that the Government has indicated it will vote against this bill today. Although, based on its performance this week, it is hardly a shock that this Government is determined to dismantle so much of New South Wales services, including our wonderful TAFE system. Labor always will stand up for students who want to be educated and for those who teach them, but the member for Manly and the Liberals are destroying the TAFE system in New South Wales as we know it. In just three years the Liberal Government has cut hundreds of millions of dollars from TAFE, sacked 1,100 teachers and staff and dropped courses from the curriculum across New South Wales. But that is not the worst of it. From 1 January next year TAFE fees will increase dramatically and New South Wales will move to a market-based vocational training system—the same system that devastated the TAFE system in Victoria.

The new system will force TAFE to compete with private providers. What will that mean for students? Firstly, it will mean that capital-intensive courses will continue to be dropped from TAFE syllabuses across the State. We will see more of what the member for Cessnock referred to during his contribution to this debate. Secondly, it will mean that less support is provided to disadvantaged students. From next year the Government will offer TAFE colleges a measly flat 15 per cent loading for each enrolled student with a disability. That is not enough to fund the important specialised programs that help students with disabilities. It is a cruel and heartless

decision by the Baird Government that will result in many students with disabilities being unable to access the support they need to get an education in TAFE and to make an economic contribution to this State. The dignity of joining the workforce and having a capacity to contribute will be denied to them.

Finally, the new system will mean a dramatic increase in TAFE fees. Students will face fees of up to \$4,000 per basic certificate courses. Forty per cent of students will pay between \$500 and \$1,500 extra for courses. Apprentices will pay \$2,000 for a course that previously cost \$500 a year. A two-year diploma of electrical engineering currently costs \$3,000, but under this Government the same course will cost more than \$8,000. Government loans for TAFE fees are available only for the highest level diploma or advanced diploma courses and not for entry-level training. That will mean that many students will be forced to pay a large amount upfront or take years to pay off the debt. It is very telling about the values of Coalition members in New South Wales and federally.

The conservatives in Government do not care about making education accessible and affordable. They do not care about pushing fees up and stopping young people from getting into the workforce. In Canberra they run around saying, "Let's make them go without if they cannot get work", but then they put barriers in the way of those very same people to access education that will allow them to obtain employment. Despite all the rhetoric from Coalition members and the Premier's best mate the Prime Minister about making it easier for people to get work, they put barriers up every step of the way. They do that because they do not get it. The member for Cessnock is right when he says that Government members do not understand and have no real appreciation of what it means to access a TAFE course.

It provides young people with an opportunity to turn their life around. It provides an opportunity for young people to undertake the Higher School Certificate [HSC] and perhaps go on to university. It provides an opportunity for young people to make a contribution to society. All of that is being put at risk by the approach adopted by the New South Wales Government to TAFE fees and access to courses. The fee increases will put TAFE out of the reach of many people in New South Wales. For Labor members, that is completely unacceptable. I assure Government members that based on my discussions with many people in our community, they find it abhorrent that this Government would put in place a program that will put TAFE beyond the reach of so many people.

In Western Sydney youth unemployment is hitting 17 per cent. It is totally irresponsible for this Liberal Government to make vocational education less accessible. Youth unemployment crisis levels are 17 per cent in Western Sydney. It is 12 per cent in Campbelltown, yet the member for Campbelltown sits silently by as this bill is passed with the assistance of his vote. A 12 per cent youth unemployment rate represents 12 per cent of young people who will not be able to access TAFE in order to get a job. The Government's new system comes at the same time as the Abbott Government moves to deregulate university fees. The Premier is in lockstep with his best mate the Prime Minister, denying access to quality and affordable education to young people after they leave school.

Labor is determined to protect TAFE from the damaging agenda of the Baird Liberal Government. This bill will stop the Liberal Government's view of massive increases to TAFE course fees. It will cap fee increases for government-subsidised TAFE courses at no more than the consumer price index. It also will continue the current arrangements for fee waivers, exemptions and concessions, all of which will disappear as a result of the approach adopted by this Government. Labor recognises the importance of quality and affordable vocational education. TAFE must be accessible to everyone in our State, regardless of income. TAFE exists to give every person in our State a chance to have quality education and find a suitable job. For the many students I have met across the State, TAFE opens up a world of exciting opportunities.

Labor believes we should not have a generation of young people who will find it harder than their parents did to access tertiary and vocational training—a generation that struggles to find jobs. Equal access to education is a fundamental right and today the Government has a chance to do the right thing—to demonstrate to the people of New South Wales that affordable access to vocational education in this State is guaranteed. I am calling on all members to give our TAFE system an eleventh hour reprieve and ensure that this State continues to have a viable public vocational education and training system. TAFE is a pillar, a cornerstone, of our public education system. Today the Government can vote to protect the future of TAFE for generations. I commend the Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill 2014 to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 20

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

Noes, 46

Mr Anderson	Ms Goward	Mrs Sage
Mr Aplin	Mr Grant	Mr Sidoti
Mr Ayres	Mr Gulaptis	Mrs Skinner
Mr Barilaro	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Smith
Ms Berejikian	Mr Holstein	Mr Souris
Mr Bromhead	Mr Humphries	Mr Speakman
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Issa	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Dr Lee	Mr Stoner
Mr Constance	Mr Marshall	Ms Upton
Mrs Davies	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Ward
Mr Doyle	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Elliott	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Evans	Mr Piccoli	
Mr Fraser	Mr Provest	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gee	Mr Roberts	Mr Patterson
Ms Gibbons	Mr Rohan	Mr J. D. Williams

Pairs

Mr Hoenig	Mr Baird
Mr Lulich	Mr O'Farrell
Ms Mihailuk	Mr Perrottet
Mr Rees	Mr Toole

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

Bill not read a second time.

CRIMINAL RECORDS AMENDMENT (HISTORICAL HOMOSEXUAL OFFENCES) BILL 2014**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 18 September 2014.

MR PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [11.09 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014. The Opposition supports the bill. The object of the bill is to amend the Criminal Records Act to enable certain convictions for a number of decriminalised homosexual sexual conduct offences to become extinguished. The logic is elegant and very powerful. Through this Parliament, the community decided that certain behaviour is not something that should have criminal sanctions attaching—and the general community view seems to overwhelmingly to support that.

That being so, it seems quite wrong in principle and evil in practice for people previously convicted of what we now say is not criminal to bear the consequences of a criminal conviction for such behaviour. That is

the evil at which this bill is aimed. The parallel argument, with which I also agree, is that such behaviour never should have been subject to the criminal law. The changes to the State's criminal law with which this bill is engaged commenced in 1984 when the Crimes Act decriminalised consensual male homosexual activity for people over 18 years of age. In 2003 a further amendment lowered the age of consent for male homosexual activity from 18 to 16 years.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in and around the chair, and in the back of the Chamber.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: Whilst these changes were made, obviously some people already had convictions. Clearly, that means they wore the stigma of a criminal conviction for something no longer regarded criminal. Such convictions have very practical impacts on employment, overseas travel and volunteering, among other things. Those offences capable of extinguishment under the scheme provided in this bill are set out in new section 19A. They include former offences under sections 78K, 78L, 78Q, 81, 81A and 81B of the Crimes Act, and also under sections 79 and 80, but not for offences relating to bestiality, some offences under section 12 of the Police Offences Act and section 7 of the Summary Offences Act 1970. As well, additional offences can be included in the scheme by way of regulation.

These former offences include the provisions in the Crimes Act relating to, among other things, indecent assaults on males, outrages on decency by male persons, acts of gross indecency, soliciting a male person in a public place, and buggery and attempted buggery. They also include consensual homosexual behaviour that may be covered by indecent or offensive behaviour in a public place or near a school under section 7 of the notorious 1970 Summary Offences Act or section 12 of the equally notorious Police Offences Act. The latter statute includes not just in a street or public place but also near a police officer and in a police station or house. The regime provided by the bill allows for a person convicted of an offence covered by the scheme to apply to the Secretary of what is now the Department of Justice to have the conviction extinguished. If a convicted person has died, an application may be made by that person's legal personal representative or spouse, de facto partner, parent or child, or person who was in a close personal relationship with the convicted person.

Effectively, the conviction becomes extinguished if the secretary is satisfied that the other person involved in the relevant sexual activity consented to the activity and was above the age of 16 years. If the other person was under the special care of the convicted person, as defined, the relevant age is 18 years, not 16. The statutory scheme has provision for the secretary to request further information. Granted that some offences theoretically could include non-consensual activity—which continues to be criminalised, regardless of whether it is homosexual—as well as consensual activity, there is obvious utility in extinguishing offences through a process of application and determination. If the secretary intends not to extinguish a conviction, the applicant must be advised and given 14 days to submit further information.

The secretary is given statutory powers to require information from various specified bodies. An applicant may apply to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal for an administrative review of the secretary's decision; effectively, there is a deemed refusal provision after nine months. New section 19F sets out exactly what it means if a conviction is extinguished. A person is not required to disclose to any other person for any purpose information concerning an extinguished conviction. A question about a person's criminal history is taken not to refer to any extinguished convictions. This extends to Acts and statutory instruments. A reference in those to a conviction is taken not to be a reference to an extinguished conviction and a reference to character or fitness is not to be interpreted as permitting or requiring account to be taken of an extinguished conviction.

For more abundant clarity, section 19F (2) (b) provides that these provisions have effect, despite any Act that provides that information relating to spent convictions maybe disclosed despite the Act. There are statutory prohibitions against the release of information about extinguished convictions without lawful excuse and consequent criminal sanctions. There are criminal sanctions also for people attempting to obtain information from public authorities about extinguished convictions. As I have indicated, the Opposition supports the bill. It seems to be entirely correct as a matter of principle. I do not always say this about bills introduced into this House, but this bill shows signs of fairly careful consideration of the most practical and effective scheme to implement those principles. A fair amount of thought has gone into this quite elegant scheme. I am delighted to support the bill.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.15 a.m.]: I am pleased to support the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014. I congratulate the member for

Coogee on his initiative in introducing this bill. Government has no role in the bedrooms of New South Wales citizens. In 1984 the Parliament recognised that when it decriminalised large categories of male homosexual activity between consenting adults in private, but it did not set up the ability to expunge convictions prior to that date. In the past couple of years Britain's Coalition Conservative and Liberal Democrat Government introduced such expunging laws, and Victoria recently passed similar laws. It is long overdue for the same process to occur in New South Wales.

Apart from strong matters of principle, there are practical reasons to support the bill. Those with convictions recorded against them for what never should have been offences 30 years ago continue to suffer constraint on their employment opportunities, volunteering options and overseas travel. Mental health issues also attach to such convictions. Young gay men particularly have a disproportionate degree of mental illness because of the stigma and victimisation that remain attached to people because of their sexuality, but older gay men in particular still could suffer mental health issues arising from the stigma of having a criminal conviction recorded against them for consenting acts in private of more than 30 years ago.

Commonly, such people are otherwise law-abiding citizens. The mopping up, if you like, of decriminalising 30-year-old offences is long overdue and will now take place by virtue of this legislation. The mechanism the bill chooses is administrative; in other places it requires an application to a magistrate. The administrative mechanism is preferred as it is less costly to the taxpayer, more private for those making the application and perhaps less confronting for those applying if they have an unfortunate history of dealing with the courts before 1984. The bill is an important step forward that is long overdue. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.18 a.m.]: I strongly support the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014 and congratulate the member for Coogee on introducing this important legislation. I also acknowledge the work of the Hon. Trevor Khan, and the Attorney General and his staff for their work on this bill, and thank them for consulting with me and other key stakeholders in delivering this legislation. The bill creates a process by which people convicted of engaging in now decriminalised homosexual acts can have those convictions extinguished from their records. Earlier this year the House acknowledged that it was only 30 years since consensual homosexual sex ceased to be an offence in this State.

Criminalisation of homosexual sex was an appalling moral approach to law that passed judgement on the private non-violent relations between consenting adults. It institutionalised homophobia and homophobic discrimination, violence and abuse of homosexuals and led to criminal convictions of law-abiding persons for being who they are and loving who they loved. Those shameful laws protected no-one. In a rally held in 1978 gay men and lesbians protested against those hateful laws and social prejudices. That rally became what is now known as the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, which is the pride event for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] community. At the time police revoked permission for the rally, broke up the march and arrested participants.

The "78ers", as those who were at the march are known, have told me of the shocking police brutality that left them with permanent psychological scars and resulted in their long-term mistrust of police, some of which remains despite massive improvements in relations between police and the LGBTI community. After criminalisation was removed, endemic homophobia and violence continued for more than a decade with many gay bashings, hate crimes and murders occurring in Sydney in the 1980s and 1990s. At the time police did not provide a safe place for victims to report crime. Instead, police were involved in entrapment, abuse, victimisation, brutality and cover-ups.

The homophobic laws and the homophobic attitudes they encouraged affected the health, mental health, employment prospects, and family and community acceptance of gay men, lesbians, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. Many people remained "in the closet" out of fear of conviction and persecution, which had serious and enduring impacts on their wellbeing. While there are probably fewer than 100 people who will be directly affected by this legislation, it is vital to help heal and right our homophobic history for the wider LGBTI community. South Australia has enacted legislation, and recently Victoria, to quash past convictions for decriminalised homosexual acts. I hope this legislation will pass in New South Wales with multi-partisan support. The bill will make it easy for those who were convicted of now decriminalised homosexual acts to apply to the Secretary of the Department of Justice to extinguish their criminal record.

The secretary needs to be satisfied that the other person involved in the sexual activity consented. The bill includes safeguards that exclude consent for applicants who provided special care to the other person when

that person was under 18 and over 16 years of age. Special care relationships refer to step-parents, guardians, foster carers, teachers, health professionals and other people of authority in institutions. There is also scope to have records reinstated where new evidence arises. The Government must ensure that applicants have access to their relevant records before submitting their applications so that they can lodge an informed submission. Most applicants who have been convicted have lived in a world that has condemned them for who they are. They will have significant distrust of authority, so the process needs to be sensitive to their needs.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of community activists and their allies in this place I am pleased that the LGBTI community has made progress since the decriminalisation of homosexual acts. We have seen equal age of consent, the removal of discrimination in de facto couple laws, including workers compensation, superannuation and taxation, and a State-based register to protect same-sex relationships. Clover Moore's Anti-Discrimination (Homosexual Vilification) Bill made it illegal to incite hatred of lesbians and gay men, and empowered the Anti-Discrimination Board to investigate complaints. Her Adoption Amendment (Same Sex Couples) Bill allows same-sex couples to adopt their children as a couple, which protects families. This year the gay panic defence of provocation was removed.

There has been significant progress in health and welfare, and policing of policy and programs to address homophobia. However, more work is needed to remove sanctioned discrimination in all areas of the law, particularly in service provision and employment in education programs, disability care and aged care. Loving and committed same-sex couples and gender diverse people should be able to marry in Australia. There is strong community support for it; it is our leaders who are lagging. We have questioned why there were laws that declared that consensual sex was illegal for gay men and we will one day question why loving and committed same-sex couples were denied the right to marry the person they love in the country they love. Transgender, intersex and sex and gender diverse people still face legal and social discrimination. I am committed to fighting that. It is sad that in some parts of the world, including within our region, consensual sex between two men remains a crime.

For example, in Papua New Guinea people can be sentenced for up to 14 years imprisonment. Australia must play a role in ending this appalling discrimination. Australia's history of homophobic laws is long and horrific. I acknowledge and thank Peter de Waal for documenting much of this history in his publication *Unfit for Publication*, which details the buggery and sodomy trials from 1727 to 1930. I am honoured to place these documents on the table for members' consideration. The New South Wales Parliamentary Library has agreed to accept all three volumes for the benefit of current and future members. *Unfit for Publication* reports the first documented sodomy conviction in Australia, which involved two young adult sailors, Adraen Spoor and Pieter Engels, who served on the Dutch vessel *Zeewijk*, which became stranded on the West Australian coast in 1727. For punishment, they were put into two separate canoes without food or water to be marooned on separate atolls where they were left to die. In the foreword of Peter de Waal's book, historian Garry Wotherspoon remarked:

Perhaps these young men were the first martyrs of our tribe in this land.

Mr de Waal's partner, Peter Bonsall-Boone, was arrested for having consensual sex in his youth. Passage of this legislation will help to not only remove his conviction but also to send a strong message to him and other gay men that such convictions never should have occurred. Consensual homosexual sex never should have been a crime. I welcome this bill. It is a strong and important step in righting past wrongs. I commend the member for Coogee and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [11.26 a.m.]: On behalf of the people of the Northern Tablelands I offer my strong support for the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to amend the Criminal Records Act 1991 to enable certain convictions for a number of decriminalised homosexual conduct offences to become extinguished. I acknowledge the member for Coogee for his great work and my colleague the Hon. Trevor Khan in the other place for bringing this important bill to the Parliament. The bill is long overdue and I am proud to give it my support.

The bill recognises not only the discrimination that people who were convicted of consensual homosexual acts have faced but also the hurt and anguish they have experienced. Consensual homosexual acts in this State have not been criminal offences for 30 years. I was born in 1984, when this Parliament decriminalised consensual homosexual activity for males. I can only imagine what it was like to have been a homosexual man in this State prior to that occurring, not only for being discriminated against but also for having consensual acts deemed to be criminal and illegal: Then not only to have been convicted but also to have suffered the indignation of embarrassment, discrimination, hurt and anguish. As a young person growing up in a modern day New South Wales, I cannot fathom such a society.

As we have heard, consensual homosexual activity for people over the age of 18 years was decriminalised in 1984, but there was no means by which to extinguish convictions prior to that date. This bill does that. I am pleased with the approach the bill has taken. The member for Liverpool outlined that it is a sensible and practical way of addressing this issue and righting the wrongs of the past. The bill introduces section 19C to the Act, which provides that a conviction for an eligible homosexual offence becomes an extinguished conviction upon application to the Secretary of the Department of Attorney General and Justice when he or she is satisfied that the other person involved in the activity constituting the offence consented to the sexual activity and was above the age of 16 years, or if the other person was under the special care of the convicted person within the meaning of section 73 (3) of the Crimes Act 1900, that is, 18 years of age.

I will not go into the specifics of the bill because the member for Coogee spoke in detail about that in his second reading speech. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the member for Coogee and other members in this place, including the member for Sydney, and the Hon. Trevor Khan, who rightly are passionate about this issue. For me it is an issue of righting the wrongs of the past and removing a discriminatory part of our State's history. This bill will give some comfort. It will also recognise that those laws in the past were not only discriminatory but also caused a lot of harm and anguish. I have no doubt that those laws resulted in a lot of stress and mental health issues for some. I am proud to support the bill. I am also pleased to hear that the bill will be passed with the support of all members of this House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.30 a.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I offer strong support for the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014. I warmly thank the member for Coogee for his efforts in promoting this bill and coordinating not only Government members but also members of all parties in this Parliament to ensure support for this bill. I also acknowledge the hard work of the Hon. Trevor Khan in the other place and the Attorney General's office. As we have heard today, a great deal of work has been done to ensure the bill adequately deals with the issue of expunging those convictions from the record in a sensitive and appropriate manner so that its objectives can be met and we can deal with any unintended consequences.

We have seen progress in Victoria, South Australia and the United Kingdom. This positive step we are taking in New South Wales today will make a real difference not only to the lives of people but also symbolically. This bill underlines provisions in earlier legislation that made sex between homosexual partners illegal. The implications for individuals who have convictions recorded against them are not insignificant—issues around travel, volunteering, employment and the stigma associated with these convictions in an area where there should be no stigma. Loving relationships between people should be celebrated not criminalised and they should not have any stigma associated with them. The pain, distress and embarrassment—with which I am sure all members empathise—must have been great for those who suffered from being convicted, harassed and intimidated by police.

Recently I sat in the Parliamentary Theatre with many others to celebrate, recognise and acknowledge 30 years later the decriminalisation of homosexuality. It was moving for those of us there to witness the enormous efforts of gay men, lesbians and their allies who campaigned, fought, struggled and worked not only to abolish discriminatory laws but also to change attitudes in society against institutionalised homophobia and to support justice and equality in our community. As the member for Sydney said earlier, that was first shown most vigorously in 1978. This bill is a testament to those struggles over the generations, particularly over the past few decades. It recognises that these things do not happen by accident; they happen only when good people work hard and fight, not only those directly affected by discriminatory legislation but also those allies who support them. That is why I am so proud that members of Parliament—Independents, The Greens, Liberals and The Nationals—are supporting this legislation.

Thirty years ago no-one could have imagined that happening in this Parliament. I place on record my great support for and acknowledgement of all of those who have gone before us and those who have made this legislation possible. Great progress has been made through legislation and in the wider community. I will now take a few moments to acknowledge the effects of this legislation on the New South Wales community. It will shine a light on injustice in this country and in the rest of the world as we acknowledge, understand and correct all these historical wrongs. On 3 October an article by Josephine Tovey titled "Couple embrace historic gay law change" was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which I found rather moving. The article talks about the normality of life as well as the huge obstacles that need to be overcome and states:

Peter Bonsall-Boone sits bathed in sunlight in the front room of the Balmain home he shares with his partner Peter de Waal, who is busy working in the kitchen—

Anyone who knows Peter de Waal would be aware that he is always busy. The article continues:

Photographs of loved ones line one wall, while a grand portrait of the pair adorns another. Dogs bark from out back.

It's a slice of very normal Australian domestic life for an openly gay couple—a life that may have seemed out of reach when Bonsall-Boone and de Waal, both now 76, were young, when homosexuality was not just heavily stigmatised but was criminalised in NSW.

I am proud to see both of them sitting in the gallery today. These two members of my electorate have made an incredible contribution to community life and I greatly respect and acknowledge their efforts to overturn the wrongs of the past. The article continues:

Bonsall-Boone is one of many older gay men who was arrested for having consensual sex in his youth, a conviction that remains on his criminal record today.

...

The convictions have followed him, made known once when he was at theological college in his early twenties—from which he was forced to leave—and more recently when he applied for a job teaching English to adults in 2001.

Today we are taking steps to extinguish that and to ensure it will never again follow men as it followed Peter. The bill will not only abolish the stigma but also celebrate those who have suffered past convictions. It will send a sign to all those who have suffered convictions, which may be fewer than 100, and a strong message about the type of society we want—namely, the type of society where diversity is celebrated and all people are treated with justice, fairness and respect. We want the type of society that has the integrity and compassion to look into the past and seek to right the wrongs that have been committed. I turn now to the weighty three-volume book entitled "Unfit for Publication", which must have taken an incredible effort to put together. The book documents the institutionalised homophobia that took place in New South Wales and recounts some incredible stories from the New South Wales Supreme Court about how people were treated in the past.

Whilst this book highlights how far we have come, it also demonstrates that a lot more needs to be done. I echo the comments of the member for Sydney that around the world and in our region homosexuality is a criminal offence and that people can be sentenced to very long prison sentences. It is up to us to shine the light on injustice and discrimination and to ensure that other Australian States and countries are aware of our efforts. I reiterate my thanks to the member for Coogee for the work he has done to get us to where we are today. I again acknowledge the good faith and good will of all members, some of whom I am sure would have been challenged by this issue and who may not have felt that the time was right. This bill is a testament to the good will of all those who have been involved in its preparation. I am sure it will be passed without objection.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [11.39 a.m.]: I speak in support of the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014. I will give a brief history of the bill for the public record. This bill has been spoken about so well this morning. Until 1984 the Crimes Act 1900 contained a number of offences prohibiting homosexual activity. In 1984 the Crimes (Amendment) Bill 1984 decriminalised consensual male homosexual activity for people over the age of 18 years. Whilst consensual homosexual activity over the age of consent is no longer a criminal offence, men who were previously convicted still have that criminal conviction. This bill seeks to allow applications to be made for convictions for such offences to be quashed. As has been said previously, such convictions may limit opportunities in employment, travel and volunteering.

Application will be able to be made to quash convictions for indecent or offensive behaviour for sexual activity with a person of the same sex. The application will be made to the Secretary of the Department of the Attorney General and Justice. The conviction will be overturned if the secretary is satisfied that the act was consensual and at the current age of consent; this is 16 years—except if there is a special care relationship, where the offender was a schoolteacher or health professional of the other person, in which case the age of consent is 18 years. Records of the conviction will be obtained from public agencies, the NSW Police Force and the courts and a decision based on the application will be made.

If the application is deemed to be unfavourable the applicant will be given the opportunity to submit additional information. In the event of the decision being denied by the secretary, the applicant will be able to seek an administrative review of the decision by the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. If the application is successful the conviction will be extinguished. This in turn will not require the person to disclose the conviction. Currently a provision in the Criminal Records Act 1991 allows for relatively minor offences to

become spent and therefore not disclose-able—if the person completes a period of crime-free behaviour. This new process to allow applications to be made for these convictions to be extinguished will be in addition to the existing spent convictions scheme.

This bill will also allow for women and transgender people to apply for convictions to be removed. Within this bill it is noted that it is an offence under the Crimes Act to knowingly provide false or misleading information. It allows for the Secretary of the Department of the Attorney General and Justice to determine that a conviction is no longer extinguished if the applicant has provided false and misleading information. Under this bill, the effect of the extinguishment now provided is that it is an offence for a person who has access to records of convictions kept, or on behalf of a public authority, without lawful authority to disclose to any other person any information regarding an extinguished conviction. Also new section 19H makes it an offence for a person to obtain records fraudulently kept by or on behalf of a public authority.

I wanted to put on record a bit of the history relating to the bill before us today. I commend the member for Coogee and the Hon. Trevor Khan for bringing this bill before us. I also commend every member of this House—members from the Liberal Party, The Nationals, the Labor Party and The Greens and Independent members—for their support for this bill. It has bipartisan support, which will see this bill go through unchanged. Everyone has spoken positively about the bill, which is a great outcome. Members of Parliament are seen as community leaders. It is fantastic to have Premier Baird from the Liberal-Nationals side and John Robertson from the Labor side support this bill in a bipartisan fashion. We are speaking in unison on this bill. I commend everyone who has spoken in debate today for their heartfelt support for this bill. I am sure other speakers will share similar thoughts. I am proud to be here today with the member for Coogee, a good mate of mine, to support the bill and to thank everyone who has spoken in this debate. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [11.45 a.m.]: I support the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014—an important bill. I have the honour of being the youngest member of my party's parliamentary caucus. What I have seen over the past three years in relation to issues around equality will stand us in good stead. We are not there yet; we still have a long way to go. But we are getting to the stage where we are starting to recognise the rights of everybody in our community and not just heterosexual people.

Nothing is more important than making sure that the rights of men and women, regardless of their sexual preferences, are maintained through legislation in this place. We must correct the wrongs that were committed in the past by governments of all persuasions and by law enforcement bodies. We can use this place—the oldest Parliament and the most important centre for democracy in this country and in the Western world—to send a clear signal to everybody that we need to right the wrongs. We need to take a firm stand if people in the community have been discriminated against because of their sexual preference. As the youngest member of my party's parliamentary team, that is something I feel strongly about. If I am a member of Parliament for some time I will continue to advocate against discrimination and to make changes in the future.

I thank the member for Coogee for introducing this bill and I thank the Hon. Penny Sharpe, a leading figure from the Labor Party, for the enormous amount of work she has done over time to advance this issue. She has not only advocated on behalf of the community but also made sure that Labor members are educated and informed and are able to ensure that this becomes a mainstream issue. We must deal with this issue positively rather than hang onto old biases. This place can be challenging and it can be difficult. I admire all those who have the courage of their convictions, particularly in relation to social issues, who are able to maintain those convictions, educate and inform others and bring us all along with them on their journey.

This legislation is about eradicating discrimination and ensuring that the wrongs that were committed many years ago are righted in this place. As someone with a four-year-old son and a 12-week-old son, I hope the example we are setting today stands the next generation in good stead, ensures that they, as future leaders, make more positive changes that reduce discrimination, and ensures that, regardless of our sexual preferences, we are all treated equally. If we are able to do that it will stand this place, this community and this State that each and every one of us is passionate about in a good light, not just in Australia but throughout the rest of the world.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai) [11.49 a.m.]: The Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014 owes its genesis to the 1984 legislation that decriminalised homosexual acts in New South Wales. Of course, in 1984 that legislation was supported in this Chamber by members from all political parties. I am proud that the then Liberal leader Nick Greiner made a very strong speech in favour of decriminalisation. I hope that we will see similar leadership and cross-party support for this measure today.

I congratulate the member for Coogee on bringing this matter to the attention of Government, then to his party room and then to the floor of this Parliament. Whilst the Victorians might today be claiming that they are leading the nation, I note that the Victorian legislation was introduced on Tuesday this week whereas the member for Coogee introduced this legislation on 18 September. It is important legislation because decriminalisation was arguably the most significant step in the gay community's fight for acceptance here and in the other States that followed suit. It laid the fundamental basis for further advances by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] community in its quest for equality and freedom from discrimination.

However, decriminalisation did not address the problem of those who had already been convicted. Importantly, this legislation will expunge the records of those people who were criminalised for consensual sexual acts. I cannot imagine what it has been like for them to live with these convictions and the obstacles they would have presented for them. At a time when many in the gay community have aged, as we all have aged, I cannot imagine what effect these convictions have had on their mental health at this stage in their lives. It is terrific that governments around the world have recognised the need to put mechanisms in place to enable criminal convictions of this type to be expunged.

Through the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 a system was put in place in the United Kingdom. In 2013 South Australia extended its Spent Convictions Act to include convictions for homosexual acts. In January this year the Victorian Human Rights Law Centre released a report on this issue that prompted consideration by the Napthine Government and resulted in legislation being passed in Victoria this week. It is hoped that this legislation will be overwhelmingly passed in this place today. When the member for Coogee first raised this matter with me during my former life—

Mr Brad Hazzard: That wasn't a life. Now you've got a life.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I have a life now. I told the member for Coogee that the issue had never been raised with me during my 18 years in Parliament but it was an issue that needed addressing. We arranged for the Department of Attorney General and Justice to do some preliminary work for him. I am grateful to the department for its work. I commend the member for Coogee for the vigour and persistence with which he has kept at the task and caused legislation not only to be drafted but also, I hope, to be passed today.

If we are to be a Parliament that represents all and upholds the sorts of freedoms that we will commemorate over the next four years during the Centenary of the First World War, those freedoms must be extended to all parts of the community. We should be a Parliament that is prepared to acknowledge the wrongs of the past that caused people to be subject to arrest, exposure and criminal records that they should never have had to suffer. It is hoped that in some small way this bill will acknowledge the wrongness of the earlier laws and actions and bring some comfort and peace to those who were affected by them.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [11.54 a.m.]: I support the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014. I congratulate the member for Coogee on introducing this private member's bill and providing us with an opportunity to right a historical wrong. A few months ago some members spoke in this place in celebration of the 30-year anniversary of legislation to decriminalise homosexuality, which was introduced by former Premier Neville Wran. As the member for Ku-ring-gai indicated, that legislation was passed with cross-party support.

In that debate I spoke about how it was historic, hard-won legislative reform for gay and lesbian people. I also said that Neville Wran recognised at the time that it was not perfect, particularly regarding the age of consent. But Wran, that consummate political operator, believed and said then that half a loaf is better than none. It took another 19 years for the age of consent to be addressed when in 2003 the Crimes Amendment (Sexual Offences) Act lowered the age of consent for male homosexual activity from 18 to 16 years. On both of those legislative reforms the Parliament acted to reflect the wider community expectation that sex between consenting adults should be lawful, that discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community is wrong, and that people should not be treated differently or as lesser because of who they love.

It has taken us another 11 years to address the anomaly that while consensual homosexual activity between people over the age of consent is no longer a criminal offence, people who were previously convicted of those offences still have to deal with the stigma of a criminal conviction for a sex offence. Such a conviction may have to be disclosed in employment applications, it is part of a criminal record check process and it can

constrain a range of activities such as volunteering, fostering and overseas travel. It is right that we are taking action now to address that anomaly because the existence of convictions for action that is no longer an offence perpetuates discrimination.

The bill provides a sensible process to extinguish these convictions. Applications will be made to the Secretary of the Department of Attorney General and Justice and a conviction will be extinguished if the secretary is satisfied that the other person consented to the sexual activity and was at least of the current age of consent. If the convicted person has died an application may be made on his or her behalf. Decisions of the Secretary of the Department of Attorney General and Justice will be reviewable by the NSW Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

We know that the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] law reform is one of constant agitation, advocacy and struggle. So often parliaments not only in New South Wales but also across the world are behind where the community is at on these issues. Much has been achieved and this bill adds to our progress. Of course, there is still much to be done. Marriage equality remains the standout issue. I am confident that it will not be long before there is progress on that front as well. I look forward to that day but in the meantime I commend this bill to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [11.57 a.m.]: I support the Government's position on the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014. The fact of the matter is that for too long governments have been far too prepared to involve themselves in what goes on behind closed doors between consenting adults. The reality is that it is time that this legislation is passed. In fact, it should have been passed a long while ago. As Attorney General of New South Wales I had no hesitation in saying to the member for Coogee that I would be happy to support his proposal when he came to me in April shortly after I was appointed. I authorised the full resources of the Department of Attorney General and Justice to support the work that had been initiated in a number of meetings prior to my appointment as Attorney General.

I place on the record the fact that the member for Coogee, Bruce Notley-Smith, already had sought the assistance of the former Liberal Attorney General, Greg Smith, who also facilitated access to the department for the necessary preliminary work, for which I thank him. The development of this legislation has been done cooperatively, in a great spirit of goodwill and by the adoption of a much more understanding approach to process than I could have hoped for. Over the years I have seen some interesting things in this place, many of which I have found a little challenging. For example, I remember the 2003 proposal for the age of consent to be lowered from 18 to 16 years. The debate on the legislation at that time was a little more animated or ferocious, let us say. I had great delight in supporting those who considered that it was time that the age of consent was brought to the more uniform age of 16 years.

To think that people have lived with criminal convictions as part of their lives for many decades is appalling. I thank heavens that in 1984 the then Government saw fit to at least decriminalise from that time forward the actions that people are entitled to take. As I said, what happens behind closed doors between people is entirely their business. What happens between consenting adults should remain between consenting adults. It has nothing to do with the rest of us; it has nothing to do with the rest of the universe. But it is disturbing that so many people who have had to bear the burden of criminal matters that were foisted upon them prior to 1984 continue to suffer from that burden until the present.

The primary issue is that people love each other, it does not matter what their sexuality is. People in a relationship should have complete freedom to explore that relationship in every way they wish. It should be about us as a Parliament in the twenty-first century acknowledging that probably there is no greater aspiration than to have someone who loves you and for you to love someone. What occurs between two parties is for those two parties alone. This legislation finally recognises that reality.

I acknowledge the member for Coogee and his hard work. I enjoyed participating in this process and ensuring that we were able to bring this bill to the House. The member for Coogee introduced it, which is a little unusual, and did so with full Government backing. In the normal course I, as Attorney General, would have brought this legislation to the House but I thought it reasonable for the member for Coogee to bring it to this place. It is wonderful that he has been able to do so. He has been at the vanguard of this fight. He has been a crusader for the implementation of fairness which should have been available to people in the community many years ago. Today he is making sure that that fairness and justice passes into law.

When I entered this House for the first time today, I had just returned from the swearing-in of Mr John Hatzistergos as a District Court judge. All members know that he is a former Attorney General—the fifty-third Attorney General for New South Wales—and a Labor Attorney General. I like to think that this Government is capable of looking beyond the horizon and is expansive in its position. That is reflected in the very good appointment of John Hatzistergos to the District Court. In recent years a number of Attorneys General have been very supportive of ensuring equality. Earlier when I walked into the House the member for Sydney introduced me to Peter Bonsall-Boone—a lovely gentleman who is in the lobby to observe this process. Mr Bonsall-Boone has never been to Parliament previously so it is a momentous occasion for him to see history being made as many people have the burden of past prosecutions lifted.

I will not deal with the bill in detail except to say that clearly the opportunity to remove convictions for what occurred between consenting individuals and allied behaviour prior to 1984 is well overdue. I am pleased that by a simple application being made to the secretary of my department, New South Wales has a system that is much simpler than the South Australian model. Obviously, ready facilitation of that process is part of ensuring that people effectively are not re-abused by undertaking a complex expunging process. The process will include a system of checks and balances. If it is found that false declarations have been made, the process can be reversed by various procedures. Previous speakers in this debate have dealt with the bill in detail. I simply say that I am pleased this bill has been introduced. I am very pleased to be part of it. I hope it makes a small difference in the lives of people who have suffered for decades from an inappropriate burden. I wish them well and I hope this Parliament proceeds in this way in future in terms of improving equality for all people in New South Wales.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.04 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I express my support for the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014. At the outset I congratulate the member for Coogee, Bruce Notley-Smith. I am sure that no matter when the member for Coogee decides to leave this place—or when that decision is made for him—this legislation will be one of his significant and crowning achievements. This bill seeks to remove a perverse, inequitable and unjust history that exists as a result of a change in our laws in 1984.

In 1984 the law was changed so that consensual homosexual sex between two people was lawful. But in changing the law, the convictions for those sexual relations still stood. This bill seeks to expunge or provide a process for expunging those convictions to ensure that there is some justice and equity in the system and so that the pall of inappropriate behaviour, which still hangs over those people by virtue of those convictions, justifiably is lifted. It is nice when this Parliament is able to come together to bring about justice and equity that is so deserving for so many people. It is not every day we get to see that, but this is one example of legislation being brought before this House to correct a historical injustice.

I proudly lend my name to supporting this legislation so that those who were convicted can have those convictions quashed and not recorded. It is entirely inappropriate, given the trajectory of law reform, that those provisions should remain on the statute books. The bill introduced by the member for Coogee seeks to remove that injustice. I congratulate the member for Coogee and all other members of the House who support this legislation. I thank the Attorney General for his earlier comments. I appreciate that when the bill is passed by this House it will be a great day for many citizens across the State. It will remove an unjustified and inequitable provision that should never have been in place but existed through a quirk of law. I am delighted to lend my support to removing something that will mean a lot to those it affects. This is as it should be and as it should be done. I look forward to this bill receiving support.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [12.08 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Liverpool, the member for Cronulla, the member for Sydney, the member for Northern Tablelands, the member for Balmain, the member for Camden, the member for Keira, the member for Ku-ring-gai, the member for Marrickville, the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice and member for Wakehurst and the member for Kiama for their contributions to the debate. I also acknowledge the presence in the lobby of this House of Peter Bonsall-Boone and his partner, Peter de Waal. Peter Bonsall-Boone is one of the many human faces of the bill before the House. Recorded against his name is a conviction for a crime which is within the scope of this bill. To this day, 57 years later, it remains an unwanted and unwarranted blemish on his good character—a blemish that I hope soon will be erased. Before concluding, I will address some of the comments made by members during this debate.

The member for Cronulla rightly pointed out that the gay and lesbian community have some of the highest occurrences of mental health difficulties because of the stigmatisation that the gay, lesbian, bi, intersex

and transgender community have had to deal with over many years. As the member for Sydney stated, the bill is just another step in healing and righting the wrongs of the institutionalised homophobia of the past. The member for Northern Tablelands was born in 1984—30 years ago—when decriminalisation was first discussed in this place. Young people today would be astonished to learn that consensual sex between any two adults was ever illegal. The member rightly pointed out that mental health is a real concern in rural and regional areas of our great State. There is often a strong sense of isolation for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex [GLBTI] people in remote and rural areas and they can experience great anguish alone and away from the big cities.

The member for Balmain spoke of Josephine Tovey's article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* a few days ago. Ms Tovey wrote about the normal domesticity of the two Peters. It reminded me of the time when my partner, Paul, and I first set up our flat together, 20-odd years ago. The queen-sized bed was being moved in and my niece and nephew—who were about six or seven at the time—were bouncing up and down on the bed. My nephew asked, "Where is Paul's bed?" My niece just looked at him and said, "They sleep together, you idiot."

I thank the member for Camden for his great support for this bill and also for his leadership as Government Whip. I also thank the member for Keira for his contribution. He said that this is yet another step towards equality for all people in this great State of ours. The member for Ku-ring-gai and former Premier, Barry O'Farrell, said that neither of the major parties has a monopoly on gay and lesbian law reform in this place. Both parties have played a significant role and have depended on one another at times in order to get important legislation through.

I thank the member for Marrickville for her ongoing commitment to this cause and for the encouragement that she has given me over the time that I have been in this place. The member for Wakehurst enthusiastically grasped the bill and has given me great access to his department in order to bring it about. The member for Kiama reminds us that destigmatisation of homosexuality is so important in rural and regional New South Wales where, unfortunately, in the past many such people have taken their lives. New South Wales decriminalised homosexual conduct in 1984 but some people still suffer the disadvantage of a criminal conviction for consensual sexual activity with another adult. Consensual sexual activity with another adult should never have been a crime. Today we can ensure that these people do not have to continue to suffer the disadvantage of having a criminal conviction for such a matter.

The bill is carefully drafted to only allow convictions to be extinguished if the other party was over the age of consent at the time and consented to the activity. I also make it clear that if someone was under the age of consent at the time of the offence but the other person was over the age of consent, the former will be eligible to have the conviction extinguished. This is appropriate because, if it occurred today, the young person under the age of consent would not be committing an offence, provided the other person was over the age of consent. From 1984 to 2003 the age of consent for male homosexual activity was 18 years. In 2003 this was lowered to 16 years, to make it the same as the age of consent for heterosexual activity. The bill will also allow people convicted of homosexual offences for conduct with somebody over the age of 16 but under the age of 18 during this time to have convictions extinguished.

The bill establishes a simple administrative scheme for people to apply to have their conviction extinguished, with a right to appeal to the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Applications will be made to the Secretary of the Department of Justice who will seek information about the conviction from the NSW Police Force and other relevant government authorities. The Secretary will then decide whether the offence was an eligible homosexual offence and whether the other person consented to the activity and was over the age of consent. The applicant will be given the opportunity to submit further information if the secretary intends to make a negative decision and there is, of course, the right to an appeal.

If the conviction is extinguished, it will be treated at law as if it were never imposed. The person will not have to disclose any information about the conviction to any person for any purpose. A question about a person's criminal history will be taken not to refer to any extinguished conviction. Such a conviction will not be disclosed as part of a criminal history check, even for court proceedings and it will not have to be disclosed when giving evidence in court. I formally thank some of the people who have given me assistance with the bill: the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and its President, Dr Justin Koonin, who is with us in the gallery today; Anne Brown of the Human Rights Law Centre in Victoria; and Alex Greenwich, the member for Sydney. Their critique and input has been invaluable.

I also mention the former Attorney General the Hon. Greg Smith, SC, MP, and the Attorney General, the Hon. Brad Hazzard. They both have been outstanding in giving me support and providing departmental

support to get the bill to this point. The former Premier and member for Ku-ring-gai, the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, has always been a great champion for reform for the gay and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities and I thank him for his assistance. The Premier, the Hon. Mike Baird, has been unwavering in his support and encouragement. I thank also Anna Gittoes from the Office of the Attorney General and Michelle Gardiner from the Attorney General's Department for their tireless work on the bill over many months.

I recognise the assistance of the Hon. Trevor Khan, MLC, who has encouraged and guided me through the whole process. It is not an exaggeration to say that were it not for him and his counsel and skill as a legislator we would not be here today. This bill goes some way to addressing past wrongs and to ensuring that people with historical homosexual convictions do not have to continue to suffer legal consequences. I commend the Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014 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 Bruce Notley-Smith 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 General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) proceeded with.

EAST MAITLAND COURT HOUSE CRIMINAL HEARINGS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.18 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the decision of the Office of the Chief Justice to end criminal hearings at East Maitland Court House.
- (2) Notes that East Maitland is the fastest-growing rural area in New South Wales, with the population expected to double by 2030, and the need for criminal justice facilities are expected to rise commensurately.
- (3) Notes that transport links from the Hunter to Newcastle are currently in flux, impacting on access to courts in Newcastle, and therefore urges the Minister for Transport to ensure adequate transport links are maintained between Maitland and inner-city Newcastle.
- (4) Calls on the Attorney General to explain the reasons for the Hunter and Upper Hunter judiciary being treated this way.

In yet another example of this Government cutting services in the Hunter, criminal cases no longer will be heard at the East Maitland Court House, as reported by the *Maitland Mercury* in March. Instead, District Court sittings will be relocated to the new court facility on Hunter Street, Newcastle. A Department of Justice spokesperson was quoted:

The distance between East Maitland and Newcastle is 30 minutes and court users should benefit from the new state-of-the-art facilities.

The same spokesperson cited as reasons for the move a lack of multiple courtrooms and necessary court equipment, such as closed-circuit television [CCTV], at East Maitland. This change generates a number of issues that I fear have not been addressed adequately. The new Hunter Street court complex is being built at a current cost of \$94 million and will house 10 courtrooms. It will largely replace, not extend, the operations of the city's current ageing court precinct. Unfortunately, like most present developments in the Newcastle central business district, serious questions have not been answered satisfactorily, including: How will people get to the new court precinct? How will the Newcastle central business district [CBD] infrastructure handle the new development? What impact will the change have on Maitland residents? What impact will it have on businesses near the courthouse?

Parking in Newcastle's CBD is at a premium already. That finite resource will be stretched to its absolute limit when the precinct becomes operational and it will get only worse when the new University House currently being built next door by the University of Newcastle is opened in 2017. Thousands of students and staff, with similar numbers of court employees and users jockeying for parking is a recipe for gridlock, stress and anxiety. The obvious alternative, public transport, is no alternative at all, thanks to the recklessness of this Government. The inner-city rail line, which connects Maitland to Civic Station across the road from Newcastle's Civic precinct, is due to be truncated on Boxing Day. Though the Government maintains that light rail will replace the heavy rail line, it will take a number of years to complete. The new courthouse opens next year.

I shall outline a brief time line just to make it clear to those opposite—many of whom have never been to the Newcastle CBD—what the Newcastle CBD is in for over the next few years. At the end of this year the heavy rail line into the Newcastle CBD will be truncated. In 2015 the new courthouse will be opened; thousands of people will be brought into the city with nowhere to park and the most viable public transport option will be removed. In 2017 the new university campus will open, injecting thousands more people into the CBD. All the while, construction of the proposed light rail will add yet more chaos to Hunter Street. I make clear now that I do not oppose development in Newcastle, but I support responsible, sane development with good public transport options. The Government's choices do not meet the criteria. John from Bolwarra wrote:

This is another reason to retain the rail, or people will need transport to the new courthouse.

Of course, the decision does not affect just the Newcastle CBD, as John notes further:

It is just a continuation of downgrading Maitland to a suburban backblock. In Sydney we now have a shift away from centralisation, here in the Hunter, just the reverse.

Yesterday I heard the Government's former Deputy Premier brag about this Government's history of decentralisation. As John from Bolwarra points, this does not seem to be the case in the Hunter. Closing the courthouse has badly affected the business of a nearby café which relied on customer traffic from the courthouse. Blackbird Café owner Carolyn Scott, whom I met earlier this year, said that the courthouse's customer base helped her business grow by a quarter in 2013 but since the court business has moved to Newcastle the café is much quieter. Carolyn has been forced to lay off several staff and close the business two days a week. Ms Scott said:

It's such a shame for the whole region and there are wider effects than us.

Labor candidate and Maitland area businesswoman Jenny Aitchison said:

We have a government making a decision to reduce services that we desperately need.

The Member for Maitland has shown a clear disregard for the needs of the Maitland and wider Hunter community. The provision of regional district courts is vital to ensuring that the community can play an active role in our justice system.

The potential solutions to these issues are myriad and obvious to me. If the East Maitland facilities are inadequate for the reasons mentioned by the department's spokesperson, such as court equipment including CCTV, perhaps the Government should invest in upgrades in the interest of local justice. If the court sittings are to remain in Newcastle, a wiser approach to transport policy in the Newcastle CBD seems necessary. In making this decision, the Government has shown its lack of interest in delivering for the people of the Hunter. It is incumbent upon the Government—especially its sole remaining Hunter Liberal member of Parliament—to stand up and do the right thing for Maitland and the broader Hunter community.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.25 p.m.]: The Government opposes this misconceived motion. The first misconception is who decides where the District Court sits. Sittings are determined by the Chief Judge of the District Court, not the Government. The Government supports the judiciary decision in that respect. The Government is aware that East Maitland is one of the fastest-growing regional areas in New South Wales. That is why it is building a new and expanded justice precinct in Newcastle, which is expected to open in the middle of next year. The Government acknowledges that residents of East Maitland and Maitland will need to travel to Newcastle—about 30 minutes by car and 36 minutes by train—but when those residents arrive they will find brand new, state-of-the-art facilities.

Contrary to the claim of the member for Wallsend, the Government's transport links in the Hunter are not in a state of flux. The Government has been clear about its plan to introduce light rail in Newcastle and to revitalise Newcastle. The Newcastle Justice Precinct will have 10 separate courts and modern equipment. This

will improve court services for the people of the Maitland area, especially those vulnerable people caught up in the justice system. A spokesman from the Office of the Chief Judge said it had always been the intention to cease District Court sittings at East Maitland once the new 10-court complex in Newcastle opened in 2015. This is not a spokesman for the Attorney General or the Government; it is a spokesman from the office of the Chief Judge. A decision to move District Court matters to Newcastle ahead of schedule was made because of recent building works. The spokesman said that judicial resources would be best used in the new court precinct:

From an efficiency point of view, judicial resources are better utilised at venues where there are multiple courtrooms and where necessary court equipment such as CCTV is in place.

The distance between East Maitland and Newcastle is 30 minutes and court users should benefit from the new state-of-the-art facilities.

It seems that the member for Wallsend does not want people in the lower Hunter around Maitland to enjoy the benefits of state-of-the-art facilities. The decision is all about providing the most efficient delivery of justice to citizens in the lower Hunter. It is more efficient to be done in one place with state-of-the-art facilities. The move of criminal matters from East Maitland to Newcastle will not disadvantage lower Hunter residents. In fact, it will be to their advantage because they will have state-of-the-art, modern facilities in Newcastle that are easily accessible by car and public transport. The Chief Judge's decision to stop listing matters at East Maitland before the new precinct opens is practical. The Chief Judge of the District Court considers that the Hunter will be better served by placing judicial resources at Newcastle, which has more courtrooms and better equipment. This Government supports that decision by the Chief Judge.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.29 p.m.]: The member for Cronulla obviously knows more about the justice system and its courtrooms than most other people in the Chamber. However, I take exception to some of what he has said. I will speak to those points briefly and then I will come back to the motion. The member for Cronulla has suggested that the closure of the East Maitland courthouse is linked to the justice precinct that is being developed in Newcastle. The reality is that one courthouse has been closed and the other is not yet built, let alone open. It is putting it lightly to say that that statement is pre-emptive. He also referred to public transport in the Hunter and the light rail system. He failed to mention that it has not been built at a time when rail services will be cut off for the people of Maitland. If these changes are made, I suggest that the new service should be in place before the pre-existing service is shut down. That common logic was not present in the two examples given by the member for Cronulla.

The decision of the Chief Justice to cease listing matters at East Maitland Court House is obviously a budgetary one. It is clear in all of the budget papers from the past three years that there has been a constant erosion of funding for the entire justice system, which extends into Corrective Services. The Government has continued to withdraw funding, which means that the Chief Justice has been forced to make a decision to close East Maitland Court House. East Maitland has been one of the fastest-growing rural areas in New South Wales for the past 10 years, and it is expected to continue to grow for the next 20 years. The need for criminal justice facilities to be located close to growing populations speaks for itself.

The reality is that the changes to public transport will affect people's ability to travel from East Maitland to Newcastle. The member for Cronulla cited a travel time of 36 minutes by train, which is based on the fact that one can travel from East Maitland and alight from the train opposite the new precinct building currently under construction. That will not be possible in the future. From Boxing Day 2014, the public transport link from East Maitland to Newcastle will be closer to an hour, depending on how seamless the bus interchange is. There is great uncertainty about the changes to the public transport system in the Hunter because the rail line on the western outskirts of the Newcastle central business district [CBD] will be serviced by buses in the short term and, I suspect, for the long term.

If that happens there should be a plan. Indeed, if light rail is to be installed, there should be a plan. I have asked many times in this Chamber and through questions on notice to see the plan. I have asked to be shown the map, the cost-benefit analysis, the timetables, the budget and the order for the new buses required in the Newcastle CBD. None of it exists. The member for Cronulla has suggested that public transport in the Hunter is in flux, which is putting it mildly—it is in complete disarray. The people of the Hunter have tried to bring this issue to the attention of the Government, but they are not being heard. I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and I congratulate her on bringing it to the House.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter) [12.33 p.m.]: I am delighted to join in this debate about East Maitland Court House and to join with the member for Cronulla in opposing the motion moved by the member

for Wallsend, which is supported by the member for Cessnock. I am the member for the Upper Hunter, which adjoins the electorate to Maitland, and speak today in the absence of the member for Maitland, who is on official leave. I join the debate not only in support of my friends in the adjoining electorate but also and particularly in support of my friend the member for Maitland and former ministerial colleague.

I support a number of points made by the member for Cronulla. The Government is not treating the Hunter any differently from the rest of the State. Often terms relating to the Hunter are used without much clarity. Sometimes the word "Hunter" means just Newcastle. Whereas residents of the Hunter like to say that the Hunter, the Lower Hunter and the Upper Hunter are distinct areas. The Government wants to offer first-class justice precincts to all residents regardless of where they live. There are many types of access and facilities available in the Lower Hunter that my constituents in the Upper Hunter envy. That is why mid next year this Government will open the Newcastle justice precinct for use by all Hunter residents.

However, the Government acknowledges that while District Court criminal matters have been transferred to Newcastle, the East Maitland court registry has not been closed. The registry is currently open three days a week from Wednesday to Friday. Inquiries on any other days can be made at Maitland Local Court, which is only five kilometres from East Maitland. We in the Upper Hunter would regard five kilometres as a luxuriously short distance. The NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal has also been sitting at East Maitland Court House at least once a week, which has expanded the availability of tribunal services in the area.

The Government is also pursuing a range of innovative reforms to improve justice services for the Hunter community. The Department of Justice has implemented a range of initiatives designed to reduce the volume of offenders entering the criminal justice system, including Youth on Track, Life on Track, and the Work and Development Orders Scheme. The department has launched an online registry to improve access to the courts to make the court system easier for people to navigate. The online registry allows people to lodge applications and to monitor the progress of their online cases. More than 55 court forms are already available on the online registry, including criminal jurisdiction forms. More than 65,000 forms have been filed online, and that number is constantly increasing. This initiative forms part of the Government's commitment to offer clients a range of service delivery options—in person, by phone and via the web. The member for Wallsend and the member for Cessnock have made a conclusive argument for obvious political purposes, but the reality is more likely to be the way in which the member for Cronulla and I have described.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.37 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. The decision of the Chief Justice to cease hearing criminal cases at East Maitland Court House shows, at best, how out of touch those opposite are. Travel time between East Maitland and Newcastle is 30 minutes, as was mentioned by the member for Cessnock. This is another reason to retain the rail infrastructure because people will need transport to the new courthouse in Newcastle, which was a Labor initiative championed by the former member for Newcastle, the Hon. Jodi McKay. It is estimated that the population of East Maitland will double by 2030. The constituents of East Maitland must be feeling let down by the Baird Government. It is another kick in the guts that downgrades Maitland to a suburban backblock. East Maitland's historic courthouse is easily accessible with free parking, unlike Newcastle's, where parking must be paid for and restricted time limits have been imposed.

Labor has committed, if elected in 2015, to establish specialist domestic violence and sexual assault courts in its first term in office to reduce the trauma experienced by victims when they go to court. Specialist judges and lawyers will be employed and courtrooms will be designed to provide safety and privacy as well as to allow victims to give evidence remotely. What a great Labor initiative. These specialist courts will not only be trialled in Sydney but also in the Hunter and the Illawarra, and will offer greater consistency and efficiency in the handling of domestic violence and sexual assault cases.

They will also provide an improved experience for victims. This improved justice system will lead to better outcomes, including higher rates of reporting offences, convictions and sentencing. Labor will make domestic violence a top propriety, including protecting and supporting victims and bringing perpetrators to justice as quickly as possible in a way that minimises trauma to victims. As I said earlier, I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and congratulate her on bringing this important matter to the attention of the House.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.41 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Cronulla, Cessnock, Upper Hunter and Shellharbour for their contributions to this debate. It is disappointing, but I understand unavoidable, that the member for Maitland is absent today. The community

would love to know whether the member for Maitland lobbied to keep the East Maitland Court House open. Given that the courthouse has been closed, sadly I suspect that was not the case. The member for Cronulla talked about the "new and expanded courthouse" at Newcastle. As I said earlier, the courthouse was a Labor initiative. It was funded by Labor in our last term of government and we look forward to its opening.

To suggest it will take 36 minutes to travel from East Maitland to Newcastle by public transport is stretching the friendship. When the rail line at Wickham is closed on Boxing Day it will take commuters much longer than 36 minutes. It is going to be a long commute—as the member for Cessnock said, it could take more than an hour. It will not be a seamless run. The closure will also lead to clogging of the popular Maitland to Sydney car route. The member for Cessnock also alluded to the fact that the rail line is to be cut but that key managers are yet to be appointed to oversee the project. Despite many requests not only from members on this side of the House but also from the Newcastle media, we know nothing about the provision of bus services and public transport options once the rail line is axed by this Government on Boxing Day.

Even the 30-minute drive suggested by the member for Cronulla is stretching the friendship. That would be on a good day and not in peak hour. Next year there will be more cars and buses on the road because commuters will no longer be able to catch the train seamlessly from Maitland to the city. The member for Cessnock said that the Government has been pre-emptive. The Government closed the East Maitland Court House earlier this year and the courthouse complex at Newcastle is yet to be opened. Commuters from the East Maitland area are now using the yet-to-be-upgraded services of the Newcastle courthouse, which has proved to be a dilemma.

Government members spoke about the decision of the Chief Justice. Let's face it, that decision was based on budgetary constraints as a result of the Liberal Government's cutbacks in funding to the judiciary. The East Maitland Court House was closed because the Government is cutting funding. The termination of the rail line and its replacement by buses will create more uncertainty for people involved in court proceedings, particularly those living in the East Maitland area. I do not think this is going to be a success. I applaud the Labor Government for the new Newcastle courthouse initiative, which we all support, but the uncertainty of public transport is a major concern. I urge all members to support the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

AUSTRALIAN CELTIC FESTIVAL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [12.46 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the twenty-second Australian Celtic Festival was successfully held at Glen Innes from 1 to 4 May 2014.
- (2) Congratulates and acknowledges the efforts of Raelene Watson, Chair of the Australian Celtic Festival; Judi Toms, President of the Australian Standing Stones monument; Margaret Sharpe, Convenor of the Celtic Council of Australia; and Glen Innes Mayor Col Price, Chief Guardian of the Standing Stones, for ensuring the smooth running of another fully engaging festival program.
- (3) Thanks the member for Upper Hunter for joining with the member for Northern Tablelands at the official opening of the festival.

The Australian Celtic Festival is held each year at Glen Innes. It is a wonderful celebration of Celtic culture and friendship. I issue a warm invitation to all members to attend next year's festival in this truly beautiful part of the world, as I am sure the member for Upper Hunter will attest.

Mr George Souris: There is a good baker there.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: There is a very good baker. Staged over four days in early May, visitors and performers flock to the heart of Celtic country to enjoy an amazing array of music, dance, poetry, pomp, Celtic cuisine, ceremony and let's not forget the wonderful bagpipes—it is great to see them paraded down the main street of Glen Innes on a Saturday morning. As the member for the Northern Tablelands, I have had the pleasure of attending the festival for the past two years. On both occasions I have been amazed at the quality of the performances and the time and effort that has gone into managing this event. I offer my hearty

congratulations to the largely volunteer committee that stages this wonderful festival, which attracts more than 2,000 people to the Celtic country at Glen Innes. This year's festival proved to be particularly difficult for the committee as the weather took a turn for the worse: The rain was tumbling down and the mercury dropped to bitterly cold sub zero temperatures, particularly on the Saturday.

I can assure members that it is not comfortable wearing a kilt in sub zero conditions. As sometimes happens in the New England, visitors, volunteers and performers were left scrambling for more clothing, warm fires and indoor venues. Indeed, the member for Upper Hunter officially opened the festival on the Friday in the Glen Innes Town Hall. But the show did carry on in typical Glenn Innes style. Rain plans were brought into action, everything was moved indoors and the event was declared a success by both the hardworking chairperson, Raelene Watson, and the Glen Innes Visitors Information Centre Manager of Tourism and Events, Peter Teschner. Given the feedback received from visitors to the festival, it is evident that the entertainment coordinator, Lara Gresham, put together a sensational and varied program. Although there were some weather disruptions, the committee was able to transition seamlessly to a wet weather schedule.

This year the committee, under the stewardship of John McClusky, introduced a wonderful food court area. It was centrally located at the Standing Stones site and was appreciated by traders and visitors alike. The large seating area was a good place for everyone to sit, enjoy the entertainment and grab a bite to eat. In finer weather the food court has the potential to work as a general hub for entertainment and trading. While some events, including the strong man and Celtic festival fun run and walk, were cancelled due to safety concerns given the icy conditions, attendance at the festival highlight events was excellent. All the clubs and pubs hosting evening events reported high numbers of attendees throughout the festival.

In trying conditions Alan Fletcher and his volunteers staged the Celtic Dog trials. I have nothing but admiration for their efforts and "can-do" attitude—a typical Glen Innes attitude. Site coordinator David Renn faced some new and unforeseen challenges that weekend and is to be applauded for his commitment to that role. Chris Sharman, who was in charge of this year's traffic control at the site, was another man who braved the very cold conditions and worked well with the other volunteers to keep traffic flowing smoothly throughout the weekend. Judi Toms, President of the Australian Standing Stones monument; Glen Innes Severn Council Mayor and Chief Guardian of the Standing Stones, Col Price; Mary Hollingworth, Australian Celtic Festival Coordinator; and staff at the Glen Innes Visitors Information Centre are also to be congratulated on their hard work to ensure the smooth running of yet another fully engaging festival program.

Festivals such as this attract thousands of people to the Glen Innes community. The festival is important for the community because it nourishes the Celtic culture and the strong Celtic roots on which Glen Innes was founded. This year of the festival was the Year of Cornwall. We had a special Cornish meal on the Friday after the official opening. It was great to have a large number of community members, both locals and from across Australia, partake in that luncheon. Of course, the festival could not occur without the strong support of a number of local businesses. I pay tribute to all those businesses that get involved in the Celtic spirit and that sponsor various events over the weekend. They benefit from the increased number of visitors who provide passing trade.

I also pay tribute to Glen Innes Severn Council and the leadership of Mayor Col Price. The council has supported the festival for many years and assisted it in going from strength to strength. Indeed, the upgrade currently being undertaken in the main street of Glen Innes will provide a wonderful forecourt at the front of the beautiful town hall where the bagpipers will be able to congregate and perform their routines in similar style to the famous annual Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. In fact, I am sure they will do it even better. The events at Glen Innes will be even more magnificent once that courtyard and quadrangle area are finally completed. I commend this motion to the House and again record my appreciation to all those involved in the festival. It was a magnificent event again this year, despite the conditions. But when you are celebrating a Celtic festival, it is great to have some genuinely Celtic conditions. I can assure every member of the House that they were genuinely Celtic conditions this year, but it was a great festival nonetheless. Well done to all involved.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I call the member for Cessnock.

Mr Mark Coure: He loves wearing a kilt!

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.53 p.m.]: I am a fan of the kilt, and I thank the member for Oatley for his interjection. He is interjecting before I have even started my contribution to this debate. Barr is a great Scottish name with a strong heritage. I recently had the good fortune to visit the mother country, which

was searching for its independence but unfortunately fell short. Sanity prevailed. I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for moving his motion. He always brings sensible, good-willed motions to the House. I support and endorse the wonderful festivities at Glen Innes. It would have to be the second-best Celtic gathering in this State—the best of course is held at Port Stephens at the Clans on the Coast festival.

There must be something about mayors, as the Clans on the Coast festival is organised by Mr Ron Swan, former Mayor of Port Stephens. The festival has a long tradition. It attracts many thousands of people to the Tomaree sports ground. Like the Glen Innes festival, it includes many wonderful events. There are pipe bands, Scottish and Celtic dancing and singing groups, stalls including those selling Celtic jewellery and clothing, ancient battle re-enactments, a strongman competition, clan tents, and food and beverage stalls with traditional food from the homeland. It really is a great event where people can proudly reflect on their traditions and heritage, particularly the young folk who would not have been able to experience that for themselves. They may have been born and bred in Australia and may not have been to their ancestral homeland. For people who have Celtic origins it is an opportunity to have a good day out—to go along, to see what is happening and to participate.

It really works wonderfully well in the Port Stephens area and across the Hunter in bringing together not only people of Celtic origin but also the broader community. They always have a terrific day. As happened with the weather conditions in Glen Innes during its festival, it seems that the Port Stephens Clans on the Coast festival never goes off without a hitch. This year the stage failed to turn up so the festivities started without one. I understand that the Bunnings store down the road was very supportive and provided equipment to make a temporary stage area. The rope for the tug of war also did not arrive, so festival organisers put out the call for a rope, which was brought in from Maitland. The festivities continued. The weather in Port Stephens probably has not been as cold as that experienced at Glen Innes, but the festival has been all but washed away in previous years. The festival is a terrific tradition and has a long history in Port Stephens. It is wonderful that the clans come together to celebrate their heritage. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.57 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands and to congratulate the organisers of the Australian Celtic Festival at Glen Innes. What I like about the Celtic festival at Glen Innes is that it mirrors many other events held across regional New South Wales. We have a number of festivals in the Tamworth electorate that play a significant role in the community. They are normally held over weekends and they boost sales for local businesses. Volunteers get involved and there is a general sense of community, a vibrancy and an enthusiasm on display during these events.

The member for Northern Tablelands would know all too well being a former mayor of Gunnedah that we recently held the Annual Porchetta Day in Gunnedah, which is an Italian food festival. Thousands gathered at the Gunnedah showgrounds to sample the food. It was a great example of volunteers getting together to host events and everybody enjoying a bit of culture. There is also the Barraba festival and arts show, which is fantastic. Again, it is run by volunteers and it is great to see that festival going from strength to strength. Nundle hosts the Nundle Go For Gold Chinese Easter Festival. Nundle is a unique village—it won the Australian Tidy Towns Award this year and will host the tidy towns award finals in November. I sincerely congratulate the community of Nundle and the tidy towns committee on their great work.

Mr Adam Marshall: It is a very clean town.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: It is a very clean town. Werris Creek has the famous rail museum. It was the first railway town in New South Wales and the museum is a significant landmark in the area. I encourage people when they come to the New England north-west region to have a look at the Werris Creek Rail Museum. Yet again it is run by volunteers, which highlights just how valuable volunteers are. The Tamworth Country Music Festival, the crème de la crème of festivals, is one of the biggest festivals in the Southern Hemisphere. It is will be held again in late January next year and I invite all members and guests to attend. It is a festival to behold. It is not only about country music; it is also about many other styles of music. The member for Orange is a big country music fan who has been threatening to come to the festival for some time. I invite him, his family and his constituents to come to Tamworth. We would love to see them there.

I sincerely thank all our volunteers for doing a fantastic job in hosting community events in our regions. Without them the events would not be possible and we would not be able to showcase our great regional towns and villages to highlight what they have to offer. I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing the Australian Celtic Festival to the attention of the House. I remember reporting on the festival

during my time as a Prime television newsreader. I am glad to hear that it continues to go from strength to strength. I commend the member for Northern Tablelands and once again thank the volunteers who host regional events.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): A number of members have mentioned what they consider to be the greatest festivals. I add to the list the Southern Highlands and Viva la Gong festivals.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [1.01 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Cessnock and my colleague the member for Tamworth for contributing to debate on this motion. I also thank them for acknowledging the hard work of not only the Glenn Innes festival volunteers this year but also the organisers of various festivals in and around their electorates. I understand that this festival is just one of many across rural and regional New South Wales and that volunteers are critical to the success of such events.

Again I thank both members for their contributions and for adding their congratulations to those that I extended to the volunteers, including Judi Toms, Raelene Watson, Col Price and Margaret Sharpe and others who did a magnificent job. I also thank the member for Upper Hunter, who opened the festival. I again congratulate the council and the community on a magnificent festival that continues to grow. It makes an important contribution to the vibrancy of the Northern Tablelands and helps to maintain Celtic culture with the standing stones at Glen Innes.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

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

Report: 2014 General Meetings

Debate resumed from 18 September 2014.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [1.02 p.m.]: The report of the Committee on the Ombudsman, Police Integrity Commission and Crime Commission was tabled on 18 August 2014. The committee's statutory oversight responsibilities require it to monitor and review the work conducted by the bodies it oversees, which the committee does by reviewing annual reports and other publications as well as through general meetings. This report contains the annual report reviews for all the bodies that the committee oversees. They are the Police Integrity Commission [PIC], the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, the NSW Crime Commission, the Information and Privacy Commission, the NSW Ombudsman, and the Child Death Review Team.

The committee's oversight responsibilities now also include the newly appointed Inspector of the NSW Crime Commission and the Inspector of Custodial Services. Together these agencies play a critical role in maintaining the integrity of the New South Wales public sector. This year we have continued to improve the way we report to Parliament on our statutory functions. Key themes and common issues that came up during the general meetings have been consolidated into a single chapter. The themes we considered were the oversight of police critical incidents, changes to agencies' jurisdictions, proposals for legislative change and cooperation between agencies. I will briefly outline each of these issues.

Early this year we saw the release of the report of an independent review of the oversight of police critical incidents conducted by Mr Robert McClelland. By way of background, critical incidents involve the death or serious injury of a police officer or civilian arising from a police operation. During their general meetings with the committee the Ombudsman and the PIC both expressed concern at some of the review's recommendations. The PIC was concerned about comments in the review report that questioned the need for the PIC and suggested that the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and the PIC should be amalgamated into one body. The committee considered this issue and concluded that the McClelland review's proposal to merge the ICAC and the PIC would be a significant change to the current integrity system in New South Wales and should be carefully considered.

The Ombudsman was concerned that some of the review's recommended reforms to the oversight of critical incidents would effectively end his ability to monitor police investigations of critical incidents. The

committee considers that the roles played by the Ombudsman and the PIC in relation to critical incidents are important and should not be downgraded. We have recommended that any reforms to the oversight of critical incidents should retain the Ombudsman's role to monitor police critical incident investigations and the PIC's role to investigate police misconduct, including in relation to critical incidents.

The committee supports the work of the Ombudsman and the PIC and considers that their oversight has led to improvements in the police response to critical incidents. We do not support any measure that would weaken independent oversight of police critical incidents. During 2013 and 2014 a number of changes were made to the roles of agencies overseen by the committee, which was partly due to the establishment of new statutory offices. Examples of these changes include enabling one person to occupy the positions of both Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission and Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and the establishment of the offices of Inspector of the Crime Commission and Inspector of Custodial Services. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

The committee is pleased to note that agencies affected by these changes have worked with each other to manage additional responsibilities and to reduce any overlaps arising from jurisdictional changes. These jurisdictional changes and new responsibilities have also led to proposals for legislative change to clarify some aspects of agencies' roles. These proposed changes related to the arrangements for the management of complaints about Crime Commission officers, the role of official visitors in assisting the Inspector of Custodial Services and biennial reporting by the Child Death Review Team.

The committee supports legislative amendments that assist oversighted bodies in performing their roles and will continue to monitor the need for legislative change. In addition to exploring the themes I have discussed, this year's report on general meetings also drew attention to specific agency projects. These projects included the NSW Crime Commission Organised Crime Disruption Strategy, the NSW Ombudsman's work on Operation Prospect and the Child Death Review Team's progress towards improving the identification of children's Indigenous status.

I will briefly outline one of these projects. The Child Death Review Team's role includes identifying trends and patterns in child deaths. In its 2012 annual report the team was not able to report on trends for Indigenous child deaths because of inconsistent methods of identifying and reporting children's Indigenous status. Different approaches have been used over time to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and the base population of Indigenous children, which enables mortality rates to be calculated. These discrepancies meant that the data was not directly comparable.

The team has addressed this issue by requesting the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to provide advice on how to collect and report on the Indigenous status of children. The committee heard that the team will introduce systems to ensure consistency and follow the institute's guidance on the identification of Indigenous status. Given that Indigenous children are overrepresented in all child death categories where prevention is a key factor, better identification of Indigenous status is key to improving our understanding of Indigenous child deaths and implementing preventative measures. I especially wish to acknowledge the Hon. Catherine Cusack, MLC, who chaired the committee for three years and presided over the general meetings with oversighted agencies.

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

Report noted.

COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report: Review of the 2012-2013 Annual Reports of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption

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

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping) [1.12 p.m.]: Today I speak in debate on the report of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC], which was tabled on 22 September 2014. The committee's oversight responsibilities require it to review annual reports and other reports of the ICAC and the ICAC Inspector. This report is the result of the committee's review of the most recent annual reports produced by the Inspector and the ICAC. This year the committee combined the reviews of both agencies into a single

report. This enabled us to highlight key themes and issues that arose during the review in a concise and consolidated format. The themes we considered are the McClelland review and its impact on the ICAC, prosecutions arising from ICAC investigations, and the role of the ICAC in effecting cultural change within the public sector.

The committee also noted the recent appointments of a new commissioner and inspector. The Hon. Megan Latham commenced her term as ICAC Commissioner in January 2014 while the Hon. David Levine, AO, RFD, QC, commenced as Inspector of the ICAC in February 2014. Mr Levine is the first person to undertake both the roles of ICAC and Police Integrity Commission [PIC] Inspector following the introduction of legislation enabling one person to serve in both roles. The committee acknowledges the service of the former ICAC Inspector, Harvey Cooper, and the former ICAC Commissioner, David Ipp, and wishes them all the best in their future endeavours.

Early this year, the report of an independent review of the oversight of police critical incidents, conducted by a former Commonwealth Attorney-General, Mr Robert McClelland, was released. By way of background, I explain that critical incidents involve the death or serious injury of a police officer or civilian arising from a police operation. While the ICAC does not have a role in critical incidents, the report made a recommendation that could impact on the ICAC. Mr McClelland recommended that the ICAC and the PIC enter into a memorandum of understanding to share facilities, resources and capabilities. The commentary preceding the recommendation suggested that a merger of the two bodies may be desirable.

The ICAC and ICAC Inspector told the committee that they did not support the proposal to merge the two bodies. It was argued that a merger would raise issues of confidentiality and make it difficult to maintain the integrity of investigations. The specialist expertise required to investigate police corruption may be lost if the PIC and ICAC were amalgamated. The ICAC Commissioner's view was that there would be little or no cost savings resulting from a merger, due to the need to create a larger body that would combine the functions currently undertaken by the ICAC and the PIC.

The establishment of a separate body to investigate police misconduct implemented a recommendation of the Wood royal commission. The royal commission had recommended the creation of the PIC, having considered and dismissed the creation of a division within ICAC to deal with police misconduct. The original reasons for the creation of the PIC were similar to those raised in evidence with the committee, centring on confidentiality, independence and proper resourcing of police misconduct investigations. The committee considered this issue and concluded that the McClelland review's proposal to merge the ICAC and the PIC would be a significant change to the current oversight system in New South Wales, which was not supported by the ICAC, PIC or the Inspector. The committee did not support an amalgamation of the ICAC and PIC and has recommended the retention of the current system, with separate bodies to investigate police and public sector corruption.

The issue of prosecutions arising from ICAC investigations has been the subject of much public and media comment in recent months. The committee previously considered delays in prosecutions and noted the work of both the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP] and ICAC in improving their systems to minimise delays and ensure more timely prosecutions. While recent concern about prosecutions may be based on misconceptions about the ICAC's role, the committee nonetheless considered that it was timely to examine prosecution processes. In June this year the committee commenced an inquiry into prosecutions arising from ICAC investigations.

The inquiry is examining issues including whether gathering and assembling evidence that may be admissible in the prosecution of a person for a criminal offence should be a principal function of the ICAC, the effectiveness of ICAC and DPP processes, adequacy of resourcing, whether there is a need to create new criminal offences that capture corrupt conduct, and arrangements for the prosecution of corrupt conduct in other jurisdictions. Through this inquiry the committee is seeking to obtain evidence on ways to assist the DPP and ICAC with gathering and assembling evidence arising from ICAC investigations and other reforms to improve current processes. In addition to considering the outcomes of ICAC investigations, the committee's report also draws attention to the commission's work in effecting cultural change in the public sector. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Agencies are required to report suspected corruption to the ICAC. The ICAC's assessments section monitors reporting trends and the committee heard that the section will respond to suspected underreporting by particular sectors or agencies. For instance, when an agency restructure occurs, the ICAC's assessment section

will work with the agency to ensure that reporting requirements continue to be observed notwithstanding any organisational changes. Many agencies are changing the way they obtain corruption prevention advice by accessing private sector or in-house corruption prevention advice and training. The ICAC has responded to this by refocusing its corruption prevention work to analysing relevant State systems.

Targeted corruption prevention advice and training are also developed during the course of ICAC investigations. The committee heard that following recent investigations that revealed corruption, senior executives at Roads and Maritime Services and Sydney Trains were offered training that focused on corruption issues. Given that some agencies are overrepresented in ICAC investigations, targeted corruption prevention is an important way to bring about cultural change in agencies that may lack awareness of common corruption risks. The ICAC's investigations attract a great deal of media and public interest and are an important aspect of the commission's role of investigating and exposing public sector corruption.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the other work undertaken by the commission, which is just as crucial to addressing corruption. The committee noted that the ICAC's assessments and corruption prevention divisions are targeted and proactive, and respond to changes in the public sector. In closing, I thank the ICAC Commissioner and Inspector and their staff for their cooperation and participation in the annual report reviews. I also thank committee members and the staff of the committee for their work. I acknowledge my predecessor as Chair, Dominic Perrottet, who presided over the public hearings with the ICAC and ICAC Inspector, as well as other members who showed great patience throughout their deliberations.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.16 p.m.]: I echo the good wishes of the chairman of the committee to the outgoing chairman, Dominic Perrottet, who has been elevated to the ministry, and I thank the new chairman, the Hon. Greg Smith, for chairing the committee in a professional manner. I also echo the comments in the chairman's foreword in this annual report in recognising the good service of the Hon. David Ipp, AO, QC, and of Mr Harvey Cooper, AM, for their service as the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] Commissioner and Inspector respectively. I have enjoyed being a member of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption and have found it to be an interesting experience.

The report before the House relates to the requirement by the parliamentary committee to review each of the ICAC annual reports and that of the ICAC Inspector. I thank the staff who have supported the committee. Over the years there have been a few changes but committee members with whom I have spoken have praised the professional and friendly way in which the secretariat has supported the members, provided briefings and followed up on questions.

At page 53 of the report I again raise questions about some of the ICAC's processes relating to Operation Syracuse, particularly as it referred to the former member for Drummoyne, Angela D'Amore. I repeat what I have previously said on this subject: the public investigation into this former member was a waste of ICAC's resources and the corruption finding is an issue of questionable judgement. The matter related to Ms D'Amore claiming wages for a staff member who, at the time, was working in one of her electoral offices and not at Parliament House. The rule was repealed because it was unworkable, yet Ms D'Amore was found corrupt on a rule that no longer existed. The staffing arrangement which she had is now a common practice by members of this House and is not corrupt.

When the commissioner gave evidence to the committee, I asked some questions about the processes in place in circumstances where the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP] advises that no prosecution will take place. I draw attention to pages 53, 54 and 55 of the report. In the case of the former member for Drummoyne, she first learned that the DPP would not be prosecuting her when a family member almost accidentally came across the fact on the ICAC website. The report outlines the answers to this issue by the ICAC officers. They state that they do not feel they should advise someone that the DPP has advised them that no prosecution will be undertaken but they just file the information on their website.

ICAC should consider a process whereby, when it is advised of such information, it writes a formal letter to the person involved, setting out the result of the DPP's decision. That is due process and common sense. Had some fair process been in place, Ms D'Amore may not have undertaken appeals to various courts with the consequent high costs incurred in doing so. In recent years ICAC has carried out substantial investigations that should stand as the benchmark for future inquiries. ICAC should not be using its resources for piddling matters such as Operation Syracuse. I found interesting the chairman's comments about future inquiries by ICAC. The public demands prosecutions and possible convictions from these serious investigations. ICAC will be judged harshly by the public for anything less.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.20 p.m.]: I contribute to the take-note debate on the 2012-2013 annual reports of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and the ICAC Inspector tabled out of session on 22 September 2014 and acknowledge my fellow committee members—the chair and member for Epping; the members representing the electorates of Mount Druitt, Oatley, Lismore, Gosford, and Toongabbie; and our colleagues from the other place, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, the Hon. Niall Blair, and the Hon. Lynda Voltz. I acknowledge also the two former chairpersons, the member for Castle Hill and the member for Cronulla.

Amidst the current political climate in New South Wales, it goes without saying that the functions of the ICAC committee are more relevant than ever. These functions include, but are not limited to, monitoring and reviewing the exercise by ICAC and the Inspector of ICAC of their functions; examining annual and other reports of the ICAC and the Inspector; and examining trends and changes in corrupt conduct, practices and methods of corrupt conduct. The committee report focused on four key themes, the first being the appointment of a new commissioner and inspector in 2014, with the Hon. Megan Latham commencing her five-year term as commissioner in January 2014, and with the Hon. David Levine, AD, RFD, QC, commencing as Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption in February 2014.

The committee noted that this was a transition year for both the ICAC and the inspectorate, and that there has been considerable change in the duties of the Inspector, which now include the oversight of both the Police Integrity Commission [PIC] and ICAC Inspector roles. The second issue considered by the committee report concerned prosecutions arising from ICAC investigations. The committee recognised the continuing efforts of the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP] and ICAC in working together, but noted recent public concern regarding prosecutions arising from some ICAC findings of corruption, such as the one raised by the member for Mount Druitt. Whilst also noting strategies adopted by ICAC and the DPP in reducing delay in commencing prosecutions, the committee resolved to conduct an inquiry into prosecutions arising from ICAC investigations, to examine various issues such as processes, resourcing, evidence-gathering, prosecution arrangements, and the need for new criminal offences. A third issue considered by the committee was recommendation 8 of the McClelland report, which recommended merging the functions of the Police Integrity Commission and ICAC.

The final topic reviewed in the committee report was ICAC's role in effecting cultural change in New South Wales. It is a role of ICAC to educate and instruct public authorities and officials on how to report corrupt conduct and on how to make changes to practices and procedures to reduce the chance of future corrupt conduct. The committee made several comments regarding this topic. The committee noted the importance of reporting obligations under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act in ensuring that principal officers of agencies are aware of what constitutes corrupt behaviour. The committee further noted the proactive and effective way that ICAC was notifying agencies of their reporting obligations and the significance of this work in building awareness of corruption within agencies to foster a culture that finds corruption repugnant.

The work of the Corruption Protection Division to implement training for senior management of agencies affected by corruption was recognised as being an important aspect to bring about cultural change, to prevent corruption and to raise awareness of common corruption risks. The committee also recognised the critical importance of the Corruption Protection Division and the assessments section in stamping out corruption in the public sector and promoting cultural change. The committee commended ICAC for its strategic and effective approach in contributing to this objective. I commend the report to the House.

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

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 62/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.26 p.m.]: I thank the House for the opportunity to update it on the comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in digest No. 62/55 tabled on 14 October 2014. This was the sixty-second digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. Three bills were introduced in the sitting week commencing 16 September and the

committee made comments on two. The Criminal Records Amendment (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014 amends the Criminal Records Act to enable certain convictions for a number of decriminalised homosexual sexual conduct offences to become extinguished retrospectively. Unlike a spent conviction, an extinguished conviction operates as if the offence had never occurred, rather than a spent conviction which merely prevents people from having to disclose relatively minor historical offences, without retrospectively extinguishing the convictions.

While the committee generally comments where provisions are drafted to have retrospective effect, the committee recognises that this law does not create new offences or penalties or remove rights but instead extinguishes minor historical convictions and, in doing so, helps remove any discrimination that may subsequently follow from the existence of having such an offence recorded. As such, the committee did not find this provision unreasonable in the circumstances. The committee also made a minor point about the possible lack of clarity about the persons to whom the Secretary of the Department of Justice may delegate his or her power when extinguishing convictions. The committee expressed its preference that the persons or class of persons to whom this power may be delegated should be listed in the bill. The committee made no further comment.

I turn now to the Rural Fires Amendment Bill, which provides for a series of new offences with respect to discarding a match or tobacco product from a vehicle, setting fire to another person's land or property, or letting that fire escape. The bill also makes it an aggravated offence to set fire to land or let a fire escape in the knowledge that there is a total fire ban in force. The committee noted that the provisions introduce a strict liability offence for the owner or driver of a vehicle involved in the discarding of a fire risk object, even if the owner or driver is not the individual responsible for the offence. The committee expressed its concern at legislation that removes the presumption of innocence and deems individuals guilty of offences for which they may not be responsible. Despite this, the committee also appreciated the difficulty at times of investigating such offences and the reality that often the owner of the vehicle will likely know who is driving it and the driver of a vehicle will likely know which passenger discarded a match or cigarette. On this point, the committee made no further comment.

By leave, consideration of Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) extended beyond 1.30 p.m.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The committee also noted the significant increases for an offence committed during a total fire ban. The proposal would increase offences for setting fire to land or property of another person during a total fire ban from 50 penalty units and/or imprisonment of 12 months to 1,200 penalty units and/or imprisonment for seven years. The committee noted that these increases are substantial in scope and, as such, may be deemed excessive punishment disproportionate to the offence committed. However, the committee further noted the policy reasons for increasing these penalties, particularly for offences committed when there is a total fire ban or where there is a risk of endangering other property or people when setting fire to land. For this reason, the committee makes no further comment. I thank the committee staff for the preparation of the draft digest and the members of the committee for their attendance at the meeting.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.32 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition, I speak on Legislation Review Digest No. 62 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. As always, I acknowledge my fellow members of the Legislative Review Committee and the staff in particular for preparing the digest. This week the committee considered three bills: the Criminal Records (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014; the Fernleigh Track Conservation Area Protection Bill 2014; and the Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2014. I turn my attention to the first bill, the Criminal Records (Historical Homosexual Offences) Bill 2014, the object of which is to amend the Criminal Records Act so that certain convictions for specified decriminalised homosexual conduct offences can become extinguished. This bill establishes a process to allow people convicted of these particular offences to apply for the conviction to be extinguished. The committee made the following comment:

The Committee generally comments where provisions are drafted to have retrospective effect. This is because such provisions are contrary to the rule of law which allows a person knowledge of what the law is at any given time. In this case, however, the retrospective provision does not retrospectively create new offences or penalties or remove rights. Instead it retrospectively extinguishes convictions for historical offences. In the circumstances, the Committee makes no further comment.

The committee also reviewed the Fernleigh Track Conservation Area Protection Bill 2014. The object of this bill is to prevent the sale, lease or other disposal of certain land set aside for the East Charlestown Bypass, a project that is not being proceeded with. The land is in the vicinity of the Fernleigh Track Conservation Area in

the local government area of Lake Macquarie and is presently owned by Roads and Maritime Services. Lastly, the committee considered the Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to amend the Rural Fires Act 1997 to make further provisions with respect to fire-related offences and fire permits. The bill creates an amendment to section 99A of the Act which currently states that:

A person must not, without lawful authority, discard a lighted tobacco product or match or any incandescent material on any land.

Schedule 1 item [4] to the Rural Fires Amendment Bill extends this section of the Act to make owners of a vehicle responsible if objects considered a fire risk are discarded from their vehicles, with exceptions listed. The bill also amends several sections of the Act to increase penalties in certain circumstances. For instance, during a total fire ban being in force, if a person sets fire to another person's land or property or permits fire to escape from land, a court must take the total fire ban into account as an aggravating factor when deciding what the penalty will be for the offence. If the accused knew of the total fire ban being in place, this will be treated as an aggravating element. The committee made the following comment with regard to increased penalties within the bill:

The Committee notes the significant increase in penalties proposed under the amendments may be deemed an excessive punishment, disproportionate to the offence committed. However, the Committee also notes the policy reasons for increasing these penalties, particularly for offences committed when there is a total fire ban, where there is a risk of endangering other property or people when setting fire to land. For this reason, the Committee makes no further comment.

I commend Legislation Review Digest No. 62/55 to the House.

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

Report noted.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Noreen Hay) left the chair at 1.36 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery Dr Damir Kušen, Ambassador from the Embassy of the Republic of Croatia in Australia, a guest of mine, the member for Hornsby, the member for Oatley and the member for Smithfield. Welcome to question time.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome 22 year 12 legal studies students and their teachers from Dubbo College Senior Campus, guests of the Leader of the Nationals, Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, Minister for the Arts and member for Dubbo. Welcome also to the winners of the 2014 Campbelltown Academic Challenge, including students and teachers from Sackville Street Public School, Glenfield Public School, Ingleburn North Public School, Ingleburn Public School, Wattle Grove Public School and Sarah Redfern High School, guests of the member for Campbelltown. I welcome also to the gallery members of the Office of Environment and Heritage Young Professionals Network, guests of the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, Assistant Minister for Planning and member for Pittwater. Welcome to everybody to question time.

DEATH OF MAURICE FRANCIS KEANE, A FORMER MEMBER FOR WORONORA

The SPEAKER: It is with regret that I have to announce to the House the death, on 12 October 2014, of Maurice Francis Keane, a former member of the Legislative Assembly, who served as the member for Woronora from 17 November 1973 to 22 February 1988. On behalf of the House, I extend to the family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.

LEADER OF THE NATIONALS

Mr TROY GRANT: I inform the House that on 16 October 2014 I was elected as the Leader of The Nationals.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.22p.m.]

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Today his electoral funding laws were criticised in the media for the "lack of retrospectivity which is likely to result in past wrongdoers escaping with the old softly-softly punishment". Will the Premier fix this loophole to ensure charges and penalties will apply to anyone involved in illegal donations at the last election?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I answered this question yesterday. We do not know the findings that will come from the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and the consequences that will flow from that, so we cannot pretend that we do. If those opposite wish to play political games, which is clearly what they wish to do, they can, but when they turn their attention to policy, it gets a little bit frightening. My attention has been drawn to a matter of policy. We received a little update about the Wollongong convention centre.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129, relevance. The Premier's answer has so far been lacking because he has moved away from being anywhere relevant to the question. He has now moved on to south of Sydney.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier indicated he has answered the question. He is therefore entitled to speak about other matters. I said yesterday that members may not receive answers that they want to hear. There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Spectacularly the member for Wollongong has put together a notice of motion—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier indicated he has answered the question. I will not tolerate further points of order on relevance.

Mr John Robertson: There is a requirement to remain, at all times, generally relevant. That requirement has been flouted in this Parliament for the past 3½ years by members saying that the question has been answered and they then use the time to talk about anything they like.

The SPEAKER: And that is correct, they can.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: There is a requirement, at all times, to be generally relevant, not to talk about the weather because it is uncomfortable to answer questions about retrospectivity.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I answered that question up front.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that disorderly conduct in the Chamber is unparliamentary.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I have rejected absolutely the assertions that are made in the question. If Opposition members wish to play politics, they can, but Government members want to get on with policy. That is what happens in a State election campaign. What is relevant is that when they play politics with policy, they receive an update from the member for Wollongong about the convention centre—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: 129. I know the Speaker does not want to hear it, but the Premier has been asked these questions four times.

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope that is not a reflection on the Chair.

Ms Linda Burney: The answer has to be relevant to the question. The Premier has not answered the question. He is avoiding the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier indicated that he has answered the question.

Ms Linda Burney: The Premier has a responsibility to the people of New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! It may not be the answer that the member for Canterbury likes. The Premier has indicated that he answered the question yesterday. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We now have a request for costing. The costing has come in at \$40 million. It is not just a convention centre but a state-of-the-art convention centre, so drawings must be on their way. They do drawings very well. I am trying to work out how the member for Wollongong does the costing process.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I can imagine they call their shadow Cabinet costing committee, but there is no shadow Cabinet costing committee.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will come to order. I call the member for Kiama to order.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: 129, relevance. The Premier is using the term "policy". There is a policy matter that he refuses to answer; that is, why do the laws he has brought into Parliament not address the issue of retrospectivity so that it captures those who may well be found to have acted corruptly? It is straightforward. The Wollongong entertainment centre does not save the Premier from being so weak.

The SPEAKER: Order! That comment by the Leader of the Opposition is inappropriate. The Premier's time has expired.

HUNTER INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government getting on with the job of delivering for the Hunter and associated matters?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is how to ask a question. That was a great question asked by a great member. It will not surprise anyone in this House that when we came to office we knew we would inherit a mess after 16 years of Labor.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We also knew that after 16 years the Opposition did absolutely nothing for the Hunter. There was no vision, no plan, no delivery. That is why they are so frustrated.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will resume his seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have guests in the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! Yesterday I had to evict seven members from this Chamber; today it will be eight, nine or more if this kind of behaviour continues. Arguments, shouting and interjections are disorderly. The remainder of question time today will be conducted in silence. If it is not, members will find themselves immediately evicted from the Chamber under Standing Order 249 without previous calls to order. I call the House to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When we came to government we said it was about time the Hunter got the attention it had been waiting for and deserved. That was one of the reasons why for the first time in the history of this State a budget was centred on Newcastle. In 2013 we announced \$460 million to be directed towards the revitalisation of Newcastle, which included the proceeds from the lease of the Port of Newcastle. The difference is that you can have proceeds but you need funding to go with it. You can make announcements but those announcements must be funded. We said that \$460 million would go towards the revitalisation of the city, which is long overdue, and this Government will deliver.

The response in Newcastle to that was pretty clear. They said, "This is our time." The Government is proud to be delivering for the people of Newcastle. What did the Leader of the Opposition say to that? He said, "The sale is absurd. Most people in Newcastle ... will be devastated." But that has not stopped him from starting to spend the money. The great thing about the Labor Party is that they say that something should not go ahead and as soon as they are finished, with the placards up, they go back and ask where the chequebook is.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They ask how they can spend the money. That is in their DNA.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Leader of the Opposition has now gone to the people of Newcastle and said, "Here is a convention centre. Here is a sky bridge. On top of that, we will be putting trees in to slow down trains"—even that fantastic policy is not costed.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We do not know where the trees are coming from. That is exactly the type of policy you get from the Leader of the Opposition. But this Government is determined to deliver. The people of the Hunter have been waiting for more than 20 years; they deserve those services and infrastructure. Why have they waited that long? They have waited that long because those opposite delivered absolutely nothing.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is why the Government is so proud to be delivering. In simple terms, we have delivered \$350 million in the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund. Those funds will be used for projects across that great region.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have also provided \$280 million for the Newcastle Inner City Bypass—the people of Newcastle have waited 50 years for that.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are now delivering that \$280 million.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: One might think there could not be any more for roads but, of course, we have delivered more.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have delivered upgrades to Nelson Bay Road, the New England Highway through Maitland, and to Lemon Tree Passage Road. We have awarded the design contract for the Tourle Street upgrade and we are fixing the road network at Glendale. This responsible Government is delivering.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In the Health portfolio we have upgrades to John Hunter Hospital, Muswellbrook Hospital, Cessnock Hospital and a site selected for a new hospital for Maitland. Under Jillian the Builder the Government is delivering in the Health portfolio. In the Police and Emergency Services portfolio we are delivering new fire stations at Lambton, Maryland and Rutherford. We are supporting our police with a major development at Belmont and upgrades at Toronto and Morisset. We are delivering on the ground for the people. We have additional frontline services with more nurses, police and teachers.

We have also looked after those most vulnerable in the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] trial. I again congratulate the former Premier and the Minister for Disability Services for securing this important step in what is an historic national agreement. The Government is very proud of its record. For too long those opposite took the people of the Hunter for granted; we will not do that. The Government will continue to deliver, as we have done, in infrastructure, health, police, frontline services and looking after the vulnerable. The people of the Hunter have waited a long time for this. The Government will continue to deliver for them.

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

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I direct my question to the Premier. Yesterday when asked about illegal donations the Premier said, "We are very happy to bring forward stronger penalties." If that is the case, why will the Premier not make those penalties retrospective to apply to anyone found by the ICAC to have been involved in illegal donations at the last election?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I say again, and I have said it here on a number of occasions, that the independent inquiry has strongly recommended against the principle Labor suggests.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are responding to the recommendations. ICAC has its work to do, and one does not know what is going to come out of ICAC.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is the position. I am not going to be lectured by those opposite on matters of probity and transparency when the Leader of the Opposition is someone who went back and forth to Eddie's office. He went back and forth so much that as Eddie said, in his own words, he made him leader.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order will come as no surprise. My question was about retrospectivity and the laws the Premier has passed to apply to his crossbench.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I have absolutely answered the question. Those opposite have no credibility on this issue. We are happy to take the recommendations of Kerry Schott who is overseeing the reform of this system. That is what we are doing. Those opposite can decide to play politics with it. If they do, they can go and knock themselves out. The Opposition's record in this area is unbelievable. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to go back and forth to Eddie's office, that is his business. If he wants Eddie to put him in as the leader, that is his business—

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

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order is 129, relevance. The question is about retrospectivity; it is not about the Bristol Arms Retro Hotel, which the Premier knows about.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked. That was a spurious point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Fairfield has waited 3½ years for that?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I look forward to the next 3½ years. I hope the member has something a bit better than that in 3½ years. I have answered the question. I say again that it is beyond comprehension for those opposite to pretend they have any scruples or morals on this issue, but I would not put it past them. That is why they are pursuing this. The Government is putting forward reforms to make a difference in this area and we are getting on with the job of delivering the services and infrastructure that the people of New South Wales need at the same time.

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

HUNTER ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I address my question to the Deputy Premier-elect. How is the Government continuing to deliver for the people of the Hunter by investing in its arts and cultural sector?

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

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his question. He is an outstanding local member who has served his community with distinction for 26 years. He is a strong member of a united Nationals team that is working hard to transform New South Wales. I pay tribute to him for his outstanding work as a former parliamentary Leader of The Nationals and for his outstanding work as the Minister preceding me in my current portfolio. He has laid a wonderful foundation.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: On the subject of outstanding leaders, I thank the member for Oxley, Andrew Stoner, Barry O'Farrell and Mike Baird. I thank Andrew Stoner for all his hard work. He has given the The Nationals in New South Wales the strongest foundation we have ever had.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: There is no doubt that the NSW Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering for the people of the Hunter. In our first term we have refocused government attention on regional communities. We have already invested more than \$13 billion in critical infrastructure projects and employed an additional 2,200 nurses, congratulations to the Minister for Health, and teachers, congratulations to the wonderful Minister for Education, and police, thanks to the outstanding work of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, across regional New South Wales. This investment is being delivered thanks to the tireless dedication and hard work of local members across the Hunter. I say well done to them all. Since becoming Minister, I have already visited the Hunter and surrounds eight times.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: In my capacity as Minister for the Arts I have pledged \$7,500 in seed funding to ScreenHunter to support the Hunter's burgeoning screen industry. There are some very talented people in that area.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. Their interjections are inappropriate. Government members also will come to order.

Mr TROY GRANT: This investment was championed by the immensely capable Annette Hubber. I recently opened the WUPA@Wanaruah Aboriginal Art and Culture Event in Pokolbin, in the electorate of the member for Cessnock. I saw the work of talented local Aboriginal artists. I also took up an invitation from the member for Maitland to tour the outstanding Maitland Regional Art Gallery. This week the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is pleased to announce that it is investing more than \$286,000 in six organisations in the Hunter region including: \$60,000 to support the Crack Theatre Festival in Newcastle; \$31,000 for the new performing arts project by the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council; \$50,000 for the Hunter Writers Centre; and \$10,000 for the Gloucester Gallery.

I am also pleased to inform the House that \$70,000 is being invested into Newcastle's Historic Reserve Trust to support the Lock Up, a contemporary arts centre and hub for creative thinking. Also, \$65,000 has been invested in Tantrum Youth Arts to work with young people across the Hunter region, the emerging artists in that beautiful part of the world. In my other portfolio of Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, I have had the opportunity to meet with local liquor accords and discuss with them local alcohol-related harm reduction measures. I have had the opportunity to tour the Newcastle Harness Racing Club and I met with participants there. The Government delivered \$1.8 million via the excellent ClubGRANTS system to redevelop a multi-sports and activity centre at the Cessnock Police Citizens Youth Club.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: On the issue of relevance, what about the Newcastle Art Gallery?

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

Mr TROY GRANT: The outstanding Resources for Regions program is delivering a swag of infrastructure projects in the Hunter, all overseen with dedication and commitment by this Government. Funding of \$4 million has been provided for the Muswellbrook Hospital emergency department upgrade; \$2 million towards the Bridgman Road at Singleton Heights to widen and upgrade the intersection with the New England Highway; and \$6 million for upgrades to the Regional Livestock Markets in Singleton.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr TROY GRANT: I am proud to be part of a team that is working hard for the people of the Hunter, especially on our priority of supporting the community, growing the visitor economy and developing skills in the Hunter region. The Premier and I are as one on this issue; the Hunter region is extraordinarily important. Having been born there and being a member of the Newcastle Knights, I am passionate about the Hunter. The member for Wallsend took a point of order about the Newcastle Art Gallery. According to the *Newcastle Herald* on 11 October 2014 in an article by Jason Gordon the Labor Party made a significant announcement—

Ms Linda Burney: Yes, we did.

The SPEAKER: Order! That was not a question directed to the member for Canterbury.

Mr TROY GRANT: —that if Labor is elected \$7 million from the State Government will go to that project. That pledge was made by Labor candidate Tim Crakanthorp on 10 October. Is that right?

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: To assist the new—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time.

Mr TROY GRANT: This wonderful candidate for Labor in Newcastle has pledged \$7 million. Where is it coming from? It is coming from the Newcastle City Council's reserves. But Mr Crakanthorp forgot to mention that he has already spent that money to pay down council debt. It is under his signature. Those opposite need to learn this lesson very quickly: you cannot spend the same money over and over again. If they do not learn that they will be sitting on the Opposition benches for a very long time. [*Time expired.*]

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, the Deputy Premier elect. Will the Minister instruct The Nationals members in the Legislative Council to support Labor's amendments to make penalties for illegal donations retrospective, or will the Minister's first act as the new Leader of The Nationals—who is a former police officer—be to protect all those members of the Liberal Party who have come before the Independent Commission Against Corruption from facing charges for their illegal donations scams?

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 126. The question is totally out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am considering whether the question is out of order. In any case, the Minister is not in a position to direct members of the Legislative Council.

Mr Michael Daley: To the point of order: Standing Order 126 states:

A Minister may be asked a question which relates to:

Public affairs ...

This is paramount to public affairs. I am entitled to ask a question about it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra is drawing a long bow, and he knows it. The question is out of order.

HUNTER TRANSPORT

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Hunter. How is the Government progressing with the revitalisation of the Hunter and associated matters?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Ku-ring-gai and former Premier for his question. I acknowledge his enormous contribution to revitalising the Hunter and of course all of New South Wales. I am very grateful for this question today given what occurred earlier this week. It was a very unusual

day in the world of transport—the Labor Party actually came up with a transport policy. It released a transport policy for the Hunter. It is amazing how a by-election can prompt Labor into cobbling together a transport policy at the eleventh hour. Regrettably, some things never change. Labor is hopelessly incompetent when it comes to transport infrastructure, while the Government gets on with delivering it. We know that the Hunter is more than just Newcastle, but a stronger Newcastle makes for a stronger Hunter. Labor had 16 years to do something for Newcastle and the Hunter, and it did nothing.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. I remind her that she is on three calls to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: After its 16 years in government and 3 ½ years in opposition, let us look at what Labor is offering the people of the Hunter. Labor's new grand transport plan involves introducing at least six new pedestrian and vehicle crossings of the heavy rail line. Let me explain what this means: It is akin to putting a zebra crossing on the Pacific Highway. When asked by the local media how it would work with cars and people crossing in front of 500-tonne trains, the shadow Minister said they had already thought about that—they will run the trains slower.

It gets worse. The new Darby Street level crossing that Labor wants to build would be so close to the existing Merewether Street crossing that both sets of bells would probably ring at the same time when a train approached. And because Labor will run the trains slower, the delays for traffic and pedestrians will be longer. More congestion for Newcastle is Labor's plan. It gets much worse. Labor's ridiculous plan to build more level crossings over a heavy rail line goes against consistent safety advice over the past decade. In 2004 Labor's Paul Gibson chaired the parliamentary Staysafe committee, which recommended:

The general policy to be adopted by rail and road agencies is that the at-grade intersection of roads and railway tracks through provision of a railway level crossing is to be avoided wherever possible.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Minister was asked about her plans for revitalisation.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being generally relevant to the question she was asked. The member for Cessnock will resume his seat.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When we looked at the safety of level crossings we also looked at a 2008 planning document released by former Premier Kristina Keneally. I note that on page 42 of the 2008 document under the heading "Planning considerations for Level Crossings" Labor's policy said:

New level crossings are to be avoided wherever possible because of their inherent safety risks.

It gets even worse. In 2011 the Independent Transport Safety Regulator said collisions at level crossings "remain one of the biggest safety risks for rail operations in Australia". Over the past 10 years governments have closed about 150 level crossings across the State. It is important to note that on 23 August 2010 one renowned transport person said:

A 500 tonne train cannot swerve to miss a trespasser on the track or a pedestrian on a level crossing, so its impact can be devastating.

Do members know who said that? It was then Minister for Transport John Robertson.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Minister. Government members will be removed from the Chamber if they do not remain silent.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I repeat, on 23 August 2010 the then Minister for Transport said in a press release:

A 500 tonne train cannot swerve to miss a trespasser on the track or a pedestrian on a level crossing, so its impact can be devastating.

Labor's plan goes even further. Labor's notion of urban renewal is to plant some shrubs. It says:

The revitalisation plan will also include a rail corridor beautification program. These works will include new and improved architect designed fencing, landscaping, gardening and new pathways.

What is an architect-designed fence? It certainly will not revitalise Newcastle. Labor's plan for New South Wales' second-largest city is to increase safety concerns and install architecturally designed fencing. Once again, when it comes to public transport Labor has no policy. Labor members do not care when it comes to the Hunter. They have cobbled together a policy that will not work. Their policy will increase congestion, slow down commuter services and—worst of all—introduce a dangerous environment for commuters, motorists and pedestrians. Labor members have demonstrated time and again how incompetent they are at delivering infrastructure. Their recent policy announcement is evidence of that. Their policy for Newcastle is not workable and it is dangerous. We value the commitment we made to the Hunter. That is why we are investing in the area. Our plans will revitalise the city, create jobs and provide a great vision for the future. We will not impose the ridiculous policies of those opposite.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, and the Leader of The Nationals. Will The Nationals members of the Legislative Council support Labor's amendments to make penalties for illegal donations retrospective or will the Minister's first act as Leader of The Nationals be to protect the Liberal members who have appeared before the Independent Commission Against Corruption from ever facing charges over their illegal donations scams?

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order: It pains me to do this but I ask you to rule that question out of order under Standing Orders 75, 77 and 126.

Mr John Robertson: To the point of order: The member is now the Leader of The Nationals and is to be sworn in as the Deputy Premier. This is a matter of public interest. He should be able to answer the question without a protection racket being run by the Leader of the House. If the member is so good at his job, the Government should let him answer the question. He wants to answer. He is rising from his seat to answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister may wish to answer, but I am considering whether the question is in order. It has not been reworded appropriately.

Mr Anthony Roberts: To the point of order: There are procedures and processes in this House. As to the point of order, I refer you to Standing Order 75.

Mr Michael Daley: To the point of order: The Premier has been at pains today to instruct members that this session should be all about policy. The question was a simple one that asked the Leader of The Nationals about—

Mr Andrew Stoner: It was not. It was three questions in one.

Mr Michael Daley: You're irrelevant; you're out of it. The Minister is in the hot seat now. He is leading The Nationals and I want to know why The Nationals are going to let these guys off the hook.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard the member for Maroubra. He will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: I have not finished my point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I beg your pardon? I would hate to be rude to the member for Maroubra. He is forever rude to me.

Mr Michael Daley: As I have indicated, Standing Order 126 provides that a Minister may be asked a question that relates to public affairs. Propriety issues are front of mind for voters in New South Wales. I want to know The Nationals policy on this issue.

The SPEAKER: Order! Pursuant to the standing orders, questions should not be argumentative, hypothetical or provocative. Both of the questions asked by the member for Maroubra were just that. The member can quote to me the standing orders and what can be asked of a Minister, but his questions were highly provocative and argumentative. The earlier question contained clear imputations. The member will not lecture me on the standing orders.

Mr Anthony Roberts: Further to the point of order: Insofar as Standing Orders 75, 77 and 126 apply the question is out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am suggesting it is out of order. I have asked the Leader of The Nationals whether he would like to answer it. If he is happy to answer the question, which should be ruled out of order because it is argumentative, I will allow it although I am reluctant to do so.

Mr TROY GRANT: The rules and procedures are in place for a particular reason but I am not afraid to answer any question the Opposition throws at me. The independent review panel made clear recommendations on this matter. The legislation has been drafted. The Government took the advice of experts.

[Interruption]

I will get to you in a second, bald eagle. The advice was clear and it is before the House. We take the advice of experts; we do not take the advice of members opposite.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: As the Leader of The Nationals I put this challenge to the Leader of the Opposition: Bring to me a retrospective amendment to this legislation that holds to account those who failed to declare a bribe and carries 10 years punishment and I will call it.

Mr John Robertson: Ah, the bogeyman. What about the 10 non-Liberal members?

Mr TROY GRANT: The Leader of the Opposition is a very lucky man that that matter did not come before me when I was in the Police Force because he would have been in the dock.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: I call on the Minister to withdraw that last comment.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will not take a point of order from the member for Keira until the House comes to order. The Minister indicates he has completed his answer.

HUNTER SCHOOLS

Mr GREG APLIN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How is the Government providing better schools for students in the Hunter?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Madam Speaker, at the outset I indicate that I share your disgust at the shirt of the member for Ku-ring-gai and assure you that that shirt needs only one button—a self-destruct button. Before I deal in detail with investments made by this Government in the Hunter and Hunter schools, I mention that we have heard a number of election commitments made by the Opposition, including one with respect to education. Ryan Park, a person named Jodie Harrison and Sonia Hornery issued a press release in which essentially they condemned public schools because we collect data on violent assaults, et cetera. I encourage schools to report when those incidents occur. They attacked schools in the Hunter and then talked about violence being a problem in schools, but they did not come up with a solution. But, according to Ryan Park, if Labor is elected in March, they will convene a summit.

Mr John Sidoti: At the Wollongong convention centre.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: They can have it in the convention centre.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely astounding. The Government is not even running a candidate—

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member for Canterbury should not get me started on Aboriginal education and what this Government has done. If she wants me to talk about Aboriginal education and what we have done, I am happy to do so. She should just ask me a question.

The SPEAKER: Order! As the member for Canterbury is on three calls to order, I direct the member for Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 3.02 p.m.]

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Opposition's answer to violence in schools is a summit. Ryan Park then goes on to state, "As education Minister in a Labor government, I'll have no hesitation in calling in the director general in week one and instructing them to make solving this matter a priority." Not bad! In just 3½ years this Government has engaged in the type of enormous investment that only would have been dreamed of during the 16 years of the previous Labor Government. That investment covers the most fantastic projects that include the Hunter Sports High School worth almost \$20 million. Labor walked past that school for 16 years and did not do a thing, whereas we are investing almost \$20 million in it. Rutherford High School in the Maitland electorate is the subject of a big investment of almost \$15 million. The Junction Public School in Newcastle has received an investment of \$3 million. They are the major Hunter capital works projects.

There are also plenty of minor capital works projects that include the Cessnock High School having lifts installed for students with disabilities and electrical upgrades in the Cessnock West Public School. I draw to the attention of the Leader of The Nationals that the electorate of Cessnock is one that The Nationals do not hold, but I am sure we will win it on 29 March next year. Other minor projects include toilet upgrades, the provision of ramps, electrical upgrades, the provision of a modular library at Soldiers Point Public School in the Port Stephens electorate and even a sewer upgrade at the Tomaree High School at Port Stephens. We have heard the Building the Education Revolution referred to many times in this House, and three big projects will include a major upgrade of the Lakeside School; in Maitland, the Hunter River Community School—which is well and truly overdue for major investment; and the Five Islands School.

This Government has spent \$347 million on school maintenance, which represents a 32 per cent increase in investment from the previous Labor Government. In relation to the Resource Allocation Model [RAM], I note comments made by the shadow Minister related to school funding. Opposition members become very confused about school funding. New South Wales was the one political party and the one Government that was first to sign up to Gonski so that we could get additional education investment funds, including Aboriginal education, and those funds will be distributed through RAMS.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The New South Wales Government has recommitted its contribution to the fifth and sixth years of Gonski implementation funding and we continue to pressure the Commonwealth to make its contribution to the fifth and sixth years. Just a couple of days ago the Premier confirmed that on the radio.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: There are huge amounts of additional resources going into Hunter schools as a result of this Government signing up to Gonski, which is as it should be. The Hunter is being looked after in 3½ years in a manner that only could have been dreamed of in the 16 years under the previous Labor Government.

MORISSET TO WYONG HOSPITAL BUS SERVICE

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Hunter. Given widespread community support for a direct public bus between Morisset and Wyong Hospital, as demonstrated by the recent collection of nearly 2,000 letters in support of the proposal in just two months, will she consider a trial of this much-needed service?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question because I know that he cares deeply and passionately about public transport services in his community. I also acknowledge that he has made a number of representations to my office and to Transport for NSW on this issue. I assure him that the feedback provided by him and his constituents has been taken on board. I reiterate the Government's commitment to expanding public transport services in the region and to ensuring we provide services where customers most need them. Since being elected, this Government has introduced more than 9,500 weekly transport services, which includes regional transport services. We have examined very closely what the member for Lake Macquarie has put to us. As the member for Lake Macquarie appreciates, people need good public transport connections to access places such as hospitals and schools, and other critical infrastructure.

In response to the specific matter he raises, I assure him that while we are monitoring existing services we are also improving services that already are provided, such as regular train services between Morisset and

Wyong. For example, in the most recent timetable change, we provided an extra 105 weekly services along this rail corridor, which has provided more frequent services. I know this is not exactly what the member has asked for, but it demonstrates that this Government is investing in the region and in his community. We also are providing regular bus services between Wyong station and the hospital. The member may know that the specific routes involved are 80, 82, 93 and 94, and we are monitoring those routes. We also have provided additional services on route 280 from Cooranbong to Morisset to offer residents greater opportunities to connect with trains. That demonstrates we are trying to improve connections between existing services.

Further to this, across the Hunter generally this Government has introduced more than 150 weekly bus services, which also demonstrates this Government's commitment to the provision of additional services. While extra services in both buses and trains have been provided, it is important to get the connections right, which is what we are focusing on, notwithstanding that we are specifically examining the issue raised by the member. I also put in a plug for what the Government has done in relation to community transport because many of the passengers referred to by the member may have mobility challenges. I am very proud that we increased funding to the Community Transport Program over four years by 100 per cent. Prior to this Government winning the election, it was \$12 million and we have doubled that funding.

I know that many of the constituents of the member for Lake Macquarie rely on community transport and this Government has given community transport a boost. As an aside I mention that I was very pleased to visit Port Stephens last week and congratulate community transport in that electorate on its thirtieth anniversary. I again assure the member for Lake Macquarie that we continually monitor bus routes and we will do so in Morisset and Wyong to ensure that customer needs are met. I assure the member that I hear loud and clear the specific issue raised by him and his constituents in relation to this matter. In relation to existing services, we are well on the way to refreshing the 200 V set carriages that provide constituencies using the rail line with better seats and lighting, and a greater environment.

We have also announced a new \$2.8 billion investment in new state-of-the-art trains that will service the member's constituents. We have carried out a major refresh program at a number of stations, including Gosford, Woy Woy, Wyong and Morisset, which will also be of assistance to his constituents. The Government takes pride in the investment it has made in public transport, especially in regional communities and for those in the community who have mobility challenges. I assure the member that I am grateful for the feedback he has provided in his on-going representations and I ask him to convey to his constituents that the Government will continue to consider the issues that they have raised.

STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES PRIVATISATION

Mr CLAYTON BARR: My question is directed to the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, who will soon be sworn in as the Deputy Premier.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Congratulate him first.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Congratulations.

The SPEAKER: Order! That was heartfelt. The member for Cessnock has the call.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Will the Minister stand up to the Liberal Premier and oppose the privatisation—

The SPEAKER: Order! That is another question I am likely to rule out of order. I suggest the member look at the standing orders. What is the member's question?

Mr CLAYTON BARR: —and oppose the privatisation of electricity, water and hospitals across New South Wales, or have The Nationals replaced a puppet with a puppet?

The SPEAKER: Order! That question is argumentative, and I rule it out of order. The wording of the question is atrocious.

Mr Nathan Rees: It is atrocious.

The SPEAKER: I am glad the member for Toongabbie agrees with me.

HUNTER JOBS

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State. How is the Government working to support jobs in the Hunter Region and other related matters?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for his question and for his interest in this matter. New South Wales is a mining State. This vital industry powers this great State and, unlike those opposite, the Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to supporting this critical industry and the people who work in it. Mining supports more than 22.6 per cent of jobs in the entire Hunter. That is, more than 12,000 direct jobs and almost 60,000 indirect jobs. In 2013 the mining industry injected \$6.3 billion into the Hunter, including \$1.6 billion into Newcastle alone. More than one-third of the Hunter's gross regional product comes from mining. The Liberal-Nationals Government recognises the enormous contribution mining makes to the Hunter and to the State. Not only does mining provide our energy needs, also the royalties generated from mining pay for our hospitals, schools and roads.

The Liberal-Nationals Government recognises that the coal industry and its workers are going through a tough and difficult time. The Government is committed to real and practical solutions that will secure jobs and our energy needs, and continue to drive the New South Wales economy. On behalf of members on this side of the House, I pay tribute to the men and women of the mining industry who, day in and day out, roll up their sleeves—above ground and below—for the people of New South Wales. Their contribution to the Hunter and to New South Wales should be applauded. Those on this side of the House are grateful for their dedication and contribution to this great State. It is shameful that the same cannot be said for those opposite. We all know the Leader of the Opposition's dangerous and disgraceful plan to shut down the coal industry in the Hunter.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will cease having private conversations in the Chamber.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Not only do members on the other side have no regard for the contribution of mining to the State's economy, they could not care less about the thousands of Hunter families and businesses that rely on this industry. For their own self-interest, members opposite—and particularly their leader—would kick them to the kerb in a cheap political stunt. Let us look at their latest plan. The Leader of the Opposition wants to destroy the coal industry and wipe the Hunter off the map. Not only that, he throws up a pie-in-the-sky bridge and an imaginary convention centre to fling in the faces of the hardworking people of the Hunter, thereby sacrificing jobs, hospitals, schools and roads.

The Leader of the Opposition's grand plan is to rip \$6 billion from the region's economy and to replace it with a convention centre. He does not even have the money to plan for that, let alone build it. As usual, Labor has thrown up another policy on the run that it cannot see to the end and for which it certainly cannot pay. Labor does not even have the money to draw up the plans. But, as usual, the Leader of the Opposition has come up with a grand plan to cut corners. We all know he is not going to deliver on this convention centre. However, I am a fair man. We have discovered that those opposite have been very busy and have put something to paper. In fact, those policy dynamos opposite have been running their own in-house design competition for the Newcastle convention centre.

I inform the house that they are down to three finalists in the Newcastle convention centre design competition, thanks to some support from The Greens. For the benefit of the people of the Hunter and to save members opposite taking points of order, I am happy to table those final entries because we know that when Labor members hear the words, "Let's draw up policy" out come the crayons. I inform the House that in third place is Comrade Paul Lynch, with his happy snap selfie from that workers' paradise, North Korea. Unfortunately, it has to be an original drawing—you cannot put a photo in—so the judge has ruled that one out. In second place we have The Greens with their broccoli tree house convention centre. It is a healthy idea but—unlike other Greens policy—it is not practical. I dare say it is a genetically modified piece of broccoli.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members would like to see the props the Minister is using.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Of course. In first place is the Leader of the Opposition. I have to give him an A for effort—all the colours in the box have been used.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: It is regrettable that a point of order has to be taken on the person purporting to be the Leader of the House and that he is in such flagrant breach of the standing orders. His performance is a disgrace to that position and an indication that he is as big a fool as he sounds.

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

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I was not the judge that threw you out of the competition. Do not take it out on me. "Original work only", they said. The vision the Labor Party has for the State and the Hunter is all on those pages; it is nothing. Just like the drawing competition, Labor offers nothing to the people of the Hunter. This is the same old Labor Party: an Opposition Leader who lacks skills, substance and a vision for the Hunter and for this great State of New South Wales.

STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES PRIVATISATION

Mr CLAYTON BARR: My question is directed to the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, who will soon be sworn in as the Deputy Premier. Congratulations. Will he stand up to the Liberal Premier and oppose the privatisation of electricity, water and hospitals across New South Wales?

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the member for Cessnock for his question and his generous congratulations. He congratulated me earlier. He is a fine man. I was happy to answer the first question because it would have been interesting to answer a question about muppets and puppets from a clown. I wish him well at the Country Labor conference that is being held in Queanbeyan. I will make this offer, on the record: I am happy to chip in and shout dinner because it will only require me to buy a McDonald's family pack that feeds four. If you want to know where I stand and where the New South Wales Nationals stand, it is right beside the best Premier this State is ever going to have.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not think I want to hear this point of order.

Mr John Robertson: That is a personal reflection on a member of the House. I want to defend the member for Ku-ring-gai because he was a much better Premier than the one we have.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has the call.

Mr TROY GRANT: The New South Wales Nationals and I are clearly on the record on this matter: We are committed to our communities. We stand by the Premier and this Government's plan to invest \$20 billion-plus into New South Wales to transform this State. I stand solidly and proudly beside the Premier, unlike something else, which is covered in the *Daily Liberal*, if members want to read about it. On 30 September 2014 the Dubbo *Daily Liberal* stated:

The Labor Party should not bother naming a candidate for next year's state election.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member asked a provocative question. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: It was not provocative.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is for me to judge, not you.

Mr Michael Daley: The question asked what The Nationals' policy is. In fact, it was very specific: What is The National's policy on the privatisation of electricity, water and hospitals?

The SPEAKER: Order! It was argumentative. The Minister is being generally relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr Michael Daley: What is the policy on the privatisation of those things?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member does not know what the Minister is about to say and whether it is going to be relevant, generally relevant or not. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: When it is prefaced with "The Labor Party"—

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

Mr Michael Daley: —it is not about The Nationals' policy.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: He has been around longer than me, but I am happy to help him out. I said that all our comments on this matter are on the record and contained in the *Dubbo Daily Liberal*, the local newspaper. Also in that newspaper is this story:

Labor branch president flays party for turning back on Dubbo.

The Labor Party should not bother naming a candidate for next year's state election because they will not win and it will not be of any benefit to the community.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Who said that?

Mr TROY GRANT: I did not say that. That is according to the president of Labor's Dubbo branch. The article continued:

Colin Norris lashed out at his own party and said it had lost its way. He said the Dubbo branch had been badly treated by the NSW branch and most of its members had been alienated.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was about privatisation, not candidacy at Dubbo.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: I am happy to take questions all day from those opposite about what the New South Wales Nationals will do and what we will back every single day because we have the local champions out there representing and planning the transformation of their communities.

Mr John Robertson: What did Jackie Kelly say? That's awesome mate, backing privatisation, backing private hospitals is perfect. Thank you. You just confirmed electricity privatisation, water, hospitals. Thank you.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. Yabba, yabba, yabba.

Mr John Robertson: That doesn't work mate.

Mr TROY GRANT: I have made reference already to the Leader of the Opposition. I stopped listening to him a long time ago. Apparently so did his Dubbo Labor branch members.

Question time concluded at 3.22 p.m.

COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY

Deputy Chair

The SPEAKER: I advise the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 28, on 15 October 2014 Bryan Michael Doyle was elected Deputy Chair of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety.

PETITIONS

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

Retail Trading Laws

Petition requesting the retention of existing retail trading laws in their entirety, received from **Mr John Robertson**.

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

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

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**.

Edgecliff Interchange

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

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

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**.

Low-cost Housing and Homelessness

Petition requesting increased funding for low-cost housing and homelessness services, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

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

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

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

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:

Sydney Airport Curfew

Petition opposing the lifting of the flight curfew and increasing the hourly cap on flights at Sydney Airport, received from **Mr Ron Hoenig**.

Wollongong Public School

Petition opposing proposed construction at Wollongong Public School and requesting the development of an alternative plan, received from **Ms Noreen Hay**.

Marine Rescue Ballina

Petition requesting the construction of a new communications tower for Marine Rescue Ballina, received from **Mr Donald Page**.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women's Services

Petition requesting funding for culturally and linguistically diverse women's services, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

Pittwater Commercial Fishing

Petition requesting a fair buyout of commercial fishing operators in Pittwater, received from **Mr Rob Stokes**.

Oxford Street Night-time Economy

Petition requesting more appropriate and sustainable licensing conditions to promote a safe and vibrant night-time economy on Oxford Street, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

WATER NSW BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Kevin Humphries, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western NSW) [3.26 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Water NSW Bill 2014. This bill brings together two equals to form a modern and responsive service provider. It is a practical reform that joins together two organisations delivering complementary work and services in different parts of the State. The bill makes provision for the storage of bulk water across New South Wales, the release and supply of bulk water, the operation of dam infrastructure, the responsive and appropriate management of catchments of those dams and the planning, design, modelling and construction of bulk water assets. It will create opportunities to leverage the strengths of the Sydney Catchment Authority and State Water Corporation, and deliver greater efficiency of service delivery. It will facilitate the sharing and deepening of skills, knowledge and expertise to the highest standard, and ensure a culture of, and opportunities for, cross-fertilisation.

Bulk water is a crucial part of the water cycle in New South Wales. The primary uses for bulk, or raw, water in New South Wales are town water supplies, stock and domestic purposes in rural areas, irrigation, environmental purposes, industrial purposes and power generation. Efficient and first-class management of this vital resource is necessary to ensure the future health and wellbeing of the people of New South Wales and the environment. A comprehensive review was undertaken in 2013 to determine the best approach to bulk water provision and catchment, and water quality protection in New South Wales. That independent review recommended merging the Sydney Catchment Authority and State Water Corporation into one State-owned corporation to enable the achievement of important public health outcomes through improved water quality. Managing our bulk water infrastructure under a State-owned corporation structure will result in significant improvements to the current operating structure.

The changes will result in a single entity responsible across New South Wales for major water storage infrastructure, including infrastructure planning, design, modelling, construction, maintenance and operation. This single entity will be known as Water NSW, which will bring to reality the concept of a State-based centre

of excellence for bulk water management and the protection of associated catchments. The merger will deliver efficiencies in water infrastructure management and create greater clarity in regard to the operational aspects of bulk water management in New South Wales. The Water NSW Bill 2014 provides for the State Water Corporation to become Water NSW and merge with the Sydney Catchment Authority through transferring the authority's functions to this new entity. Water NSW will continue to be a statutory State-owned corporation with the same shareholder Ministers.

The bill re-enacts and consolidates with necessary modifications the provisions of the Sydney Water Catchment Management Act 1988 and the State Water Corporation Act 2004 into one Act. This change to a single corporate entity, which is focused on protecting bulk water, emphasises the importance of the critical objectives for bulk water in New South Wales. These include ensuring that bulk water operations that support rural towns and irrigated agriculture are delivered efficiently and that important public health and safety objectives are maintained in the Sydney catchment area and elsewhere enhanced where possible. Other benefits that will come from the establishment of Water NSW include improved dam safety and risk management through the consolidation of New South Wales dam safety expertise, dam operations and maintenance expertise; better incident management capabilities through the merger of two experienced teams with wideranging skills and expertise; and improved financial stability for this important service provider.

The process of creating Water NSW began earlier this year with the administrative alignments of the board of the Sydney Catchment Authority and the State Water Corporation and the appointment of one person to the position of chief executive of both entities. The existing board and chief executive have been retained for Water NSW. The bill provides for the transfer of all Sydney Catchment Authority staff, assets, rights and liabilities to Water NSW. The process will combine staff knowledge and expertise and reinforce Water NSW expert advisory role in major projects. The bill effectively continues the separate operating licences of the Sydney Catchment Authority and State Water Corporation and ensures that existing functions of the Sydney Catchment Authority continue to be exercised under the authority of a separate operating licence.

The Bulk Water Review recommended that the costs of the operational and regulatory functions presently carried out by the Sydney Catchment Authority should be "ring-fenced" from the costs associated with carrying out those functions elsewhere in the State. Ring-fencing is necessary to allow for separate price regulation by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] and the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission [ACCC] through price determinations for the services provided by Water NSW to each part of the State, and specifically to ensure that the intensive catchment management and operational activities required in the Sydney catchment are not subsidised by rural and regional water uses. At the commencement of the proposed Act there will be two operating licences—one for the Sydney catchment area and one that regulates the functions now carried out by State Water in respect of the rural and regional areas. Other operating licences may be granted in the future.

I now move to the specific contents of the bill. The principal objectives of Water NSW include the capture, storage and release of water in an efficient, effective and safe manner. They will also require the protection of public health and safety and the environment, and to provide for the management of designated catchment areas. Water NSW is also required to plan for, design, model and construct bulk water infrastructure. Water NSW will also be required to manage its infrastructure works efficiently and economically, conduct a successful business, display social responsibility, conduct its operations in compliance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development and to exhibit responsibility towards regional development and decentralisation. These objectives provide Water NSW with the clearest guidance about how the community and this Government expect Water NSW to conduct its business.

By uniting water quality, bulk water asset management and catchment management expertise, this new organisation will ensure the highest quality and most efficient service to customers across New South Wales. The new structure will assist the Government to anticipate, plan and react to issues associated with water quality, as well as environmental issues such as droughts and floods. The bill also provides for a range of functions that are essential to delivering water quality and public health and safety objectives in declared catchment areas. At present the Sydney catchment area is the only declared catchment area in New South Wales. However, the bill provides a flexible and responsible architecture that will also allow other catchment areas to be declared in the future, where appropriate.

The bill contains a number of provisions that carry over existing functions currently conferred or imposed on the Sydney Catchment Authority as a statutory body representing the Crown. The Government

acknowledges the importance of these regulatory functions. The bill provides a mechanism by which these functions will be developed to appropriate regulatory authorities, noting that for most of these regulatory functions, Water NSW will be the most appropriate and capable body.

The use of a regulatory authority will, in this way, build on the performance and expertise that has evolved in the Sydney Catchment Authority over many years. The bill provides that all the regulatory functions carried out by the Sydney Catchment Authority and State Water Corporation will now be carried out by the regulatory authority. The regulatory authority is the Minister or a statutory body or an agency nominated by the Minister. The bill will enable more than one regulatory authority to be nominated in order to leverage off the existing expertise across government in the bulk water sector and ensure the best possible regulatory outcomes. The Minister will maintain ultimate responsibility for overseeing the manner in which regulatory functions are exercised and will be able to withdraw them where appropriate.

IPART and the ACCC will continue to provide pricing and regulatory oversight for Water NSW. IPART will also monitor and report to the Minister on compliance with both of the operating licences, imposing monetary penalties if either operating licence is contravened. IPART will also be responsible for determining the price of water delivered by Water NSW along the New South Wales coast, including to Sydney. The bill also ensures that Water NSW is to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Environment Protection Authority and the Secretary of the Ministry of Health in order to formalise appropriate and valued relationships with these entities and to ensure that the existing relationships are maintained or enhanced.

Ensuring compliance with the bill and the objectives for Water NSW will require a range of enforcement actions. These safeguards will ensure the protection of bulk water supplies and ensure those whose actions risk the quality of bulk water in New South Wales are held liable. Authorised officers appointed by the Minister will have a range of entry and investigative powers bestowed upon them to investigate where there are reasonable grounds for believing that a provision of the bill or the regulations has been or is being contravened. Information and records must be furnished to the regulatory authority if requested. Penalties may apply in cases of non-compliance with the reasonable requests of these authorised officers. The Government has undertaken a rigorous process to ensure the best possible outcome for bulk water operations and regulation. The bill introduces important reforms to establish Water NSW that will enable first-class management of water as a vital resource. I commend the bill to the House.

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

MARINE ESTATE MANAGEMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events) [3.38 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Marine Estate Management Bill 2014 is to make provision for management of the New South Wales marine estate. The bill provides for effective and integrated management of the whole marine estate for the first time in New South Wales. I will jointly administer the new Act in my capacity as the Minister for Primary Industries with the Minister for the Environment. The primary industries portfolio will take the lead on day-to-day administration of this Act. Direct responsibility is a continuation of current arrangements and means that matters relating to the marine estate are appropriately considered from a resource management and conservation perspective. The bill represents a landmark moment in the history of the management of the marine estate of New South Wales and will legislate comprehensive reforms that the Government is implementing.

This bill has been more than three years in the making. In June 2011 the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government delivered on a key election commitment by commissioning an independent scientific audit of marine parks in New South Wales. The audit found that management of the marine estate in New South Wales was fragmented and deficient. In February 2013 we released the New South Wales Government's response to the audit, which announced a comprehensive new approach to the management of the

marine estate. This new approach is about establishing a foundation for robust, scientific and evidence-based management of the marine estate into the future. Crucially, this new approach is about ensuring a thorough triple bottom line assessment process, which will consider social, economic and environmental impacts in the context of the entire marine estate.

As lead Minister for these reforms, I can assure the House that New South Wales marine resources and marine park operations will be managed responsibly. It is important to reflect upon from whence we came to reach this point. The bill addresses community concerns about how the State's six marine parks were established and managed by previous Labor governments. Our reforms stand in stark contrast to the non-strategic and politically motivated management of the marine estate by those opposite. This new approach will: provide a strategy for maximising social, economic and environmental values and benefits associated with the marine estate; better coordinate service delivery to reduce red tape and increase effectiveness across the management of marine parks and aquatic reserves, fisheries management, boating, shipping, and coastal land-use planning; and introduce best practice evidence-based marine park and aquatic reserve planning, declaration and management.

The bill will provide the legislative architecture for the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government's vision for a healthy coast and sea, managed for the greatest wellbeing of the community now and into the future. Projects such as assessing threats and risks to the entire marine estate and piloting new management planning approaches at the Batemans Marine Park and Solitary Islands Marine Park will be done within the new management framework provided in the bill. Stretching north to south for approximately 1,250 kilometres, the New South Wales marine estate is an area of about one million hectares of estuary and ocean. Almost six million residents live within 50 kilometres of the New South Wales coastline.

The cornerstone of our new approach is an overarching Marine Estate Management Strategy, which sets out common principles and coordinated management while identifying priorities through a threat and risk assessment. This strategy will deliver better outcomes on the ground for coastal communities in New South Wales. Our coastline and marine waters support a wide range of commercial, recreational and cultural activities. The marine estate is also valued for the environmental benefits it provides as habitat to species, including threatened plants and animals, as well as such ecosystem services as nutrient cycling and climate regulation. The objectives of this bill reflect this diversity of interests—for example, the estimated one million recreational fishers in New South Wales.

Earlier this year the New South Wales Government completed a comprehensive survey of marine estate communities, which canvassed the views of more than 1,700 people. Key findings from that survey found that health of the marine estate is a core value that underpins the social, economic and environmental benefits derived from the estate. The survey also found that the marine estate is considered integral to the New South Wales community's social and cultural wellbeing. I turn now to specific aspects of the bill. The bill is in eight parts, which relate to preliminary matters, including the objects and definitions; administration, which covers establishment of the Marine Estate Management Authority and Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel; the Marine Estate Management Strategy; threat and risk assessment; marine parks and aquatic reserves; enforcement; finance; and miscellaneous provisions. I turn first to the objects and definition of the marine estate found in part 1 of the bill.

The objects of the bill are to provide for the management of the marine estate, consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development; facilitate economic, social, cultural, scientific and environmental opportunities; promote the coordination of functions by public authorities; and provide for a comprehensive, strategically managed system of marine parks and aquatic reserves. The objects set out the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government's clear commitment to a more integrated approach to managing the marine estate, including marine parks and aquatic reserves. This integrated approach will be more effective and better understood by the community.

The strategy developed under the bill will relate to the whole of the marine estate, which is defined to include coastal waters, estuaries, lakes, lagoons, wetlands and adjacent coastal lands strongly influenced by ocean processes. These adjacent lands include beaches, headlands, dunes and rock platforms. The advantage of this strategy is that it will support the development of a shared understanding of key threats and risks and coordination of actions across government. Importantly, adjacent coastal lands are included because they are the interface between marine waters and terrestrial land. I turn now to part 2 of the bill, which enshrines the establishment of the Marine Estate Management Authority and the Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel in legislation.

This is about getting the right advice from the right people. These two statutory advisory entities have been operating on an administrative basis for more than a year, and already have a proven track record in providing independent, scientific and expert advice. The authority and panel will play an important role in ensuring that management strategies for the marine estate properly balance social, economic and environmental outcomes. Next I turn to the centrepiece of our new approach: the Marine Estate Management Strategy. An overarching strategy in relation to our precious marine assets has been sadly lacking to date in New South Wales. Accordingly, the bill provides for a whole-of-government strategy to coordinate management of the marine estate. The strategy will set out the vision and management priorities for the marine estate, underpinned by a threat and risk assessment. It will also provide guidance about how pressures on the marine estate can be managed and mitigated.

The strategy will provide decision-makers with relevant information and support to address the significant issues across the marine estate. Under the new Act government bodies will have regard to the strategy when making decisions that may affect the marine estate. The bill requires that social, economic and environmental values must be clearly recognised in the strategy. In keeping with the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government's commitment to developing policies that make a real difference to communities, community consultation will be an essential step in developing the strategy. The bill requires that a draft strategy be publicly exhibited and that any community views be considered before the strategy is made. Consultation with Local Land Services is also required in order to ensure that land-based impacts on the marine estate are properly identified and understood.

The bill requires that the strategy must be independently reviewed at least once every 10 years. This will allow sufficient time for the strategy to be implemented and evaluated, but will also ensure that the strategy is adapted as required so that it remains responsive to the threats and risks to the marine estate over the long term. I turn now to part 4 of the bill which requires assessment of threats and risks to the marine estate. Comprehensive threat and risk assessment is essential. The bill sets out a process for assessing social, economic and environmental threats and associated risks to values that the community derives from the marine estate. This assessment must be undertaken at least once every 10 years and will be the product of extensive community consultation.

The bill requires that threats and risks be both identified and prioritised. The assessment is expected to take into account cumulative threats, present threats and those that are expected to have impacts in the future. Crucially, this assessment will help us focus on the critical issues for the marine estate. I turn now to part 5 of the bill relating to marine parks and aquatic reserves. The bill replicates the majority of the existing statutory provisions for the declaration, management and review of both marine parks and aquatic reserves. It links marine parks and aquatic reserves with the Marine Estate Management Strategy and threat and risk assessments. The bill provides that the primary purpose of marine parks and aquatic reserves is to conserve biological diversity and maintain ecosystem integrity and function. Where consistent with biodiversity conservation the secondary purposes under the bill will allow for other uses in marine parks and aquatic reserves. These include resource use consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development, research, education, appreciation, enjoyment and Aboriginal cultural uses.

Marine parks and aquatic reserves are two spatial management tools focused on the conservation of biodiversity that can be used to deliver on the vision for the marine estate. They do this by protecting a range of biological diversity, which contributes to better productivity of our land and water, benefitting people and society. Aquatic reserves will remain a flexible and responsive spatial management tool. These reserves can be focused on a specific component of biodiversity and applied to particular areas of the marine estate. Where consistent with the strategy, I will be able to declare an aquatic reserve by notice in my capacity as the Minister for Primary Industries, with the Minister for the Environment, in order to conserve a specific component of biodiversity or ecological community that is important in a particular local area.

Where sensible and effective, the bill does include some changes to the existing legislative regime for marine parks and aquatic reserves, and I turn to those now. These changes do not affect the fundamental role of marine parks and reserves as areas that help conserve biological diversity in the marine estate. The first of these changes is that aquatic reserves and marine parks will now be managed under one Act. Formerly aquatic reserves were managed under the Fisheries Management Act 1994, while marine parks were managed under the Marine Parks Act 1997. This was inefficient and led to inconsistent management approaches. Bringing marine parks and aquatic reserves together under a single piece of marine estate legislation makes sense. I have already highlighted another important change: the establishment of the Marine Estate Management Authority to advise the New South Wales Government regarding marine park management.

This has led to the abolition of the Marine Parks Authority. As a statutory advisory entity the Marine Estate Management Authority will not have the operational or decision-making powers of the Marine Parks Authority. Ongoing responsibility for the Marine Parks Authority's operational functions now lies with me as the Minister for Primary Industries, jointly with the Minister for the Environment. Day-to-day management of marine parks will continue to be done by the Department of Primary Industries, together with key marine and aquatic functions. This ensures that, like the new legislative framework for the marine estate, core functions, operations and delivery are integrated and coordinated.

The next important change from the existing legislative requirements relates to how marine parks are established and their boundaries are varied. The provisions of the bill make it clear that a marine park may now only be declared by the Governor or varied on the recommendation of the relevant Ministers following consideration of the strategy and any relevant threat and risk assessment. This will ensure declarations are strategic and consistent with broader principles and priorities across the marine estate. There have also been some changes to the way that plans are developed for marine parks and aquatic reserves. These changes will make a significant contribution to ensuring that management planning for marine parks and aquatic reserves achieves the New South Wales Government's plan for an integrated and strategic approach to the marine estate.

To support integrated management, the bill provides for management plans to be made for marine parks and aquatic reserves. The plans are intended to be a single source of information for the community in relation to the values and uses of a particular park or reserve and must be published on the website of the Department of Primary Industries. Under the bill, the plans must be developed having regard to the strategy, any relevant threat and risk assessment, and any submissions made by the community following a two-month public consultation period. The bill requires that management plans set out management objectives, identify threats and risks, and specify management actions and programs. It is envisaged plans will be both strategic and operational in nature. They will not only describe a range of uses suitable within marine parks and aquatic reserves but also establish links between research projects and other programs aimed at improving management outcomes for our marine conservation areas.

While management plans will provide a broad outline of the management initiatives relevant to a marine park or aquatic reserve, regulatory controls will be included in management rules in regulations. Under the bill, these rules in the regulations may provide for the classification of areas into zones to clearly set out permissible and prohibited uses in marine parks and aquatic reserves. The community will be consulted on the range of uses that may be prescribed for a particular zone, with a mandatory two-month consultation period built into the requirements for the making of management rules. The bill continues the existing prohibition on mining in marine parks and aquatic reserves, as it is the view of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government that these activities are incompatible with conservation outcomes, which are the primary purpose of marine parks and aquatic reserves.

Management plans and rules must be reviewed at least once every 10 years under the bill. This time frame is long enough to allow sensible assessment and adjustment of management arrangements, while providing a high degree of certainty for the community, including commercial businesses. For consistency, marine park closures and aquatic reserve notifications will now both be known as notifications under this bill. To date they have effectively been the same power by a different name in two different Acts. Notifications will allow the prohibition of specified activities within designated areas. This will continue to provide a responsive tool for managing areas in marine parks and aquatic reserves. Notifications will now simply be published on the website of the Department of Primary Industries and exhibited in a prominent place at the relevant area.

I turn now to part 6 of the bill, which provides for compliance and enforcement measures across marine parks and aquatic reserves. All existing compliance and enforcement functions for marine parks and aquatic reserves have been included in the bill, with some improvements. There are no new offences in the bill. Compliance functions are presently carried out by marine park rangers. However, to increase efficiency and integration with existing processes, these functions will now be carried out by other authorised officers within the Department of Primary Industries, primarily fisheries officers. This will allow for functional alignment, as these officers already carry out the bulk of compliance and enforcement work.

The bill allows for recovery of administrative costs associated with the issuing of notices relating to the removal of wrecked vessels and other property in marine parks and aquatic reserves. It will now be possible to recover those costs through civil proceedings, if necessary. Inclusion of this new power is only reasonable. Wrecked vessels and other property may create significant safety and environmental hazards. It is essential that they should be removed promptly from areas where the primary purpose is conservation of biodiversity. Those who create such hazards should be held responsible for their actions, including for the associated costs.

I turn now to the Marine Protected Areas Fund established in part 7 of the bill. The bill abolishes the current fund, which only accommodated marine parks, and transfers any balance to the new fund. The bill specifies that fund money is now to be expended on marine park and aquatic reserve administration, research and consultation. Administration of the fund is vested in the Secretary of NSW Trade and Investment. This administration system will be consistent with this agency having operational responsibility for marine parks and aquatic reserves. The Government has made it clear, in its response to the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks conducted by Professor Bob Beeton of the University of Queensland, that marine park advisory committees will continue to be vital sources of local and cultural knowledge. The importance of these committees is recognised.

However, it is also recognised that it is important not to overly constrain their role. In order to allow a more adaptive and responsive community consultative committee model to develop, the bill does not provide a specific statutory role for the committees. These community consultative committees will continue to provide advice on management of marine parks and also input on management issues across the marine estate as required. The Government is committed to reducing red tape. The bill is expected to consolidate and streamline existing processes. This includes new regulations that will reduce the types of permits required in marine parks and aquatic reserves by focusing on high-impact activities as informed by threat and risk assessment.

The final part of the bill, part 8, includes transitional and savings provisions. These will minimise issues arising from the implementation of the new legislative framework for managing the New South Wales marine estate. Under the bill current zoning plans and operational plans for marine parks remain in force until such time as relevant management plans and rules can be finalised. The start of the 10-year review period will commence on enactment of the bill. This means that the previous zoning plan review dates under the Marine Parks Act will no longer apply. However, the New South Wales Government remains committed to setting a timetable for reviewing the existing plans for the other four marine parks after the completion of pilot management planning at Batemans and Solitary Islands marine parks.

At present there is a moratorium on declaring new marine parks. This remains strongly supported by the New South Wales Government at this time. Although the bill does not include a provision maintaining the moratorium, it does provide confidence to the community that all future decisions about marine parks will be underpinned by the best and latest available science about the social, economic and environmental impacts of that decision. The New South Wales Government has undertaken targeted and robust consultation on the reforms the bill will legislate. There is strong support in the community for establishing a legislative framework for a more balanced and considered approach to managing the marine estate.

The bill is consistent with the coastal reforms being led by my colleague the Minister for the Environment. Across the board this Government stands by the principle that coastal land in New South Wales—its beautiful beaches, rock pools, dunes and estuaries—should be available for the use and enjoyment of all the people of New South Wales, now and in the future. This bill introduces important reforms that will facilitate strategic, coordinated and sustainable management of the marine estate, including marine parks and aquatic reserves, for all users. The bill will deliver long-term benefits to New South Wales, its people, regions and industries. I commend the bill to the House.

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

REGIONAL RELOCATION GRANTS AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr John Barilaro, on behalf of Mr Andrew Stoner, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.57 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Andrew Stoner: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Regional Relocation Grants Amendment Bill 2014. This amendment bill proposes legislative changes to the Regional Relocation Grants Act 2011. The Act provides for the Regional Relocation Grant scheme to encourage population and economic growth in the regions. Since its inception in July 2011, the

scheme has helped more than 4,400 people and their families relocate from metropolitan areas of New South Wales to regional New South Wales for the purpose of employment, self-employment or purchasing a home. The scheme is part of the Government's Decade of Decentralisation policy, a key Coalition election commitment which aims to stimulate regional economic development.

Complementary initiatives include the Jobs Action Plan, which has supported the creation of more than 15,000 regional jobs through payroll tax rebates to eligible businesses for creating new jobs; and government agency decentralisation, which has a target to relocate 1,500 jobs to regional New South Wales by 2021. So far, 466 jobs have been relocated or planned for relocation. Other complementary Decade of Decentralisation initiatives include government funding through the Regional Industries Investment Fund and the State Investment Attraction Scheme. These funds and the services provided by NSW Trade & Investment have helped regional projects that will generate investment of more than \$3.9 billion and are expected to create more than 11,800 regional jobs. The Regional Relocation Grant scheme includes two categories of grants: the Regional Relocation Home Buyers Grant and the Skilled Regional Relocation Incentive.

The Government introduced the skills incentive in January 2014 as part of its efforts to better target the scheme to a younger, more economically active demographic. Both the home buyers grant and the skills incentive have been administered on a first-come, first-served basis and the scheme is subject to the available budget allocation. The scheme's budget for 2014-15 reached capacity in August 2014. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, the Government published a legislative order on 29 August appointing a scheme closure date of 30 September 2014.

The Government recognises that the skills incentive has been successful in meeting its target audience of a younger, economically active demographic and in helping to attract much-needed skills and businesses to the regions. This is why the Government has agreed to deliver additional funding to continue the skills incentive. We have made the difficult decision to discontinue the other part of the scheme, the home buyers grant, which has been less successful in meeting the Government's objective to drive economic and jobs growth in regional New South Wales. The home buyers grant is not directly tied to jobs or regional skill needs. As the Act does not provide for partial closure of the scheme, both the home buyers grant and the skills incentive were closed.

The key purpose of the amendment bill is to enable the continuation of the Skilled Regional Relocation Incentive, which contributes to the Government's continuing efforts to drive growth and employment in regional areas. The key amendments proposed are: first, to allow the Skilled Regional Relocation Incentive to operate retrospectively from 30 September 2014 through to 31 March 2015; secondly, to confirm closure of the Regional Relocation Home Buyers Grant as of 30 September 2014 by specifying that this grant is only applicable to relocations that commenced on or before 30 September 2014; and, thirdly, to provide for a few consequential amendments and general provisions to clarify the operation of the amended Act.

The skills incentive will continue to be offered as a \$10,000 incentive as of 30 September 2014 through to the newly defined incentive scheme closure date of 31 March 2015. The bill does not change the eligibility requirements of the Skilled Regional Relocation Incentive. The grant will continue to be paid in two equal instalments of \$5,000 to eligible applicants who relocate from metropolitan to regional areas in New South Wales. The first instalment will continue to be paid no sooner than three months after an eligible relocation and the second will be paid at least a year after payment of the first instalment.

For self-employed applicants who are relocating or setting up their own business, engagement with the small business advisory services of the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner is still required. This was a suggestion by the shadow Minister in the other place during discussions on previous amendments to this legislation and it was one which the Government was happy to accept. A small change is proposed to the wording of this engagement with the small business advisory services—namely, to "participate in an approved program" rather than "complete an approved program"—to better reflect the ongoing nature of the business advisory services and program.

The bill proposes to rename the Act to reflect its new focus on the skills incentive and to make a few minor amendments, such as the making of applications and the removal of redundant clauses. Applications for both the home buyers grant and the skills incentive cannot be made more than six months after each grant's respective closure date. This is in keeping with standard practice and the initial intent of the Act. The skills incentive scheme closure date is specified as 31 March 2015; however, the Minister for Finance and Services may appoint an alternative scheme closure date by legislative order.

The amendment bill enables the continuation of the Skilled Regional Relocation Incentive. The skills incentive has successfully targeted the desired economically active demographic for relocation to regional New South Wales. The Office of State Revenue reports that since the introduction of the skills incentive in January 2014 until the end of July 2014 some 32 per cent of recipients were under the age of 30 years of age, 75 per cent were under 40 and 92 per cent were under 50. Continuation of the relocation skills incentive means that it will continue to attract city-based families, young professionals, small business owners and tradespeople to regional communities.

The skills incentive has already helped to attract doctors, architects, real estate agents, engineers, mining and farming workers, chiropractors, optometrists, teachers and police officers to regional New South Wales. It is estimated that continuation of the skills incentive will help to deliver 85 successful job seekers or business operators and their families to regional New South Wales per month. Continuation of the skills incentive will help to deliver employment outcomes and support existing efforts to drive business and job growth in regional communities and boost local economies. It provides an important incentive to help to attract the much-needed skills, jobs and business opportunities that contribute to the prosperity of regional communities and this State as a whole. I commend the bill to the House.

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

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2014-15

Debate resumed from 6 August 2014.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [4.05 p.m.]: As the member for Albury I will speak in the take-note debate on the Budget Estimates and Related Papers for 2014-15 from the perspective of the Albury region. Let me commence by thanking the Premier and Treasurer for overseeing a budget that delivers for Albury and for the entire State. In my electorate and local business community I can see the positive impact of having the State's finances in sound hands. A number of points have particular relevance to people in the electorate of Albury. The budget allocates \$324 million to Service NSW. This includes a \$190.5 million transfer from Roads and Maritime Services and \$87.2 million for capital works for the expansion of digital services and the one-stop service centre network. A new Service NSW centre is planned for Albury and discussions are already well underway. This will provide a genuine boost to productivity not just for businesses but also for residents dealing with State government licences and programs.

In the Health portfolio I welcome finalisation of one major project and the commencement of another. The budget provides \$2 million to continue work on the new Albury Brain Health Centre. This is in addition to the \$1 million secured pre-budget. Now this important project is fully funded. The sum of \$435,000 has helped finalise works on the \$4 million Albury ambulance station, which the Premier opened on the last day of July. My particular thanks go to the Minister for Health for pushing through the funding for this much-needed and long-anticipated ambulance station, which had been at the top of the electorate's wish list for 18 years. Indeed, I began my campaign for this project when first elected in 2003. It is a tremendous achievement all round—not to mention a relief—to get this one completed. Our paramedics really needed the facility and I am told they are enjoying it immensely.

I am pleased that Albury will benefit from a 50 per cent increase in the funds available to the electorate through the Community Building Partnership program. This will allow more community groups and councils to receive funding that will provide positive social, recreational and environmental outcomes in the local community. This program, in my experience, is grassroots government funding at its best. Councils in my electorate will make good use of the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme. Across the State a further investment of \$17.6 million in the 2014-15 budget will enable this scheme to continue to provide councils with a 3 per cent interest subsidy for up to 10 years on loans to finance critical local infrastructure projects. In total the scheme will unlock up to \$1 billion in funding for shovel-ready projects across New South Wales.

I welcome the announcement this week of two more projects in my electorate that will unlock \$4.1 million of road upgrades for Wagga Road in Albury and Alma Park Road in Greater Hume Shire. Albury will receive \$1 million for two new disability services facilities: \$600,000 for completion of a five-bed villa model in Albury and \$400,000 for completion of a five-bed villa model group home. The continual development

of these resources has been most welcome. I applaud the Government for committing \$587 million to the Ready Together program to give people with disabilities more choice and flexibility about how they live their lives. This commitment will assist individuals, their families and carers to prepare for transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The building industry is a major employer in my electorate and I welcome changes to the First Home Owner Grant scheme whereby the threshold purchase price for the \$15,000 grant will be boosted to \$750,000, which is an increase of \$100,000.

From a position of promoting social equity, I am truly pleased that the Treasurer has moved to protect New South Wales pensioners and seniors by including an additional \$107 million to continue concessions and rebates lost to them under the most recent Federal budget, and I endorse that move. The \$500,000 expansion of the New South Wales Seniors Card program is also well received in Albury, where the Seniors Card is valued highly. Community transport is a vital service, particularly in a regional area. Kalianna Enterprises Incorporated will receive more than \$600,000 for its transport programs, while Tumbarumba Shire Council will get \$93,000. The Albury electorate will share in \$1.954 million provided for the Eastern Murrumbidgee Network Homelessness Service led by the St Vincent de Paul Society New South Wales and \$1.974 million to the Southern Murrumbidgee Network Homelessness Service led by Albury-Wodonga Youth Emergency Services.

A commitment of \$228 million in the budget will provide vital assistance to households seeking to rein in their energy costs. The value of several rebates will rise, which is another good move. Roads program funding of \$34.569 million provided by this budget for the Albury electorate will support several key projects: \$8.1 million has gone towards finalisation of the Holbrook bypass as the last stage of the Hume Highway duplication between Sydney and Melbourne; \$1 million will help with planning for a replacement Murray River bridge between Yarrawonga and Mulwala as the New South Wales contribution; \$4.513 million is coming by way of grants to councils for regional roads; a further \$8.429 million will pay for maintenance works and \$2.603 million will pay for specific maintenance works and improvements on State roads.

The sum of \$2.2 million has been provided for planning, investigations and acquisitions. There are allocations for works on the Jingellic-Tumbarumba Road, the Riverina Highway, Olympic Way, the Hume Motorway and the Jingellic-Gilmore Road, along with maintenance for the new Wymah Ferry, road safety works and for school crossing supervisors. I take this opportunity to thank the Premier for his recent visit to Albury and for taking time to speak with local mayors, the chamber of commerce and many local citizens. It was a very worthwhile visit. In particular I acknowledge the commitment made by the Premier to addressing safety concerns over a part of the Riverina Highway between Albury and the Hume Weir. A report has now been prepared by Roads and Maritime Services [RMS].

I thank the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Freight for their assurances that funding will be secured to deal with this narrow and winding stretch of highway. Funding also will flow to the Albury electorate to complete the rollout of school zone flashing lights to the few remaining schools that lack those lights. Work will begin in January. I turn now to education. This December, as the academic year concludes, the students and parents of James Fallon High School, which is a government school situated in Albury, will climb into their cars or onto buses to get to their school presentation day ceremony—just like hundreds of thousands of other students across New South Wales.

They will drive to their school, but will not get out there. Instead they will keep going through the heart of the city and right to the other side. Soon they will cross a river, the Murray, and leave the State of New South Wales behind them. Those parents and students will gather in Victoria at a venue owned by Wodonga City Council, and it is here that they will hold their New South Wales high school presentation ceremony, I repeat, in Victoria. This will happen because James Fallon High School has only a tiny indoor facility which, if pressed, can seat a little over one-third of those in its community who might attend this important school function. One might ask: How can this be?

Thorough research has uncovered that the school parents and citizens [P&C] association has been seeking an adequate hall for more than 40 years and has made representation after representation to departmental and ministerial offices. Yet this year James Fallon P&C will pay Victorian local government authorities thousands of dollars for the hire of the hall in Wodonga. I reiterate that this money has been raised by the P&C to hold the school presentation day. Can we not do better than this for one of our own government high schools in the centre of a major regional city?

Unfortunately, the record shows that we have not been able to move forward on this. It is important to raise this subject now in the context of the budget as this has been its traditional home. Newer members might

not know that my predecessor as member for Albury, the late Ian Glachan, made his disappointment well known year after year at budget time as the school was overlooked for funding for a hall. Today I carry on that tradition—and it is important. On 12 June 1996 Mr Glachan told the House:

James Fallon High School in Albury, which excels in music and drama, desperately needs a multipurpose centre. The small hall is totally inadequate to meet the needs of pupils. I have been battling for a multipurpose centre for some time.

The Minister for Education in the coalition Government undertook to provide the multipurpose centre, but since the election last year those plans have been put on hold and there is now no guarantee as to when that desperately needed multipurpose centre might be provided.

Similar speeches were delivered in this place in 1999 and 2001 but I can go further back than that, much further. The first reference to correspondence about the hall problem comes in a letter from the then Minister for Education, which was read out to parents at the August 1972 P&C meeting.

Mr David Elliott: That was before I was born.

Mr GREG APLIN: As the Parliamentary Secretary says, that was well before he was born. Correspondence and reports continued over the years until Ian Glachan announced in February 1995 that approval had been given by a Coalition Government to commence planning for a new gymnasium and a senior studies centre and refurbishment of the music centre. However, this did not occur as there was a change in the government that year. Victory was snatched away and it stayed away for the 16 years of Labor governments in this State. Labor simply lost interest. What have been the consequences of this delay to act? In the minutes of the P&C of April 1977 I read that numbers of pupils attending the school's Anzac Day service would be limited due to the size of the hall. That problem continues to this day.

Presentation days have been held off site since at least 1977. This year's high school musical was staged in Victoria. It was a large-scale production that we should be proud of, such is the quality of the school I am talking about. Each week school assemblies for 700 are held outdoors under what can generously be termed a rustic carport. The students sit on bare concrete. When it rains, the assembly area is flooded. The children sit on the grey concrete in dozens of little islands, finding places where there is no running water. In summer temperatures hit the mid-forties and in winter there can be frost on the ground. Indeed, Albury morning temperatures fell to minus two degrees this winter. It makes for hardy children, but it is not fair.

Large exams, such as the Higher School Certificate [HSC] in some subjects, are held in overcrowded conditions. The school is unable to ever hold a full school assembly in a hall, which has an obvious negative impact on school spirit and public recognition of outstanding students, groups, teams and events in a formal setting. Over the years I have continued to write to and question various Ministers for Education about this hall. Recently I encouraged the school to dig out its archives so I could prepare a detailed report on the situation. This report was duly delivered to the education Minister last June. On 28 July the Minister wrote to me saying that while he recognised the school community had been "seeking a gymnasium multi-purpose facility for some time", this was not going to be the time that need was met. He said that the project would "continue to be assessed and prioritised for funding against competing projects across all New South Wales government schools."

With respect, that is not a particularly helpful response to a detailed report exposing a frankly shocking history of unmet need and questionable departmental processes. Bureaucratic words such as those have been the tenor of replies to the school's submissions since the 1970s. Correspondence reveals that the hall project has been on departmental capital works priority lists since at least 1991 when the Director of the Albury North Cluster for the Department of School Education wrote to the P&C stating, "I have urged Mr Peters", who was the director of administration and finance at the regional office, "to give your submission the highest regional priority possible". Twenty-three years later the hall remains unfunded and unbuilt. I ask: What do we call a priority list on which one can never advance?

What the school community wants—and in this respect I join them—is for the 42-year delay to be investigated by the Minister. The community needs and deserves answers as to how its hall, which is a basic piece of school infrastructure if ever there was one, can be left on departmental priority lists for 23 years and be under consideration for more than 40 years. What has gone so terribly wrong with this school's request? This is not a matter of budgets, which are a reality, nor an attempt to seek special favour. It is about an apparently broken departmental process. Surely the time has come to investigate the selection process. If ever there is a school that has waited its turn with good grace, it is James Fallon High School.

On this, the eighteenth anniversary of the first occasion the problem of this school's hall was raised in desperation during debate on a State budget in this House, I am standing here renewing the call, as another State budget bypasses this essential and most basic school project—42 years of making applications; 23 years on departmental priority lists for capital works and three Governments. I look forward to hearing that this school community no longer has to take its children to another State for the staging of the high school musical. I look forward to hearing that James Fallon no longer has to limit the number of its students and parents who can participate in Anzac Day remembrance or end-of-year presentation ceremonies. I look forward to the day when James Fallon's 700 students can get up off the concrete. I look forward to an investigation of the disturbing matters raised in my report and to obtaining answers for the community I represent in this place.

In concluding I thank the Minister for visiting Albury on 22 August to open the rebuilt Kandeer School—a school for children with emotional and behavioural disorders—and substantial, indeed transformative extensions to Wewak Street School, which caters for students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities. It was a wonderful, warm winter's day. I am grateful the Minister made time for a quick inspection of the situation at James Fallon, even though this was not part of his official itinerary. These actions are much appreciated in my electorate and demonstrate the Government's commitment to regional schools.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [4.20 p.m.]: I was elected in 2011 to represent the people of Port Macquarie, whether they be in Harrington, Laurieton or Telegraph Point. I consider it a real honour to be given this privilege and I am proud of the achievements of this Government in supporting the people of our electorates. The 2014-15 budget reflects the commitment of the Liberal-Nationals Government to the people of Port Macquarie. Just as importantly it reflects the Government's commitment to the people of regional New South Wales. The budget, which was handed down on 17 June this year, reflects the responsible financial management of the Liberal-Nationals Government during its three years in office. On this occasion, \$105 million was announced for projects in the Port Macquarie electorate. That sensible management has helped to deliver funding for a range of projects that will benefit local communities across the electorate.

After three years of tough decisions to transform the way we spend and to instil discipline across government, New South Wales is now at or near the top of the nation on all leading economic indicators. New South Wales Treasurer Andrew Constance is to be congratulated as he continues the solid work of the former Treasurer and now Premier, Mike Baird. The budget handed down on 17 June contained some major funding allocations for the Port Macquarie electorate. It included the continuing duplication of the Pacific Highway, with \$73 million to commence the construction of the dual-carriageway upgrade of the Pacific Highway between the Oxley Highway and Kundabung.

Yesterday I joined the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Warren Truss, and the member for Lyne, Dr David Gillespie, on the Pacific Highway just past the Dennis Bridge, where we turned the first sod for the commencement of work on this next stretch of the upgrade of the Pacific Highway. At this event I talked about the concerns of parents who live north of Port Macquarie and regularly have to travel on the Pacific Highway. It is a daunting time for parents waiting for a phone call saying their children have arrived safely when they travel that stretch of road. Sadly, this stretch of the Pacific Highway north of Port Macquarie to the border has claimed far too many young lives. I am very proud that the Federal Government and the State Government are working in partnership, as we should, to deliver this very important project. I am confident that the duplication will be completed by 2020.

In the budget there was also \$7.2 million to complete construction of the Sancrox Road interchange as part of the upgrade of the Pacific Highway between the Oxley Highway and Kempsey. This is a significant interchange as it will open up a vast area for use as industrial space. This additional space is desperately needed in the Port Macquarie electorate. From speaking to many local businesspeople located around Lake Road I have learnt that there is often congestion in that area. Light vehicles and large semitrailers and delivery vehicles use the road which also has retail outlets and that means there is continuing pressure on the infrastructure. Opening up new industrial areas, as a result of the construction of this interchange, will make an enormous difference to the business community in Port Macquarie.

There was also an announcement of \$7.24 million to fund the replacement of the bridge over Stingray Creek at North Haven on Ocean Drive. The community of Camden Haven has waited for this major infrastructure project for decades, and construction is expected to commence in early 2015. I am very pleased that Port Macquarie-Hastings Council and the State Government have made funding commitments for this bridge project, which is estimated to cost close to \$20 million. The State Government has committed \$8 million

to the project. I commend the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, who has consistently shown his commitment to making sure that the community of Port Macquarie has safer roads by supporting local government to improve road infrastructure.

There was also \$6.2 million for the construction of Lake Cathie Public School, which is progressing very well. A few weeks ago I toured the construction site to assess progress, along with the very proud newly appointed principal, Mr Jock Garven. The community has commented to me about how quickly this project has come to fruition. The school has 10 classrooms, an enormous library and an excellent administration area as well as canteen facilities and a hall. Its covered outdoor learning area will become a hallmark for schools in the area as it will cover an entire basketball court. Many excited young students will start their first day of school or transfer from another school to Lake Cathie Public School.

The budget also allocated \$3.4 million towards the construction of the \$3.9 million fire station at Port Macquarie. I saw that this work is progressing well when I inspected the construction site recently with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Stuart Ayres. This is another important infrastructure project for the community. There was also \$3.2 million for the completion of the Port Macquarie Base Hospital redevelopment. I have had the privilege of visiting the upgraded hospital on a number of occasions. To say it is an impressive addition to our existing hospital is an understatement as the original part of the hospital has been given a facelift and the new section is a little overwhelming. I worked at the hospital as a registered nurse and many of my former colleagues, both nurses and medical practitioners, are equally impressed.

Some \$2 million was allocated to upgrade Ocean Drive in Port Macquarie—a project that is under the control of the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council. What we were hoping to see is duplication of a section of Ocean Drive, which is one of the main thoroughfares into the Port Macquarie central business district [CBD]. I am disappointed that we have not yet seen work commence on that project. It was only last month that the Minister, the Hon. Duncan Gay, announced that some of the funding, which previously was allocated for Ocean Drive, will be transferred to the upgrading of a roundabout at the intersection of Ocean Drive and Houston Mitchell Drive, adjacent to where the new Lake Cathie Public School is to be built.

This is a sensible approach. The community wants to ensure that, when money is allocated by the State Government to local government, it is spent in a responsible and timely fashion. I again thank the Minister, the Hon. Duncan Gay for this approach and I am looking forward to seeing that project commence in earnest. The community rightly expects that their elected representatives will work together to protect the most vulnerable. The New South Wales Government is certainly fulfilling its promise to do that. It is this Government's priority—something that Premier Mike Baird has made clear on many occasions.

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

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

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [4.31 p.m.]: I speak in support of one of our most precious institutions—the public library—and to endorse this petition of more than 10,000 signatures that has been presented by Public Libraries New South Wales. This is the third time the matter has been brought before the House, which indicates a significant number of signatories across New South Wales. I know that the majority of members, if not all, have at least a fondness for libraries. I know this because I recall the time taken by more than 60 members early in this term as they spoke passionately and somewhat nostalgically about libraries during debate on the Library Amendment Bill 2011. Who could forget it? I hope members look back fondly on their time spent with their noses in books and that they will continue to use the services that libraries provide.

The series of petitions that have been tabled highlight the strength of feeling among the people of New South Wales about the protection of their libraries. The continuance of a healthy, vibrant and responsive library service is essential, but it is not assured. Libraries are an important part of the social and cultural fabric of our communities and should not be taken for granted. The Lake Macquarie libraries in my electorate are true centres of learning. Their service list is extensive, with facilities far beyond access to books and the internet. At

many libraries one will find 3D printing, meeting rooms, home library services, story times, movie screenings, information sessions on everything from gardening to knitting and online job applications, regular author talks and even performances, in our case by the wonderful local magicians.

Of all the things that libraries do, the most important is that they provide access to wonderful professionals in information management and dissemination. Librarians are experts in sourcing information, facts and figures. Their skills cannot be understated and cannot be replaced by search engines, regardless of what a Google search might say. Libraries are centres of creativity, centres of communication and centres for personal development. They are so much more than the humble book repositories of times past and they are well used. Over the past 10 years, library visits have grown by 21 per cent, despite the increasing prevalence of e-readers. More than 44 per cent of New South Wales citizens are members of libraries, with many more using their services.

Since the New South Wales Library Act was introduced in 1939, the State Government has progressively reduced its contribution to the funding of public libraries, from 50 per cent to just 7 per cent. This is the lowest per capita contribution of all the States in Australia and, clearly, a matter for concern. The burden of funding libraries falls mostly on the shoulders of local government, yet libraries are governed at State level. The original Act presumed a partnership between the two levels of government, but these days there is little to no partnership. Successive State governments have largely wiped their hands of the responsibility for funding these centres of learning and shifted an unfair financial burden onto local government. The Government has said that the new Public Library Infrastructure Grants program will afford opportunity for smaller councils to apply for additional funding.

This petition contests how this can stabilise the future of our public libraries, as there are no guarantees that councils will be successful in their applications. The reforms have to be aimed at the day-to-day funding of libraries. One-off projects may provide for things such as wi-fi, but they will not protect the longevity of our libraries. Recurrent costs—including asset depreciation—are a burden that is not lightened by those grants. The Government ignores the flaws in the per capita funding initiative of \$1.85 per person. This figure has remained the same for nearly 20 years. As the population rises, the funding of libraries effectively decreases, irrespective of the size of the council and the locality. The Government has raided other pools of funding, such as the library development pool, to the extent that there is nothing left. It is not only small councils that are adversely affected; it is every council in New South Wales.

This petition asks for a building library infrastructure program—a pool of funds dedicated to the maintenance of library buildings, collections and equipment. A labelled fund will protect this money to ensure that it is used efficiently in the areas where it is most needed. Without a funding pool set aside for a distinct purpose, public library funding as a whole is at risk, as general funds can too easily be redirected for a different purpose. If the funding plan for public libraries is not properly reviewed, and resources increased, we could see many public libraries becoming privatised and running fee-for-service programs. How many of us as children would have spent our lolly money on taking out a book? It is because these services are free and accessible that so many people are attracted to libraries.

Access to learning in the twenty-first century should not be prohibitively expensive. Reading is essential to personal development, and libraries these days are about a lot more than just books. Library services must remain free of charge and they must be resourced in such a way that they remain effective, up to date and accessible. This petition demonstrates the level of care and concern in our communities about the survival and ongoing viability of our public libraries. We must act now to increase dedicated funding to ensure that these centres of learning continue to flourish.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [4.36 p.m.]: I welcome the petition, which shows the high regard the people of New South Wales have for their public libraries. I know my good friend the Minister for Mental Health was a councillor on Campbelltown City Council, which opened its first library in May 1965—Campbelltown, that great opal of the south-west. I am sure the member for Mount Druitt will remember that. The library now has branches at Campbelltown, Eagle Vale, Glenquarie and Ingleburn. The Ingleburn branch is named after Greg Percival, who the member opposite would remember. The council received State Government subsidies for 2014-15, which will exceed \$380,000. This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Library Act 1939. The legislation passed on 3 November that year with bipartisan support and set in motion the incentive for local councils to open and operate free public library services.

The Act encouraged councils to establish and operate public libraries by making State Government subsidies available to councils. At the passing of the legislation, there were just two free public libraries

operated by local councils in New South Wales—one at Broken Hill and one in the City of Sydney. City and country councils adopted the Act and opened public libraries at a great rate. Today, all New South Wales councils have adopted the Act and all but one provide free library services. The one local government area [LGA] that does not yet have a library is the Central Darling Shire. However, the State Government funded the Outback Letterbox Library, which ensures that the residents of Central Darling and the unincorporated area of New South Wales receive services provided by Broken Hill City Library.

As noted in the House on 11 September, the petition that has led to this debate contains some statements that could be considered to be misleading. First, it states that library funding was once split 50:50 between State and local governments. Matching funding from the State Government was only available to a handful of country councils between 1945 and 1952 and only to those councils that had tiny populations, lower expenditure and a low base rate. The vast majority of councils have never qualified for that 50:50 funding. In 1952 the Library Act was amended to cap the subsidy to a per capita amount.

Secondly, while the petition correctly states that the \$1.85 prescribed amount per capita has not increased since 1997, it is incorrect to say that library subsidy payments to councils have been static since that time. Increases to payments since 1977 have been paid through disability weightings and other more equitable mechanisms, with the full support of local and government stakeholders. The prescribed amount is just one component of the annual subsidy paid to councils. All councils receive well in excess of this amount per capita, with a New South Wales average of \$2.74 in the 2014-15 year. In addition, councils are eligible to apply for the new Public Library Infrastructure Grants. These grants are from a new fund established by the Government in the 2014-15 budget, which will provide an additional \$15 million over four years.

The State Library of New South Wales is now seeking applications from councils for year one of this new grants program. Applications are due on Friday 31 October and councils are encouraged to apply for funding to help improve their library buildings, public spaces and information technology infrastructure. As required by the Library Act, this Government is assisting councils to promote, provide and maintain library services for the people of New South Wales and continues to seek advice from the State Library through the Library Council of NSW on how to best do so. Local councils have the responsibility of operating and managing local libraries, and the State Government is focused on providing support to upgrade library facilities and infrastructure. I commend the petition to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.41 p.m.]: I join the member for Lake Macquarie and the member for Campbelltown in taking note that we have received another petition of 10,000 signatures in relation to library funding. I note that we have received a similar, if not identical, petition on at least three occasions, which indicates that more than 30,000 people are calling on the Parliament to ask the Government to increase the per capita funding of libraries in New South Wales. This petition brings to the attention of the Parliament the dwindling contribution towards State libraries made by the State Government. The number of signatures coming from the electorates of many members of this House shows how deeply people feel about the viability of their local libraries and that they are prepared to fight to save them.

In this Parliament we are blessed to have a well-resourced library staffed by a team of highly professional staff. Over many years I have seen how the services of the library downstairs have expanded as new technology has changed the way information is accessed by all members and their staff. In my own electorate I have seen the local Mount Druitt Library expand. It is now part of the Mount Druitt Hub, a project jointly funded by the former Labor Government and the former Labor council of Blacktown. An inspection of Mount Druitt Library shows a modern facility that is accessed by a growing number of locals, not just by school students but also the retired population and broader sectors of the electorate. Many years ago people would have seen some reading areas, bookshelves full of books classified in different sections, magazines and so on in the Mount Druitt Library.

The modern Mount Druitt Library proudly boasts on its website that it has 45 general use personal computers, internet access, wireless internet access, colour and black and white printing, black and white copying, study rooms for people to study there, meeting rooms for the general public and laptops for loan. There are even toys available for children to play with. There is also an after-hours facility for the return of laptops, books, videos, DVDs and so on. This petition highlights the need for the Government to increase the per capita funding. I note the member for Lake Macquarie highlighted that the petitioners say New South Wales is at the bottom of all the States for per capita funding in Australia. This Government came to office promising to make New South Wales number one again. If that is the Government's slogan it should match those words with reality and make New South Wales the number one library-funding State in Australia.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.44 p.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to join my colleagues in speaking on this petition on behalf of the Government. I am immensely proud of the public libraries in the Northern Tablelands. At the outset I acknowledge Ian Greenleigh, who manages the Armidale Dumaresq Council War Memorial Library, and I pay tribute to the great work that he and his team do at that facility. I also acknowledge Sonya Lange and her magnificent team at the Inverell Shire Public Library, which has been servicing the wonderful community of Inverell since 1939 when the Library Act was passed by this Parliament. I note that in the 2012-13 financial year the Inverell Shire Public Library successfully applied for a New South Wales Government Library Development Grant of \$25,750 for the project e-books for Inverell.

I use this example to illustrate how far libraries have come since the Library Act was introduced in 1939. All members will know innately—particularly those members who have served on local government, such as the member for Lake Macquarie—how important libraries are to our communities, particularly to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Statistics collected by the State Library show that last year more than 1 million people attended events at public libraries across New South Wales. These events included cultural events such as exhibitions; early literacy support programs, such as story time for kids; information technology programs for seniors, such as the Tech Savvy Seniors program that has been running at Inverell Shire Public Library over the past few months, kindly supported by Telstra; and stimulating holiday activities for teenagers and the younger members of our community.

The use of the internet in libraries—and I know the member for Mount Druitt will be particularly interested in this—has almost doubled in the past five years to more than five million hours across the State in the 2012-13 financial year. Much of this growth is attributable to the advent of wi-fi and having free access to wi-fi at many of our public libraries. Rolling out that project to more libraries has been actively supported by this Government. Similarly, the State Government has increased the grants and subsidies provided to councils in support of their library services—a record figure of \$27.5 million will be provided by the State Government this financial year. The new Public Library Infrastructure Grants will provide an additional \$15 million over the next four years to assist councils with capital projects, chiefly to improve buildings and information technology access for members of the public. I thank all the people who signed this petition to show their support for public libraries and I commend the petition to the House.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

INDIA INDEPENDENCE DAY 2014

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [4.47 p.m.]: On 15 August 2014 in Castle Hill I attended the sixty-eighth anniversary of India's independence. I thank the Council of Indian Australians, especially the president Subba Rao Varigonda and the public relations director Tony Colaco for organising and inviting me to this event. This State is richer because of the enormous contribution the Indian community has made, especially to Western Sydney. This relatively new community is making serious inroads into various aspects of our community, such as information technology, health services, finance and many others. Money raised during this dinner was put towards providing assistance to new migrants, victims of domestic violence and educational programs. More than 55,000 people living in Greater Western Sydney have come from India, making them one of the largest cultural groups in the area. It gives me great joy in representing the community, and I look forward to celebrating Diwali.

CARDIFF RAILWAY STATION

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [4.48 p.m.]: Cardiff commuters are lucky because Barry Lynn has been their stationmaster for seven years. During that time he has done a lot of good work, but a recent article in the *Newcastle Herald* highlights just how important Barry and all his co-workers at Cardiff railway station are in the State's public service. When a young man with autism spectrum disorder forgot his wallet and realised this while waiting for the train to school, Barry stepped in to make sure he got to town without any problems. That is the kind of guy Barry is—a stationmaster who really cares about helping people. Bravo to Barry.

BOWRAL HOSPITAL 125TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health) [4.49 p.m.]: At the outset I congratulate you, Mr Acting-Speaker, on your appointment. I congratulate Bowral Hospital on its 125th anniversary celebration, which I had the opportunity to celebrate recently with its general manager, Alison Derrett, staff and volunteers. I was honoured to cut the cake, welcome a new mental health nurse who will support the region's children suffering with mental illness, meet with clinicians and tour the hospital. The hospital was founded in 1889 and continues to provide world-class care with its absolutely amazing staff, who work every day with dedication to the community. I am constantly amazed by the work of Bowral Hospital and remain committed to supporting it. As Assistant Minister for Health, I am proud to have such a fantastic service in the region. I wish them a happy 125th anniversary.

THE SHOPFRONT YOUTH LEGAL CENTRE

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.50 p.m.]: The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre celebrated its twenty-first birthday on Thursday 9 October at the offices of Herbert Smith Freehills, a firm of lawyers that provides substantial pro bono work in connection with the centre. Other centre partners are the Salvation Army and Mission Australia. The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre is a free legal centre for homeless and disadvantaged young people. It does quite important work for the young people for whom it acts. My dealings with the centre relate to its broader systemic advocacy, which I have found quite valuable both in government and opposition.

Indeed, as I said to the centre's principal solicitor, Jane Sanders, at the celebration, given the number of times I have read her material—and quoted from it from time to time in my speeches for second reading debates—attending the event was the least I could do. The shopfront's story can be traced back to the 1989 Burdekin report. In 1993 Freehills formed an alliance with Sydney City Mission to operate a legal service operating with an information centre. In 1997 The shopfront moved to a building of the Salvation Army, which then became another partner. The shopfront and its staff have won a series of awards and been widely recognised for their work. In 2008 Jane Sanders was awarded the Law and Justice Foundation's Justice Medal.

DR ROBERT HERD, PRINCIPAL RESEARCH SCIENTIST

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.51 p.m.]: I commend Armidale-based scientist Robert Herd, who has been enrolled as a Fellow of the Australian Society of Animal Production in recognition of his groundbreaking research into efficient livestock breeding. Dr Herd is based at the University of New England and employed by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries. He is recognised internationally for his research into feed efficiency and reducing methane emissions in beef cattle. His comprehensive research on genetic improvements led to the adoption of the Net Feed Intake [NFI] as a trait in the national genetic improvement scheme for beef cattle and provided the first empirical data for the link between feed efficiency and reduced methane emissions in cattle. With more than 30 years of research experience, Dr Herd's expertise in animal nutrition and genetics has made him an integral part of the Department of Primary Industries' beef genetics research and development team. This is a significant honour for Dr Herd and I congratulate him on his major contribution to this field.

TRIBUTE TO GAYLE FROST

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.52 p.m.]: I praise carers in Bankstown in recognition of New South Wales Carers Week and, in particular, Bankstown resident and recipient of a carers award Ms Gayle Frost. I had the pleasure to visit Ms Frost at her Yagoona home on Friday to congratulate her on her achievement and was delighted to present her with the award, which reflects her selflessness and generous nature, and acknowledges her love and commitment in caring for her unwell mother. Carers Week provides an opportunity to praise the tireless efforts of our 850,000 carers in New South Wales, and Bankstown is particularly blessed to have a number of committed carers such as Ms Gayle Frost. Ms Frost is an exemplary carer and her qualities encapsulate what it means to be a carer: selflessness, generosity and unconditional love. Ms Frost generously dedicated the award she received to all carers in the community.

MONEY STUFF CHALLENGE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [4.53 p.m.]: I recognise Catherine Yao, a year 9 student at Gosford High School. One month ago she entered the New South Wales Department of Fair Trading's Money Stuff Challenge. This competition challenges students to create savvy consumer messages

using contemporary media to get their message across. From more than 1,000 entries Catherine won the regional category for creating an engaging video about phishing scams that was a perfect balance of information and entertainment. I also congratulate Sam Sebastian of Normanhurst Boys High School, who won the People's Choice Award for his video about statutory warranties. It is great to see young people in the community getting involved in raising awareness about the problems consumers face every day. I congratulate Catherine and Sam on their outstanding achievements and wish them all the best in their future careers.

MOUNT DRUITT TOWN RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.54 p.m.]: I will relate a story from the Mount Druitt Town Rangers Football Club. In March this year contact was made with Adonai Partners, an African mission seeking football gear for local teams. As a result, club secretary, Narelle Telling, and president, Mark Robertson, searched through the club's old stores and emerged with 360 obsolete Mount Druitt Town Rangers player shirts that were still in a usable condition. The Mount Druitt Town Rangers have released photographs of the old shirts being worn by African football teams in Uganda and Togo. As the club press release this week states, "These photos remind us of how fortunate we are as a club, community and country." I could not agree more. Well done to the Mount Druitt Town Rangers for their continued support of football at local and now international levels.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE CADETS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [4.55 p.m.]: This being the first opportunity to do so, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the member for Dubbo on becoming the next Leader of The Nationals. I acknowledge Chris Nolan, who runs a brilliant NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] local program: the Rural Fire Service Cadets. The program operates out of the Albion Park RFS Headquarters and provides an invaluable service to the local community. Chris and his crew of helpers volunteer their time to teach cadets the vital knowledge they require until they are old enough to join a local RFS brigade. The knowledge, skills, discipline and confidence they gain from this program is very noteworthy and a real credit to the Rural Fire Service. The time spent volunteering to teach these children is additional to the time the crew spends assisting our community, attending to members' own training, completing hazard reduction burns, fighting fires and attending accidents. Thank you, Chris, and your team of volunteers for the service you continue to provide to our local community in preparing the next generation of RFS volunteers. I acknowledge also Danny Tonge and his son, who gained enormous benefit and confidence from the RFS cadets program. It is an outstanding program from outstanding locals.

WHITE BAY CRUISESHIP TERMINAL NOISE POLLUTION

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.56 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the many residents of the Balmain peninsula who have made a powerful stand to highlight major issues arising as a result of the noise and emissions from the White Bay Cruise Terminal. I congratulate all the people who have spoken out about the health and wellbeing of our community, including Michelle Hacking, Kath Hacking, Councillor John Stamilos, Dr Alan Rosen, Christina Ritchie, Kate Horobin, Libby Horobin, Caren and Adrian Lockhart, Kerin Cox, Valerie Sundquist, Gill Hazel, Tony O'Halloran, Peter and Maree Thomas, John and Kate Priest, Deidra Sutton and Richard Gould. These issues have tested the patience of the community for more than 1½ years. It is pleasing to see the commitment and support from members of our local community and their efforts to ensure that the decision of the former Government is overturned and the safety, amenity and health of local residents is restored. I thank all those community members for their wonderful support.

TRIBUTE TO ERNEST "SOLLY" STEPHENS, OAM

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.57 p.m.]: I congratulate 82-year-old Ernest "Solly" Stephens, OAM, patron of Wanda Surf Life Saving Club, on his recent award of a platinum medal from the International Surf Lifesaving Association in recognition of his contribution as an official at 10 world surf lifesaving championships. Solly joined Wanda in January 1951 and remains active at club, branch, State, national and international levels. He has officiated for more than 45 years at State, national and world championships, especially in rescue and resuscitation [R&R] and belt competitions. Since 1978 he has travelled to Japan for three months each year to help Yugawara Surf Life Saving Club. About 600 Japanese surf lifesavers have received their bronze medallion at Wanda through Solly's exchange program. On his eightieth birthday Solly received a citation of merit from the International Life Saving Federation. He has also received two Japanese citations for rescues, two Queen Elizabeth Awards, the Australian sports medal and two 50-year service awards. I congratulate Solly and thank him for his continuing contribution to the safety of swimmers at our Bate Bay beaches.

KAHAWATI MEDICAL AND PHARMACY CENTRE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.58 p.m.]: On 8 October 2014 I was pleased to attend the grand opening of a new local business in Fairfield. The Kahawati family opened a new pharmacy and medical centre in Fairfield that provides modern, state-of-the-art medical and pharmaceutical services to Fairfield residents. The combined pharmacy and medical centre will greatly assist the area and facilitate the ever-increasing needs of residents in my electorate. At the opening of the new centre, a plaque was unveiled that read "For God, For Family, For Country." The proud Kahawati family migrated to Australia to make a better life not only for themselves but also for their community. This is another great migrant success story. I extend my congratulations to Christopher Kahawati and his family on the opening of their new medical centre and pharmacy.

NOWRA-BOMADERRY JETS GRAND FINAL VICTORY

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.59 p.m.]: I congratulate the Nowra-Bomaderry Jets on their recent victory in the Group 7 Rugby League competition. The Jets beat minor premiers Warilla-Lake South to take the 2014 first-grade title—the first for the Jets since their formation. The team has competed in the South Coast first-grade competition since 2007 and has worked tirelessly to build its club membership. They have achieved great success over that time, and are a big part of the Shoalhaven's sporting achievements. The Jets games are well attended by all their community followers—especially, of course, in Nowra—and the team is a significant part of our community. I commend all the players, particularly captain and coach, Ben Wellington, and the supporters for their efforts. I look forward to witnessing the team's many future successes. I also thank Shoalhaven City Council Mayor Joanna Gash for providing a fantastic civic reception last week, which I attended with Gareth Ward, the member for Kiama, and at which all members, coaches, managers and volunteers were acknowledged for their contribution to the Jets' victory.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [4.59 p.m.]: On 19 September my wife, Jeannette, and I attended the sixty-second annual awards presentation dinner of Sutherland Shire Football Association. The Association is regarded as one of the largest junior soccer associations in the Southern Hemisphere. It comprises 26 locally based clubs and has its headquarters at Harrie Denning Field in Kareela. At the ceremony I had the privilege of presenting the Stan Ellis Memorial Cup for the senior women's champion club to the Menai Hawks club president Nigel Essex. Women's soccer is one of the fastest-growing sports in the Sutherland shire. I congratulate the Association, its president, Mr Wayne Schweike, vice-president Mr Paul Berger and the entire committee on its excellent administration of the world game throughout Sutherland shire in the 2014 season, and I wish all 26 clubs a fantastic 2015 soccer season.

NATHAN RILEY AND INDIGENOUS MARATHON PROJECT

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [5.00 p.m.]: I congratulate a young Dubbo resident Nathan Riley, who has been selected to compete in the New York Marathon as part of the Indigenous Marathon Project. This is an amazing opportunity for and achievement by Nathan. The Indigenous Marathon Project is about giving men and women the opportunity to run in the New York Marathon in November. This great program, mentored by Robert de Castella, is aimed at using the marathon to change lives, promote healthy and active lifestyles, and create inspiring role models in the community.

Nathan has been selected along with 11 representatives from across Australia. The program gives runners the opportunity to train in a range of races across the country from Sydney, Canberra, Gold Coast and Alice Springs in the lead-up to the New York Marathon. Squad members will be required to undertake a Certificate IV in Leisure and Health as part of the program. Nathan is a great example and role model for other young people in my area, showing us what can be achieved from hard work and commitment. Through his hard work, Nathan has shown his commitment to the future by supporting other local youth in pursuing their dreams.

ORANGE NATIONAL HOCKEY CHAMPIONS

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.01 p.m.]: I draw the attention of members to Orange's Bailey Ferguson and Eva Reith-Snare who both took out gold medals at their respective boys and girls Hockey Australia under 13 national championships in Adelaide and Brisbane recently. Bailey's side won all of its

11 games at the championships. His team netted 61 goals, with Bailey accounting for 10 of them, including nine field goals and one converted penalty corner. Eva's team conceded just two goals for the entire tournament, with the team winning nine of its 11 games. From the tournament Bailey was given the opportunity to train with the NSW Waratahs side, while Eva was able to spend some time with Edwina and Meredith Bone of Orange. Congratulations to Bailey and Eva on these outstanding achievements. The community is proud of you.

WOOLLAHRA PUBLIC SCHOOL ART SHOW

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [5.02 p.m.]: Last Friday, 10 October 2014, Woollahra Public School in my electorate held its annual art show, showcasing the outstanding work of its students across all years. I was impressed to see so much creativity and innovation on display from the students through their artwork. There were many types of artwork on display, including edible art made entirely of food. I was particularly impressed with a mural that the school is currently developing that represents the Aboriginal word "Woollahra", which in the language of the Gadigal people means "meeting place". It was a pleasure to add my own dot to the mural. The school is inviting people to add their dots for a donation of \$5, with all the proceeds going to the Sydney Story Factory, which is a not-for-profit creative writing centre for young people at Redfern. I always enjoy visiting Woollahra Public School. I thank Principal Simon Symeou, students, parents and friends for their work in organising the art show and welcoming me on the evening.

CAMPBELLTOWN ACADEMIC CHALLENGE

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [5.03 p.m.]: I am pleased to inform the House of this year's Campbelltown Academic Challenge visit to the New South Wales Parliament today. The event is now in its third year and shows no signs of slowing down. Today's visitors came from the five finalist schools: Wattle Grove Public School, Ingleburn Public School, Ingleburn North Public School, Sackville Street Public School and Glenfield Public School. Also joining the students were staff from the host school, Sarah Redfern High School, who have graciously hosted the event for the past three years.

During their visit the children were treated to a tour of Parliament, where they viewed the Aboriginal art display, which is run in conjunction with Campbelltown and the New South Wales Parliament, and the historic building in which we work. The children were delighted by discussions with the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, and the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, who took time to talk and have his photograph taken with the kids. I commend the efforts of the students and the staff involved from each of the competing schools and Sarah Redfern High School who make this annual academic competition an exciting and engaging battle of intellect and skill.

GARETH MCCRAY, RADIO 2CH ANNOUNCER

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MAYORAL ELECTIONS

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.04 p.m.]: I am delighted that Hills resident Gareth McCray is back on the airways at 2CH. Gareth has been a high school teacher and a broadcaster with 2CH since the early 1980s and re-joined the station in 2003. Gareth is a Hills resident and a real community man, always willing to help and to advocate for the vulnerable. He has been the master of ceremonies for the Hills Relay for Life and Chairman of Christmas in the Hills. More recently, he has worked with The Hills Shire Council to promote cyber safety and reduce cyberbullying. I commend members to tune in to 1170 at 6.00 p.m. on weeknights.

On the subject of leaders in my electorate, change is afoot in the electorate of Baulkham Hills with two new mayors in our midst. The Hills Shire Council welcomes Andrew Jefferies to the role of mayor, replacing the magnificent Michelle Byrne. Michelle has provided tremendous leadership for the council on a plethora of issues, and I know Andrew will take on the role with plenty of enthusiasm. In Sydney's second central business district, Scott Lloyd has stepped up in place of John Chedid as the Lord Mayor of Parramatta. John has revitalised Parramatta and, while he has much to do, Scott will ensure that Parramatta maintains its rightful place as Sydney's second city.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COFFEE WITH A COP

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.05 p.m.]: Coffee with a Cop is an amazing initiative run by the Fairfield Local Area Command [LAC] that aims to promote police in the area, engage with local residents, gather information and bolster the trust between the local police force and the surrounding community. It is a simple yet effective approach to community engagement and has been a huge success in my local area. Coffee with a Cop is exactly what it sounds like: Members of the community are invited to sit down and have a coffee with a local police officer. They may discuss any concerns they are having or simply say g'day and have a chat. The Coffee with a Cop initiative has seen individuals from all walks of life show up to these events and engage with their local law enforcement agency. It has certainly helped to elevate the level of trust within the community.

The informal discussions between the residents and police are a key factor in the success of Coffee with a Cop. The environment at Coffee with a Cop resembles a family gathering: people sitting, standing and talking, much laughter and plenty of photos, including selfies. Just last Friday I had the privilege of attending yet another Coffee with a Cop event at Neeta City, Fairfield, where more than 100 individuals from our multiculturally diverse community showed up to have a coffee with a cop. Young, old and in-between, they were all there. It is also worth noting that the Coffee with a Cop event is not just a local strategy. This concept has been picked up and promoted by police throughout the world and has received amazing feedback from members of the local community who appreciate the ability to have a one-on-one conversation with their local law enforcement agency without any formalities.

This ties in closely with the NSW Police Force campaign, We are You. The We are You campaign aims to reinforce to the broader community that the police officers we see at the local area command are just like you and me, and they understand what individuals may be going through. Our local police are often local community members themselves and have their own families in the area. Many of our fine police officers have grown up in the area, their family is still in the area, and our area is what they know best. They are truly local and they can relate easily to our local residents. Indeed, what makes Coffee with a Cop such an amazing success in the Fairfield area is that, although we are the most multiculturally diverse area in New South Wales, we also have a linguistically diverse LAC, which allows the officers to communicate to members of our community in their native language.

The Unique skills set of many officers at the Fairfield LAC definitely embodies the message that the NSW Police Force is trying to get across: We are You. This helps our police to identify the large number of communities in the area and it reinforces the fact that they do not have to be afraid of reporting problems to the police, approaching the police for help, or simply engaging the police in matters that are affecting the area. This concept is strongly reinforced behind the Coffee with a Cop initiative. Police are like all of us. However, their job is a little different. They would love to know what is happening in the neighbourhood or to help out in any way possible. They are more than happy to share advice on matters within their jurisdiction, or to answer concerns in regard to what may be happening in the local area.

We need more members of the community to engage with our local area commands to help tackle issues in our areas and to build a high level of trust and respect so that we can overcome any obstacles that may be in our way. I offer my sincere appreciation and thanks to the men and women at the Fairfield Local Area Command [LAC] for the wonderful work they do to keep our area safe and for going above and beyond their call of duty to engage with local community members. I give special thanks to Superintendent Peter Lennon, Dena Audicho, Alex Sentana, Senior Constable Ece Hasan, and the fine men and women in the Fairfield LAC who make Coffee with a Cop an outstanding success.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health) [5.10 p.m.]: As a result of the electoral redistribution, the Wollondilly electorate has been expanded to take in much of the Wingecarribee shire in the Southern Highlands. It now encompasses areas such as Bowral, Mittagong, Renwick, Balaclava, Aylmerton, Willow Vale, Hilltop, Colo Vale, Balmoral Village, Yerinbool, Mount Gibraltar, Alpine, Braemar, Burradoo, Welby and Woodlands. I grew up in the Southern Highlands and

I know these areas well. In my teenage years I attended Bowral High School and I was a member of the Southern Highlands Youth Arts Council. I have a strong network of friends so when I visit the Southern Highlands it is like going home.

I have enjoyed meeting many community groups, sporting groups, schools and residents. I have been invited to and have attended many events in addition to visiting many villages and towns across the Southern Highlands. Countless members from the communities have let me know how to further improve the area and they have shown their support as a result of the redistribution. Each one of them has used their valuable time to visit me. Some of the activities and events that I have been involved with recently in the Southern Highlands include visiting the Wingecarribee Adult Day Care Centre where dedicated staff do a fantastic job of looking after elderly members of our community. I have also met the fantastic team at the Southern Highlands Bereavement Care Service who assist people in times of need. I have visited many schools, including Bowral High School and I recently visited Chevalier College.

I have had the privilege of unveiling the Mary Poppins statue with the former Governor of New South Wales, Dame Marie Bashir. I have attended the Country Women's Association fundraising night in the Southern Highlands, which everyone in the community attended to raise money for this fantastic cause. I have celebrated the 125th anniversary of Bowral Hospital. I have welcomed the new childhood and adolescent mental health nurse, for whom the community raised money to support our children. It is a generous community. I have taken part in the world famous Tulip Time Festival and parade, which was an amazing experience. Thousands of people line the streets to celebrate Tulip Time. I have watched the Billy Cart Derby with my sons, Will and Menzies. I have judged the Battle of the Bangers with former Channel Nine Music Director, Geoff Harvey, while promoting tourism. I have opened the Wingecarribee Community Services Expo.

Countless numbers of service providers collaborate to raise awareness about the services that are provided to the most vulnerable in our community. I have presented awards at the Southern Highlands Wine Awards. The Southern Highlands is well known for its fantastic wines. I have supported Destination Southern Highlands and I take this opportunity to thank Steve Rosa for his work that promotes our fantastic region. These are just a few of the events that I have attended recently and I look forward to many more of them. I love our region and look forward to delivering more for the Southern Highlands and the Wollondilly region. Many of the people who visited me in the villages have said that this Government has delivered services and infrastructure for the region. They wish to continue the strong partnership they have with the Government and I look forward to delivering more services and infrastructure to the region.

MEDICINAL CANNABIS

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.15 p.m.]: This evening I speak about supporting the use of medical cannabis, especially in circumstances where no other treatment can be found. I am extremely dismayed and disturbed that our Federal Government has not accepted the fact that cannabis oil is produced and used overseas. Cannabis oil has an extremely low tetrahydrocannabinol [THC] content. Everyone in this Parliament knows that I am opposed to recreational drug use, especially marijuana. My electoral office in Coffs Harbour has installed smash-resistant glass because of previous damage caused by people with brain psychoses as a result of the overuse of cannabis and other drugs.

Last year David Stevens was named Citizen of the Year in Coffs Harbour because of his work with carers. He contacted me about his five-year-old daughter, Deisha Magic Stevens, who has a rare genetic syndrome called Rubinstein-Taybi syndrome and is unlucky also to have a rare and nasty form of epilepsy called continuous wave in slow-wave sleep syndrome. On numerous occasions at night her parents have had to call paramedics when she has stopped breathing because of these fits. This young girl was prescribed steroids, which had devastating side effects. Her parents were told by the doctor who prescribed them that if she continued to use them, she would die. I have met this young girl and her brother and sister. They are lovely kids who have caring parents.

David stated publicly that for a number of months he had been giving his daughter cannabis oil, which was supplied by an unregistered doctor in Sydney. The cannabis oil is mixed with coconut oil and is not extracted by a process using alcohol. He did this to support a family that had been having problems and he is doing the best for his daughter. Sadly, in the past 12 months David has been diagnosed with oesophageal cancer. After he went public he received a phone call from the Department of Family Services, who threatened to take legal action against him and his wife for giving his child this medication. The paediatrician has confirmed that it has solved her epilepsy problems as she no longer has fits. However, the department says there may be some legal ramifications. I hope David recovers, but oesophageal cancer can be aggressive.

I want the Federal Government to get off its backside and introduce this oil that has less than 1 per cent tetrahydrocannabinol THC into this country—it has been proven overseas in medical circumstances—and allow it to be prescribed to kids like Deisha and families like the Stevens family. If legal action is taken against Mr Stevens, I, as someone who absolutely hates the use of recreational drugs, will stand in front of his house and support him, his wife and his family to enable his child to continue to have a better quality of life. When I was at their home she was running around and playing with her brothers and sisters.

We have a responsibility to ensure that it is approved. I remind members that the morphine that is used in every hospital in New South Wales is a derivative of heroin. I do not think anyone in this Chamber supports the recreational use of heroin; we have seen how it destroys lives. Let us forget these stupid, bloody trials, accept the science from overseas, import this oil and ensure that those who need it, be they cancer patients or people like this poor little girl, are able to avail themselves of it to give them a better quality of life. *[Time expired.]*

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health) [5.20 p.m.]: I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for raising such an important and difficult issue. We all know that the member for Coffs Harbour is compassionate and genuine, not afraid to speak his mind or to stand up for his community. If members in this Chamber could be half as good as him New South Wales would certainly be a better place. We could see from his contribution that the member for Coffs Harbour is connected to his community. Recently I had the pleasure of visiting Coffs Harbour. Wherever I went people in his electorate were singing his praises, which is a tribute to the work that he does for his community. I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for raising such an important issue.

CHANGING PLACES TOILETS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.21 p.m.]: I commend one of my constituents, Annette Pham, on her efforts to advocate for those living with a profound disability and their carers. I have had the privilege of meeting with Annette on many occasions and she has helped to inform me and countless others in the community of the difficulties faced in accessing special needs facilities, in particular, the lack of change facilities and toilets to meet the needs of the profoundly disabled not only in my community but also throughout the State. Annette informed me of the significant difficulties she faces in finding a place to change her 12-year-old son, Liam, whenever they leave their home.

While there are many accessible toilets, these are suitable only for individuals such as elderly persons with a walking frame, or individuals who are able to transfer themselves from a wheelchair. Standard accessible public toilets currently do not have the facilities to enable those with profound and multiple learning disabilities to use them comfortably. I am empathetic to the distress faced by families like Annette's as it makes it difficult for them to venture outside their homes for any period. With very few facilities available to change nappies for those who are incontinent or who are not physically able to use a disabled toilet independently, this has made it difficult for carers and those living with a disability to live their day-to-day lives with minimal hardship and discomfort. Currently when Annette is required to change Liam, she must do so in public on a park bench, or leave him in discomfort until they reach home, or change him on the floor of a public bathroom.

The Baird Government and in particular the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, have done an incredible amount of work to assist those living with a disability to live as independently as possible, and I am confident that they will review this matter accordingly. When carers are required to deal with young people or young adults who cannot be easily lifted, it is important that the correct facilities are easily available. In fact, Minister Ajaka will be meeting with Annette and her son, Liam, to discuss the challenges faced by carers not only on the South Coast but also across New South Wales.

Annette recently launched a petition with more than 3,200 signatures to alter the building code in Australia to include, as she calls them, changing places toilets. These are different to standard accessible toilets as they provide added space, a height adjustable change table and ceiling track hoists for the wheelchair bound. While these facilities would be more costly, it is equally true that a basic amenity such as a public toilet should not be a challenge for those living with a disability to use. Providing changing places toilets would invaluablely assist with our goal to work towards creating the most inclusive environment for all people living with a disability. As we are all aware, being a carer is an incredibly challenging and committed role. Any assistance we can provide them should be considered an appreciation of the work they perform 24 hours a day to assist others to live a happy and comfortable life. Policies such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme will make the lives of countless individuals easier, and this is one more step towards ensuring that no need is left untended.

I was proud to be part of the first State Government to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme in December 2012. The agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the New South Wales Government will allow for the full rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in New South Wales by July 2018 and provide care and support to approximately 140,000 residents with a significant disability, and provide support in the event of disability to approximately one-third of the Australian population. The scheme will provide peace of mind to people with a disability, their families and carers, and to the South Coast residents who may unexpectedly face misfortune in the future, and give people with disability choice and control over the care and support they receive.

New South Wales will provide more than \$3.13 billion by 2018—48.6 per cent of the funding needed. This will contribute to the cost of individual packages and other supports for people with disability, their carers and their families. Eligible South Coast residents will start entering the scheme in 2016, and by July 2018 all eligible residents will be covered by the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I commend Minister Ajaka for his tireless work in this space, as it is clear the challenges facing carers and those living with a disability are diverse and complex. His work to ensure their quality of life is the highest possible will go a long way towards improving the standard of living of people in New South Wales. I look forward to continuing to work with Minister Ajaka on these issues, and continuing to provide for the needs of profoundly disabled members of our local communities. In conclusion, I also commend the work of Annette Pham, who is spreading the word about changing places toilets throughout the Shoalhaven and the State. I hope that as a Government we can do everything we can to assist her.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health) [5.26 p.m.]: I congratulate Acting-Speaker Coure on his recent appointment. There are many heroes in our community who do amazing things day in and day out, but there can be no greater heroes than those who look after our most vulnerable. I thank the member for South Coast for acknowledging Annette Pham and for advocating for those living with a disability. The Government is committed to supporting those who are living with a disability. As the member for South Coast said, New South Wales was the first State in this country to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I am delighted to be working alongside our fantastic Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, who is ensuring that our most vulnerable people are being looked after. I thank the member for South Coast for her commitment to looking after our most vulnerable.

SOUTH SYDNEY RABBITOHS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [5.27 p.m.]: Since the start of the National Rugby League Final Series this year there has been an outbreak of red and green fever, which is always present in our local area. On grand final day it was out of control. It is true to say that an unmitigated euphoria descended on our area for all Rabbitohs fans. It has been the best of times. Houses have been painted red and green and flags have been visible everywhere—on cars and on houses. A lady with a British Bulldog with a South's flag attached to its collar walked past my house. It has been a terrific time for our area. I do not recall a time when such goodwill, euphoria and pride in our local area have been displayed since the 2000 Olympic Games. The grand final has brought our area together. There has been a great feeling of pride as the Rabbitohs finally brought the trophy home after 43 years. As Nick Pappas, that wonderful chairman of the Rabbitohs, said last Friday night at the Red and Green Ball, "When we take into consideration all the history and the struggle that the Rabbitohs have been through in the past few years, this is a victory for the community." Nick Pappas is spot-on.

On behalf of the people of Maroubra, for whom I am entitled to speak in this Parliament, I say thank you to the entire Rabbitohs organisation for this time that we hope never ends. Indeed, we are going to gloat and celebrate for as long as we are allowed to. Thank you for the victory and the great times we have been enjoying. I congratulate the club and the players on the way they have conducted themselves. Often we see with young men who are celebrating, and who may or may not have had one or two drinks here and there, inappropriate conduct. Our players know they are the custodians of that red and green jersey and that they walk in the footsteps of giants. They know how valued they are in our community and what great role models they are, particularly for young people. There has been no boorish conduct or inappropriate behaviour following the grand final.

In the last couple of weeks of the finals series I was privileged to be close to the Rabbitohs. The players did not refuse a single request for an interview, a photo or an autograph. I congratulate them and the club management because they have conducted themselves with great distinction. I take this opportunity to congratulate the following key people in the organisation: coach Michael Maguire, what a lovely man he is; Mark Ellison; chairman Nick Pappas, who has led us through the struggle to good times; chief executive officer

Shane Richardson—I love a man who wears his heart on his sleeve—and chief financial officer Joe Kelly. I congratulate also South Cares and Shannon Donato. People might not know that all the Rabbitohs players are qualified teachers aides and they do a lot of work in the local community.

Finally, I congratulate Souths Juniors, particularly President Keith McCraw and his directors. Without juniors there can be no seniors; the juniors in the electorates of Maroubra and Heffron have always been at the heart of the Rabbitohs. Nothing would have given them more pride than seeing homegrown juniors like captain John Sutton, Adam Reynolds, Jason Clarke, Alex Johnson and Dylan Walker playing in the grand final. It was entirely appropriate that Keith McCraw, following in the footsteps of a great man like Henry Morris, was president when the trophy was brought back to the Juniors Leagues Club on grand final night and we came in our thousands to celebrate. This has been a victory for our community and we are going to celebrate for as long as we are allowed to. After 43 years of long and hard wait we have our twenty-first Premiership. Doesn't that sound good? This has been particularly pleasing for all the people in our local area. Once again, on behalf of the people of Maroubra I say congratulations and thank you to the entire Rabbitohs organisation.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): As a supporter of the St George Illawarra Dragons, the best football team in the competition, I was barracking for the Rabbitohs in the grand final. I too congratulate them on their win.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health) [5.32 p.m.]: The member for Maroubra and I do not agree on many things, but I definitely agree with him that the grand final was a fantastic game. Although I was going for the Bulldogs, I join the member for Maroubra in congratulating the Rabbitohs on their win. I am a Wests Tigers supporter, particularly of the Magpie variety. Like the member for Maroubra, when Wests Tigers won in 2005 it was the first time in my lifetime that the Magpies had ever won the Premiership. I know what it is like to experience such a win after a long time in the desert. It is great to finally see the member for Maroubra with a big smile on his face spreading his joy in this Chamber this afternoon.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.33 p.m.]: Today I wish to speak about the wonderful student leaders who visited Parliament House yesterday. They learnt about leadership and how Parliament operates. They had the enriching experience of meeting the Premier, who was most impressed with the calibre of these young adults and the way in which they conducted themselves. They are our leaders of the future so it is important that they be provided with an opportunity to experience great leadership in practice and to appreciate the importance of both being responsible and making decisions. We all possess these qualities and traits but it is how we choose to use them that makes one a great and effective leader who contributes to our community and has a positive impact in society.

There are many fine role models in this place, in particular I mention the following outstanding New South Wales Government Ministers who are exemplary community leaders: the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, MP, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Hunter, and Deputy Leader of the New South Wales Liberal Party; the Hon. Jillian Skinner, MP, Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research; the Hon. Pru Goward, MP, Minister for Planning, and Minister for Women; the Hon. Gabrielle Upton, MP, Minister for Family and Community Services; and the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson MP, Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events. I commend those outstanding Ministers for the roles they play within their communities, this House and our great State.

I take this opportunity to mention our local leaders in Camden who embody many great qualities that inspire and motivate many within our local community to be great and effective leaders: Councillor Lara Symkowiak, mayor of Camden; Councillor Theresa Fedeli, deputy mayor of Camden; Councillor Penny Fischer and Councillor Debby Dewbery. They too contribute to ensuring that Camden is the magnificent place to live that we all enjoy so much. It is with much pleasure that I mention the excellent school leaders who visited yesterday and who represent eight outstanding secondary schools in the Camden area: Camden High School, Piper Weeding and Maddie Pierce; Eagle Vale High School, Tahani Latu and Sarah Kearney; Elderslie High School, Laura Killen; Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Elyse Strahan, Kirilly White and Zoe Brooks; Magdalene Catholic High School, Madeline Kenny and Maddie Taylor; Mount Annan High School, Briana Melville and Emma White; Robert Townson High School, Jade Dymitriw and Caitlin Ramondetta; and Macarthur Anglican School, Danielle Santos and Alanah Monger.

All of those students are positive role models in their respective schools. They have the ability to positively influence their fellow students and the wider community. I am extremely proud of each and every one of them for being the wonderful young adults they are. I know they will be future leaders of my community and this State. Those young adults are a testament to their respective schools and a product of the first-class education provided by schools in the Camden area. I commend them. They should be very proud of their excellent conduct and the way in which they have represented their schools and fellow students. They are great ambassadors for their schools and have made me, their teachers, principals, school communities and parents very proud.

I acknowledge the teachers, principals and parents for their continued support and thank them for the great work they do in educating our children and future leaders. Every person I have mentioned today is a leader in their own right; all contribute tremendously to their schools, communities and this great State. They have all been chosen for their qualities and attributes and, most importantly, on merit. Everyone I have mentioned is a woman who has earned her role by being a great leader. They are to be congratulated on those qualities and attributes, not their gender.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): I, too, congratulate those future leaders in the electorate of Camden.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health) [5.38 p.m.]: I thank the member for Camden for his work supporting our local school students, who are our future. I know the member for Camden is a strong advocate for the Camden community. He is a fantastic Chief Government Whip, probably the second best.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Daryl Maguire was very good.

Mr JAI ROWELL: He certainly does a great job. I have the fortune of having an electorate that adjoins the Camden electorate and I know that many Wollondilly school students attend schools in his electorate. Our next generation is certainly an amazing bunch. I think of the great leaders at Picton High School, Wollondilly Anglican College, Bowral High School, Frensham School, Chevalier College, the Southern Highlands Christian School and Oxley College, to name a few. They contribute richly to our community and I thank them, including all their teachers and principals, for all the work they do.

CALTEX REFINERY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.39 p.m.]: This week marks the closure of all of Caltex Kurnell oil refinery's major processing units for the final time after almost 59 years of service. The Caltex refinery has been an important part of the local community throughout that period. In 2012 Caltex announced that the refinery would be converted into what it said would be Australia's largest and most modern fuel import terminal. As the local State member of Parliament I was very disappointed at the time of that announcement, given many hundreds of local residents were employed at the refinery and it was Cronulla electorate's largest workplace. But it was an announcement that sadly came as no surprise.

The market had changed over the refinery's lifetime and for some time, despite efforts to make it as competitive as possible, the refinery had been at a clear disadvantage compared with more modern, larger-scale and more efficient refineries in the Asia region. The refinery commenced production in February 1956 and manufactured regular and premium petrol and diesel, jet fuel and fuel oil. By-products manufactured included gases, bitumen and sulphur, with an original production capacity of 22,000 barrels or 3.5 million litres per day and a peak capacity of 135,000 barrels or 21.5 million litres per day.

Caltex has consulted with the New South Wales Heritage Council and the Australian Museum for advice on how to preserve the site's history and heritage. It has commemorated the refinery's contribution over time through an employee photo exhibition displayed at Cronulla Central Gallery from July to August this year. Caltex has been collecting memorabilia from the site and commissioned a short film on day-to-day operations. It released a 400-page colour commemorative book to be provided to its workforce, the State Library and other local libraries.

Caltex says that its longstanding relationship with the Kurnell community will remain. It says it will continue to hold quarterly community meetings to provide updates on its activities and neighbours will still be able to contact the facility on its 24-hour community hotline. Once decommissioning and demolition has

finished, which will take some time, there will be no process units and no structures left on site that will be taller than a tank. Caltex says that at this stage it has no plans for the future use of the site. It says that all fuel going into the new terminal at Kurnell will be sourced from imports or interstate refineries. It will be distributed by pipelines to other fuel terminals and Sydney Airport, as happened during refinery operations.

The terminal will have 750 million litres of storage capacity and supply fuel to retail sites and commercial customers across New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Caltex says that it has provided considerable support to employees during a transitioning phase that has included a vocational training and development allowance, an outplacement service and a careers expo. It is the passing of a significant era for Kurnell in particular and Cronulla in general. As I said, it was the largest workplace in the Cronulla electorate. Times change and economic circumstances change. We have seen the decline of heavy industry throughout Australia and Kurnell has been no exception.

It is sad to see hundreds of jobs go but there are silver linings. We are told that we will have a modern facility. We are told that in fact our oil supplies will be more secure because they will come from places like Singapore, Korea and Japan rather than riskier places like West Africa. As I have referred to in other speeches in this place, the deindustrialisation of the Kurnell peninsula provides the opportunity for a renaissance of Kurnell as we approach 2020, the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook's landing and the meeting of two cultures. Kurnell is at a crossroads and there will be what I hope is a renaissance of Kurnell. I would like to mark this very significant event in Cronulla's history. It is also a significant event in the industrial history of New South Wales. History is not just about facts and figures. It is not just about wars, princes and presidents; it is also about people and industries. The Kurnell refinery has been an important part of our social and economic history.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly—Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health) [5.44 p.m.]: I thank the member for Cronulla, Mark Speakman, an excellent member, who is so connected to his electorate. He is everywhere in his community and I know that firsthand. It is almost like he has a clone. I thank him for raising such an important matter and advocating for employees in his electorate. I understand the issues of which he speaks because it can also be very difficult in rural and regional areas. I know that firsthand in my electorate of Wollondilly, where the loss of a few jobs or the restructure of an organisation can impact on the local community. The New South Wales Government is committed to bolstering employment opportunities in rural and regional areas. It is working with industry and various sectors to ensure that those vital jobs remain.

CENTRAL COAST DIVISION JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE AWARDS

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [5.45 p.m.]: On Tuesday 23 September 2014 I attended the Central Coast Division Junior Rugby League presentation evening at the wonderful Mingara Recreation Club. The awards that evening were to acknowledge our junior clubs within the rugby league on the Central Coast, its players and representative players from the 2014 season. It was a special night for me in another way because it gave me the opportunity to present the award named in honour of my father, Henry, who had served the Central Coast Division Rugby League for many years.

On the evening special achievement awards were given to several players on the Central Coast who had achieved at various levels, including Blake Andrews, who represented Country Rugby League; Brendan O'Hagan and Tom Starling, who represented New South Wales in the under 16s State of Origin; Jacob Liddle, who in the under 18s was chosen to play for Australia; and Jack Cogger, who was chosen to play for both New South Wales and Australia in the under 18s.

Within our representative presentations on the evening in the under 14 representative teams Best Back winner was Mackenzie Kay, the Best Forward was Jye Montgomery, and the Best and Fairest went to Kyle Schneider. In our under 16 representative team Best Back winner was Blake Andrew, the Best Forward was Joel Mula, and Best and Fairest went to Lachlan Garland. Our under 15 representative team deserves special mention as they were the winners of the 2014 Country Championships. Thomas Steadman won the award for Best Back, Mokena Moeke won the award for Best Forward and Elih Jackson won the Best and Fairest award. I said earlier that I was proud and honoured to present the Henry Holstein Memorial Trophy to the most improved team for the 2014 season and I was pleased that the winners were the Woy Woy under 15 (2).

Also on the evening there was acknowledgement in the form of 29 awards. The Player of the Year award was hotly contested this year. The nominees for the Central Coast Division Junior Rugby League Shield for Player of the Year 2014 included: Scott Drinkwater from Terrigal; Daniel Peck from Toukley; Jarrett Boland

from Terrigal; Keegan Hayne from Berkeley Vale; and Ben Thomas from Kincumber. The winner of that prestigious award was Daniel Peck from Toukley. Members should remember those names because they are the National Rugby League players of the future. These young gentlemen are very talented players. As I said earlier, a number of players from the Central Coast have been chosen to play for New South Wales and Australia. The Central Coast is a heartland for rugby league, as these young men have displayed through their abilities.

In the short time I have left I acknowledge the master of ceremonies for the night, Mr Ken Dyer, and make special mention of the President of the Central Coast Division Junior Rugby League, Terry Rule, and his executive. They did an outstanding job. The night was well attended. Rugby league on the Central Coast is well represented and the young award winners were well deserving of their accolades. It was a very successful season for junior rugby league on the Central Coast.

LIVERPOOL WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.50 p.m.]: I advise the House of the important and impressive work of the Liverpool Women's Resource Centre, which is located within my electorate at Ashcroft. The centre has recently completed 30 years of operation and celebrated this milestone at an event held on 24 September, which I was delighted to be able to attend. The centre's manager, Nikki Tighe, describes the centre's activities in these terms:

Liverpool Women's Resource Centre is committed to supporting women who are marginalised and disadvantaged. Women are supported to build capacity and decrease social isolation through groups and programs run at the centre. Liverpool Women's Resource Centre is committed to empowering and supporting individuals and communities to identify and articulate their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities. Liverpool Women's Resource Centre is an active, busy centre which provides support, group programs, projects, drop in counselling and telephone support to a wide range of women throughout the 2168 postcode area and wider LGA.

Ms Tighe also says:

We provide groups and programs for women including art, craft, sewing and social and support groups at the centre. Currently all groups have free child minding and are low cost/no cost and run in groups consistently accessed by disadvantaged women and women from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The event on 24 September was part of an open day at the centre which showcased the projects, programs and events of three decades of impressive achievements. The centre formally espouses its objectives as:

- (1) To provide a centre operating on feminist principles that will identify and respond to the special needs of women.
- (2) To deliver services and offer direct support and assistance to all women, particularly women who are disadvantaged.
- (3) To provide opportunities for women to improve their skills and knowledge, establish support networks and gain greater access to resources.
- (4) To focus the provision of services to women in the Liverpool Local Government Area, with an emphasis on women residing in the 2168 postcode area.
- (5) To work in partnership with other women's services, government and non-government organisations in the community.
- (6) To encourage all sections of the community to challenge existing limitations to women's equity and work towards improving the status of women in the community.

The centre also resources and supports an Aboriginal women's group called Sistas for Sistas, who organise Know Us, Respect Us events in the Green Valley area. I have been able to attend some of their events this year and last year. The anniversary was accompanied by a book entitled *The first 30 years*, which chronicles the history and achievements of the organisation. Funding was first granted in the 1984 financial year. At that stage the organisation was known as the Liverpool Young Women's Resource Centre. The book highlights some of the projects developed over the years at the centre.

These include: the Way Past Time media project; a resource directory project; the Safe Women project; a mural project; Aboriginal Women Against Violence, or AWAV; the Sistas for Sistas book; and the Weaving Women Together project. Over all of its 30 years the centre has been running programs and groups aiming to empower women through holding creative, practical and educational resources. Early courses included self-defence, literacy and car maintenance. They have broadened into a range of courses on contraception and health, job hunting, basic computing, carpentry and small business management. They have been accompanied by a range of groups, including several groups whose first language was not English. The centre also has been active around International Women's Day, domestic violence and action against sexual assault.

I have known of the Liverpool Women's Resource Centre for all of its 30 years of existence. I was a member more than 30 years ago of the Liverpool Youth Needs Committee, known as LYNC. I was aware through that organisation of the establishment of what is now the Liverpool Women's Resource Centre. I have done what I can over the years to assist them and I look forward to being able to continue to do so into the future. The centre, during its celebrations, did not mention how much it does with so little funding. As I said on the day of the celebrations, it runs on the smell of an oily rag. This organisation and the work it does is a powerful demonstration of the work that community-based specialist organisations are able to perform in the community.

Currently, discussion is taking place about having larger, more structured organisations, and often faith based, take over these types of services. In reality, a specialist community-based service like this delivers services that no larger organisation would ever be able to deliver. It is my great pleasure to have been at the event celebrating the first 30 years of the Liverpool Women's Resource Centre. It is also my pleasure to be able to recognise the incredibly important, useful and good work that it has been doing during that time.

GRAND FIESTA KULTURA

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [5.55 p.m.]: I was pleased to attend the twenty-sixth annual Grand Fiesta Kultura, also known as the Grand Filipino Food and Cultural Festival, on 6 October at the Fairfield showground in Prairiewood in my electorate of Smithfield. I was also honoured to represent the Premier at that event. He sent his best wishes to the Australian Philippine community for a successful fiesta celebration. The event was hosted by Philippine Australian Sports and Culture [PASC] Incorporated. They have successfully hosted the event since 1989. The organisation is one of many in the south-western Sydney region that continues to promote and support Filipino culture and heritage.

I acknowledge the work of the PASC President, Manny Castillo, OAM. He has been there since the very beginning. In 1979 he took up an executive role with the predecessor to that organisation called the Philippine Australian Sports Council. Manny continues to be one of the instrumental figures in contributing to the Philippine narrative in Australia and advocating for unity and cooperation between the Filipino community and the wider community of New South Wales. Under his leadership, the organisation has gone from strength to strength in expanding its platform of activities, including support for various charities.

I could see on the day that the festival reflected the deep history of the organisation. It is no surprise that it remains the largest Filipino community gathering in the Southern Hemisphere, averaging about 25,000 attendees per year. They come from each and every State in Australia. The warm and sunny day helped to waft the delicious smell of various traditional dishes cooking inside the stalls and to carry the vibrations of the traditional gong and rondalla music that boomed from all corners of the showground. The friendly, smiling faces of all in attendance were a great reflection of the genial and warm temperament that is so often associated with the Australian-Filipino community.

The day also served as a hub for the many arts and craft stalls set up by talented Pinoy painters, drawers and performance artists, many of whom are young and up and coming in the field. Wherever I went on the day there was something new to be seen, such as the variety performance shows that contrasted the traditional tinikling dance involving bamboo poles and modern-day dance fusing hip-hop with contemporary styles. I especially mention dance groups 3D Reborne, Blackout Dancers and Kookies N Kreme for their unique and amazing dance interpretations of various musical themes. Of course, I was amazed by the sheer amount of vocal talent of the many young singers on the day. It would not be possible to list every single performer, but I would like to congratulate Kelebek and the group Trill, who are all of Filipino background and have performed on the national television competition the *X Factor*.

The day was capped off by a pageant contest for the Miss Philippines Australia title, of which I was honoured to be named a judge. The competition was fiercely contested. All of the candidates were remarkable and beautiful ladies who displayed tremendous talent, grace, humility and insight. Eventually the panel reduced the list to finance student Glyssa Perez and marketing graduate Arianne Tan. Miss Perez was crowned with the 2014 title and Miss Tan awarded runner-up. The title of Charity Queen Australia went to nursing student Sarah-Anne Johnstone. I congratulate all the ladies for their tremendous involvement.

I make special mention of the Consul-General of the Philippine Consulate General in Sydney, Anne Jalando-On Louis, who was in attendance on the day, and visiting Filipino congressman Lito Atienza, who is a man of incredible warmth, spirit and liveliness. I thank and commend Lolita Farmer, the event coordinator, for

her success in continuing the long-held tradition of the festival and assisting Manny in sustaining the bayanihan spirit of the Philippine Australian Sports and Culture Inc. Given the historical trend, next year's Fiesta Kultura will be a great success.

COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [6.00 p.m.]: As the world economy went into meltdown in 2008, Labor governments across the country stepped in to save Australia from the worst ravages of the global financial crisis. Austerity, Labor leaders realised, was not going to be the solution. Labor leaders took action. The previous Government of New South Wales was no exception. Amongst the many initiatives introduced to inject much-needed cash into local economies was the Community Building Partnership scheme. The goal was clear: provide funding for much-needed, small-scale community projects in order to boost local industry and business.

I am sure I do not need to explain the specifics of the program to anyone in this Chamber but I will take this opportunity to voice my full-throated support for it. Much good has come from its implementation in the Wallsend electorate. Today, I would like to draw attention to some of the Newcastle City Council projects that the partnership funding has contributed to. Since 2009, when the Community Building Partnership program was first introduced, I am pleased to say that \$430,000 has been contributed to a variety of projects, undertaken in conjunction with Newcastle City Council, in the Wallsend electorate.

Each year money has been provided to council projects and each commitment has been a valuable investment in the Wallsend community. In 2009, \$70,000 was provided for the first stage of a cycleway from Wallsend to Blue Gum Hills. In 2010, \$60,000 was pledged for a skate park at Maryland. The project has been completed, providing a much-needed recreational space for young people in Newcastle's west. In 2011, \$200,000 was committed to a shared cycleway from Minmi to Bishop Tyrell College. I am informed that this project has recently been completed and represents a significant public amenity in that part of the city. I look forward to receiving an invitation from Newcastle City Council to the project's completion ceremony.

In both 2012 and 2013, \$50,000 was contributed to developments at Jesmond Park and Federal Park respectively. These funds greatly contributed to an upgrade of each park's facilities, and I am especially glad that the people of Wallsend have a chance to enjoy these public green spaces. The 2012 project has been completed and I am informed the 2013 project should be completed in the 2014-15 financial year. Other electorates in the Hunter have also benefited from the program, even those that do not currently have representation in this House. Labor Newcastle city councillor and candidate for the electorate of Newcastle Tim Crakanthorp stated:

If we had not notified the Premier of the fact that Newcastle had no MP and had not notified community groups about the grants then the electorate simply would have missed out.

Fellow councillor and lord mayoral candidate Nuatali Nelmes stated:

These grants represent significant boosts for a number of important projects council is looking to deliver for the people of Newcastle.

He further stated:

Local governments all over the State are under a lot of pressure thanks to cost-shifting, but I am glad that Newcastle council has a chance to put recent troubles behind us, buckle down and get to work delivering on infrastructure for Novocastrians, especially those in the city's west. The projects these grants have helped get off the ground are a major part of that.

Is this not what Government should be doing: delivering projects to those that need them and helping local communities to address local needs and concerns? The projects I have mentioned today are not the only ones we have helped fund in Wallsend. But I am proud of the work we have done in conjunction with Newcastle City Council, especially since this funding brings needed development into the western suburbs. I hope to work with Tim and Nuatali, in whatever roles they may take, to deliver the best outcomes for Newcastle.

ODYSSEY HOUSE

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [6.04 p.m.]: On Sunday 12 October I attended Celebrate Recovery Day at Odyssey House, which offers "A calm in the sea of addiction". I am proudly wearing the Odyssey House badge today. Together with James Pitts, Chief Executive Officer of Odyssey House, I was privileged to present awards to graduates who made it through the Odyssey House program. I hosted an event at

Parliament House to celebrate Mr Pitts' 30 dedicated years of service. Douglas Sneddon, chairman of the board of Odyssey House, Paul Nunnari and Campbelltown Deputy Mayor Ted Rowell were also in attendance at the celebration. Mr Nunnari, a paralympian, spoke of how he overcame a crippling car accident to do things he never dreamed he could do.

Odyssey House is about saving and improving the lives of people with addiction. It is easy to feel alone when you are in addiction and you feel your life is dominated by alcohol and drugs. The message is "You are not alone". Odyssey House is an expert in the field and its message is that it can help addicts. Treatment at Odyssey House is unique in that it looks to the behaviours as symptomatic of underlying personal problems, such as low self-esteem, sexual abuse, domestic violence or parental drug misuse, which must be addressed for people to successfully overcome drug dependence and remain abstinent in the long-term.

The Odyssey House program is a long-term residential program and it is not easy. For personal growth to replace dependency people have to work hard to change negative attitudes and values, confront the reasons they resorted to misuse and learn strategies to deal with daily life. Odyssey House's professional and caring staff guide graduates through their journey in a safe and non-threatening environment. Odyssey House's main treatment facility is located in Eaglevale, Campbelltown, that opal of the south-west. The assessment, referral and withdrawal unit is located at Ingleburn.

The statistics are amazing: over 35,000 lives saved and rebuilt since 1977; 334 people admitted to Odyssey House residential program in one year alone. At Celebrate Recovery Day the hot sun beat down on the large white marquee as we gathered to congratulate the graduates. The gentle breeze carried the stories of their heart-rending journeys from the depths of despair back to hope. The breeze helped to dry the tears in the eyes of those present, including the proud families who shared in the pain and redemption. A plaque to commemorate the first anniversary of Odyssey House in New South Wales, on 30 October 1978, reads:

By first doing I proved it can be done,
the second doing followed with ease,
the third slipped unnoticed,
I had a habit of living.

Odyssey House is indeed a calm in the sea of addiction. I am proud of the work it does and proud to be a supporter of this organisation. I urge anyone who has a problem with drug or alcohol addiction to seek help. It is available; they only need to put up their hand and have a go.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.09 p.m.]: I thank the member for Campbelltown for his support of that outstanding organisation. I have had a bit to do with Odyssey House since being elected to Parliament and can attest to the fine work they do supporting people afflicted by addiction. It is a hard and lonely journey but Odyssey House has been there providing care for many years in the Campbelltown electorate for those who need it. The member is an outstanding advocate for his community and shows a great deal of compassion for suffering people. This is another example of his compassion on display as he works with and recognises the important work of Odyssey House. To the team at Odyssey House I express my thanks and appreciation for their outstanding work in caring for some of the most vulnerable people in our community. Members of this House must do all we can to support their good work.

MEMBER FOR MIRANDA RETIREMENT

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [6.10 p.m.]: Earlier today I announced that I would not be seeking re-election to Parliament in March 2015. After the record 27 per cent by-election swing that returned me to office last October, I can assure all my constituents that this was a very difficult decision for me. I decided to consider retirement from Parliament during a recent holiday with my family. Looking at my grandchildren's young faces, reflecting on the fact that State politics is a 24/7 commitment over four years and thinking it over I decided it was time for me to spend more time with wife, children and grandchildren.

My family has made endless sacrifices in supporting my service to the shire community for 12 years the first time around and then backing up again to support me unconditionally for another 18 months after the 2013 by-election. I well remember asking each of my family members what they thought about my standing for election again after my successor, Mr Graham Annesley, suddenly resigned. My then eight-year-old granddaughter Taylah responded by saying most emphatically, "Go for it, Pop!" That was it.

Being the member for Miranda is a full-on job. I would not be able to give my family the attention I would like to and that I believe they deserve should I have the privilege of serving another full four-year term

in Parliament from 2015 onwards. But I am not retiring from life. While I will be putting politics behind me after March 2015, I know I can serve my community in other ways. I did that after I first retired by serving as President of the Kareela Public School Parents and Citizens Association and later as a member of the Rookwood General Cemetery Reserve Trust Board and as chair of its finance committee.

I enjoyed both roles and feel I made a very useful contribution in each. In fact, I was quite disappointed that I could not continue as a trustee at Rookwood after my re-election. While the new board had made excellent progress in reforming the administration of the largest cemetery in the Southern Hemisphere, the provisions of the New South Wales Constitution meant that I could not continue as a trustee and be a member of this honourable House at the same time. I have made no plans beyond March next year and I do not have jobs lined up—or I did not until I told my son, Michael, that I was retiring. His response was, "Good, Dad. I've got some work for you to do in my backyard!"

My retirement next March will bring to an end a 13½ year career in the New South Wales Parliament. I first won the seat of Miranda from the then Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, the Hon. Ron Phillips, in 1999. I went on to serve three consecutive terms over 12 years before retiring just prior to the 2011 State election. I was taken aback by just how many shire residents asked me to return and represent them once again after Mr Annesley's sudden departure. I was deeply humbled by the enormous confidence they placed in me as shown by the extraordinary by-election result that saw me returned as the member for Miranda on 19 October 2013.

I know there are some supporters in the Sutherland community and within the Labor Party who will be very disappointed at my decision. But I also know in my heart that it is time for me to move on and spend more time with my family. I know too that there will be those who say that given the historic swing in the Miranda by-election last October I have an obligation to continue in Parliament beyond 2015. But I trust that the people of Miranda will remember the extraordinary combination of events that brought me back from political retirement to serve them for the 18-month remainder of the term. They included the extraordinary resignation of Mr Annesley, the extraordinary allegations against Sutherland Liberal councillors that soon followed, and the loud community outcry against overdevelopment—extraordinary in itself because it was also the major local issue when I first ran for Parliament in 1999.

Since I returned to office my staff and I have worked hard to clear the backlog left behind by Mr Annesley's sudden departure and to deal with the issues raised by my constituents, who have given me what I regard as a most extraordinary opportunity to represent them once again. Rest assured I will continue to work hard for my constituents as their local member until my last day in office. I could not have done what I have been able to do without the continued support of my wife, Jeanette, and my family or without the support of my hardworking, loyal and committed office staff—Kim, Maree, Stefanie and Jackie—who are always willing to go that extra mile for the people of the shire. I trust that whoever succeeds me as member for Miranda at the general election in March 2015 will continue to stand up for the shire and will never, ever let our community down again.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): As the member for an electorate that adjoins the Miranda electorate I wish the member for Miranda the very best for the future.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.15 p.m.]: I too acknowledge the enormous contribution that the member for Miranda has made to public life. It is clear that he cares about his community and that he got involved in politics to make a difference. Our State and his community of Miranda are better off because of his contribution and public service. I first came across the member for Miranda as a year 11 student studying economics at St Ignatius College, Riverview. The member's textbook was the one that all economic students across the State used. As I went on to do 3 unit economics it is fair to say that the member for Miranda had quite an impact on this Liberal member for Hornsby and many other students. It was a positive impact then and it remains a positive impact now. I wish the member for Miranda and his family all the best in his retirement. I know that he will continue to contribute to the shire and the electorate he loves deeply. I know his community will be better off as a result of his contribution.

HORNSBY SMALL BUSINESS NETWORKING FORUM

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.16 p.m.]: As a proud Liberal member I share the party's firm belief that the small business sector is the engine of growth in the New South Wales economy, which is one of our State's greatest assets and strengths. It is for this reason that I want the New South Wales Government to develop closer ties with small businesses to help them to grow and prosper. Recently I helped to

organise and facilitate a small business networking forum in Hornsby where local business owners could come together to showcase local business opportunities, share their industry expertise and learn how the New South Wales Government can better assist their needs. The event also provided an opportunity to bring business owners together to share their experiences and challenges and work together to find ways to make their lives easier in the Hornsby area.

A diverse range of businesses were in attendance at the forum representing more than 160 businesses including Westfield Hornsby, HSBC Bank, Absolute Thai, Sydney Conveyancing, Berowra Outdoor Centre, Smartline Personal Mortgage Advisers, i Talk Travel, the *Bush Telegraph Weekly*, Studio ARTES disability group and Hornsby Lions Club. The forum also featured an address from our special guest speaker for the evening, NSW Small Business Commissioner Robyn Hobbs. We can have every confidence that in Robyn Hobbs we have an outstanding advocate for small businesses across this State. She is passionate and hardworking. Ms Hobbs has had a successful career running businesses large and small. With dirt under her fingernails, as the saying goes, she has a great deal of knowledge to impart to small business owners in her role supporting them in this State.

Ms Hobbs used her address to remind local business owners of just how vital and valuable their role is in making up 96 per cent of all New South Wales businesses. Ms Hobbs went on to explain to guests the NSW Small Business Commission's role in being an independent arm of the Government that has been set up to help ensure that small businesses have a sustainable and healthy place within the New South Wales economy. Among the issues discussed were ways in which the Small Business Commission can assist small businesses by cutting red tape, ensuring that there is a level playing field, improving regional economies, working with council's business engagement methods and reaching out to multicultural business communities. By co-hosting the forum with Hornsby Business Alliance President Bill Tyrell and *Small Biz Matters* Triple H radio show host Alexi Boyd, I was able to better connect with the local business community and listen to its individual and collective concerns.

Together we were also able to raise \$400 for St Lucy's School at Wahroonga for children with disabilities and hearing defects. It was great to see businesses dig deep to support a very important cause. The school's principal, Dr Georgina Reynhaut, even let me join the Week Without Words awareness campaign. I did not quite last a week but I undertook the challenge for a solid four hours. That was hard work for someone who likes to have a chat as much as I do. A successful business forum takes plenty of preparation. I sincerely thank Bill Tyrell and Alexi Boyd for their hard work in organising the event with my staff member Heidi Cameron. I congratulate Bill Tyrell on his re-election as President of the Hornsby Chamber of Commerce. He has performed outstandingly in the role for many years and he will continue to do a fantastic job on behalf of small businesses in our community.

The event was a big success thanks to the talented trio I mentioned and the Hornsby Business Alliance executive team made up of Darren Hart, Paul Julien and Maree Garrett. With their help I was able to hear about a broad range of issues affecting local businesses including their most common concern—government red tape and its flow-on effects to business productivity. I want all small business owners in my electorate and across the State to know that the New South Wales Government has heard their concerns and is committed to working better with them to cut the unnecessary and costly red tape that makes small business life harder.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of our nation. It makes no sense for the Government to restrict them or to make it harder for them to grow, to trade or to provide employment opportunities. Since coming to office, this Government has overhauled the Labor Party's cruel imposts on small business operators. I am proud of this Government's achievements to date, which include the appointment of a small business commissioner for New South Wales who provides an advocate within government for the needs of small businesses. The Government has also reformed the workers compensation scheme and in so doing prevented a \$750 million increase in premiums for employers and protected 12,600 jobs. It also eliminated vehicle registration stickers, which is estimated to save \$5 million each year for New South Wales businesses or 160,000 hours of unnecessary work dealing with red tape.

The 2013-14 budget raised the payroll tax threshold from \$689,000 to \$750,000, thereby exempting 13,000 new businesses from payroll tax and saving all businesses liable for payroll tax an average of \$3,300. Looking forward, the Government will continue to work with the NSW Business Chamber to fund and deliver more infrastructure across New South Wales through public asset swaps, revitalising and reforming local government, improving the State's energy security and addressing pricing challenges, and reviewing the tax scheme. These changes will better equip New South Wales to attract greater investment opportunities, further develop the jobs market, and encourage economic growth to support our growing population.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): I thank the member for Hornsby and Parliamentary Secretary for Communities for his private member's statement. I congratulate the Hornsby Business Alliance on the work it does and Mr Tyrell on his re-election as its president.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.21 p.m. until
Tuesday 21 October at 12 noon.**
