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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 23 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.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

RELATIONSHIPS REGISTER AMENDMENT (RECOGNITION OF SAME-SEX AND GENDER-DIVERSE RELATIONSHIPS) BILL 2014

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

Second Reading

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.11 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Relationships Register Amendment (Recognition of Same-sex and Gender-diverse Relationships) Bill 2014 is a simple bill that will ensure that the New South Wales Relationships Register recognises same-sex couples and couples with at least one person who is gender-diverse who have married or entered into a civil union overseas or in other Australian jurisdictions. The Relationships Register was introduced in 2010 and passed this House with overwhelming support from all sides. It gave adults in de facto or couple relationships the opportunity to have their relationship officially recognised by the State, ensuring their rights as a couple. While both heterosexual and homosexual relationships were included, it was widely acknowledged that the register would be most useful for same-sex couples who are at greater risk of having their relationship and rights challenged. In the agreement in principle speech, the then Parliamentary Secretary—the member for Miranda—stated:

For same-sex couples in particular this should prove a useful tool for countering any possible reluctance to recognise their relationship.

One of the requirements to register a relationship is that both adults are not married, and the Relationships Register Act 2010 requires each person to declare that they are not married. This prevents the growing number of New South Wales citizens in same-sex relationships who marry overseas from registering their relationship here in New South Wales. Forcing these couples to declare that they are not married is untenable, especially as the Federal Government provides these couples with certificates of non-impediment to allow them to marry overseas, in recognition of the fact that same-sex couples do marry overseas.

The last census found that an estimated 1,338 Australian same-sex couples have married overseas, and recent statistics from New Zealand indicate that between August 2013 and December 2013, 97 Australian same-sex couples got married in New Zealand. More recently, couples are getting married in the United Kingdom consulate in Sydney. For couples to enter into a United Kingdom same-sex marriage the United Kingdom law requires them to end their New South Wales registered relationship. My bill would ensure that these couples can regain the basic, yet important, protections and rights provided by the New South Wales Relationships Register.

My bill would give same-sex couples who marry overseas or, should legislation pass, in other Australian States or Territories, automatic recognition of their relationship on the register upon application. It would also ensure that the law recognises such couples as de facto. The bill extends these provisions to civil unions, particularly given many same-sex couples entered into civil unions prior to the rapid growth in countries offering same-sex marriage. The bill also extends the provisions to marriages and civil unions between couples where one person is gender-diverse, and it introduces a definition for gender-diverse. Gender-diverse includes someone who is, or identifies as, neither wholly female nor wholly male, or a combination of female and male,

or neither female nor male. This definition will include trans* and intersex persons, some of whom have fought to have their birth certificate reflect something other than female or male, and many of whom reject that sex is always binary.

The Federal Marriage Act only permits marriage between a man and a woman, thereby excluding couples with one or both persons who are gender-diverse, and many of these couples marry or enter into civil unions overseas. The bill gives them automatic inclusion of their relationship on the register and would recognise them as a de facto couple. The opportunity for legal recognition of a relationship is important to many same-sex couples and couples with one or both adults who are gender-diverse, as their legal protections are at risk from prejudice or cultural assumptions. This bill will provide greater guarantee to immediate access of rights. A registered relationship is not a marriage and this bill in no way enables same-sex marriage. The bill addresses an anomaly that excludes same-sex couples and couples where one or both adults are gender-diverse who have married overseas from being on the register. It also streamlines the inclusion of these relationships on the register. 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.

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

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

Second Reading

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.16 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I address the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. The bill has come to this House from the Legislative Council after gaining majority support in that place. This bill from The Greens seeks to express the will of the community to take fees for TAFE courses and funding for private providers back to the 2010-11 level and freeze them at that level. The bill also proposes that the Minister for Education will introduce policies that ensure TAFE is the dominant provider and, specifically, that no policies are introduced that increase unfair competition for TAFE.

This is a moratorium bill; it will reverse the damage done by TAFE budget cuts and fee increases. It will also stop the, wrongly named, Smart and Skilled market and it will remove the need for TAFE managers to cut courses, slash staff numbers and destroy support programs in preparation for the Smart and Skilled market, which is scheduled to commence on 1 January 2015. This bill does not set out in detail the future for TAFE. The bill stops the downward spiral for TAFE where it is, not slowly as it was under Labor but in an exponential way, being destroyed as a dominant provider providing a quality, central form of education in New South Wales.

For the first time in more than 120 years in the history of TAFE and its predecessors, we are confronting the real prospect of a future where the public provision of vocational education and training is no longer dominant but is in a state of collapse. Budget cuts of more than \$800 million may mean that up to 1,200 full-time equivalent positions will disappear from TAFE. When the Managing Director of TAFE NSW, Pam Christie, was questioned about job losses, she did not dispute that up to 1,200 full-time equivalent positions may be lost, and no mention was made of casual workers, who may not be retained to return to work or may have their hours reduced. It is clear from media articles in the past few days that the Smart and Skilled program is a catastrophe and that TAFE is facing a train wreck. I draw attention to an article in the *Australian* yesterday which was headed:

Critics say NSW scheme Smart and Skilled is more like Dumb and Dumber.

It talks about the urgency behind this bill, because private and community colleges are reeling after being doled out unviable small contracts as part of the New South Wales Government's exercise in opening its training funds to competition. Unlike other jurisdictions, where a voucher system has been used, the department is determining who gets what funding. The article stated:

The picture is murky because the government has refused to discuss the process, and contracts—which were emailed to successful applicants almost two weeks ago—carry confidentiality clauses. But the Australian Council for Private Education and Training also said its members have been offered unfeasibly meagre contracts.

The article further stated:

But this has generated turmoil for other state-subsidised colleges, particularly community colleges, which offer personalised services largely to disadvantaged students. Their peak body said more than 80 per cent of its members had either missed out completely or had their previous allocations slashed savagely.

The article details not only the catastrophe that has befallen TAFE but also the problems for the wider vocational education and training [VET] system. An article in the *Australian* on 23 October is headed:

Training market deaf to special needs as NSW set to lose Auslan diploma

The Minister for Education told the Parliament and the community that New South Wales would be sheltered from the excesses that we have seen in Victoria. Universally, people, and even the Minister, have admitted that the Victorian process was and is a catastrophe. Now we are seeing the Victorian skills reform in this small and simple example, which is one of many. The article states:

Funding cuts triggered by a 2012 blowout in Victoria's open training market forced the closure of the state's only sign language diploma—a situation not resolved until months later when the state government offered a \$5.2 million lifeline ...

So the Victorian Government had to pour money into the sector. Now the same thing is happening in New South Wales; the only experienced provider has lost its funding as a consequence of the new training market. The article continued:

The Deaf Society of NSW said the cut could not have come at a worse time.

It said last year's rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the Hunter Valley had triggered a 119 per cent spike in demand for its interpretation service.

...

The Deaf Society has attracted several years of stop-start funding under NSW's Strategic Skills program. It has run Auslan courses on a break-even basis when funding was available, and at a loss when it wasn't.

Last week the society was denied a contract under NSW's replacement scheme, Smart and Skilled. It has not been told why.

Senior policy adviser Susannah Macready said the society would struggle to offer the Auslan diploma on a commercial basis, because students would not tolerate full commercial fees, and the increased demand triggered by the NDIS meant cross-subsidising the course was no longer feasible.

That is another casualty of Smart and Skilled. Adding to this are the news stories everyone would have seen in the past week or so about unregistered and registered training colleges targeting disadvantaged people to sign them up to expensive schemes and then encouraging them to get VET help with funding and support. Again, shonky private sector providers are undermining the provision of education, targeting disadvantaged students. Indeed, articles in the ABC news on Friday 10 October and on ABC news online on Saturday 18 October stated that unscrupulous providers were standing out the front of Centrelink offices recruiting people to their courses. They were offering free courses under the guise of providing help with VET fees. However, these students could never hope to pay back these large debts, which stand against them in the general loan market for any other loan they might seek to get.

I do not propose to read all the articles but anyone involved in VET education will say that there is a major problem in the private market, which has been supported and nourished not only by the New South Wales Coalition but by Federal Labor. It was Federal Labor—and most notably Julia Gillard—that pushed the national skills reform at the Federal level. The Adult Migrant English Services [AMES] program was put out to competitive tendering, and the Federal Labor Government's national skills reform saw a huge reduction in the quality of adult migrant English services. Federal Labor members are happy to hold up "Stop TAFE Cuts" signs, but their ideological attack on TAFE and the public education system has led to this problem, and it is where the New South Wales Coalition is at. Seeking to get Federal funding is one reason that we are seeing this move apace.

Before I address that in detail I refer to another bill on this issue which was discussed last week, because it goes to the position of TAFE in New South Wales. The New South Wales Opposition leader's private member's bill only seeks to freeze TAFE fees, which might make a good headline, but it does not secure affordable, high-quality public skills training. The Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Fees) Bill is worth supporting. It is marginally better than the Coalition's position because it freezes the maximum fees chargeable by TAFE NSW for its courses at 2014 levels plus inflation. However, it fails to deal with the philosophical issue at the heart of the attack on public education and TAFE and as part of the overall

competition process. I refer to the Leader of the Opposition's bill because it goes to the integrity of the Labor Party position. Labor members have said, "We don't like Smart and Skilled either. We don't want Smart and Skilled." What is their position? I put this question to Government members: Are they proposing to put it to a competitive market?

Mr Matt Kean: They drove it through COAG.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Hornsby. He is right.

Mr Clayton Barr: How much are The Greens putting up?

Mr JAMIE PARKER: That is what this bill is all about.

Mr Clayton Barr: Are you going to submit it to the Parliamentary Budget Office?

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

Mr JAMIE PARKER: The bill will not cost additional money.

Mr Clayton Barr: Everything costs money. How much will this cost?

Mr JAMIE PARKER: All this bill does is take the situation back to 2010-11 and say, "That's the situation we are at." And we move on from here. The member for Cessnock asked how much it will cost. That is one of the great challenges. We know that everything costs something.

Mr Matt Kean: You never worry about that.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: At the last Federal election The Greens was the only party to submit every one of its costings to the Parliamentary Budget Office, unlike the Coalition and Labor. Unlike the major parties, we took a fully costed position to the last election. But I digress. We know that Labor is doing the right thing on this bill. Labor did the right thing and supported this bill in the upper House. I hope that Labor members, including the member for Cessnock, are pulling Labor in the right direction on this matter, and pulling the Labor Party and the Coalition to the community's position. TAFE is a fantastic provider.

Recently I sat on an inquiry into the skills shortage in New South Wales. Whether we were in Albury, on the far North Coast or in Dubbo, everyone said how much they loved TAFE and that it was a great provider. Yet the Government is loading millions of dollars into the private sector, with all the dodgy implications and reductions in the types of services that are needed. I will address briefly the impact of Smart and Skilled on our community because that is the key point. In my electorate of Balmain 124 permanent full-time equivalent jobs have already been lost. Hundreds more part-time casual teachers have lost some or all of their work. A further 79 direct class support positions in the Sydney Institute are currently under threat. Of course, the majority of them are at the Ultimo campus.

The latest information we have is for August-September 2014. On top of the numerous previous restructures and downsizing exercises since March 2011, in August and September of this year fresh cuts were announced for at least six institutes as a direct result of the imminent arrival of Smart and Skilled. All the managers are saying, "Smart and Skilled is coming. Let's chop, chop, chop because we can't compete." That is why TAFE Outreach is being hacked apart. TAFE Outreach is an organisation that helps students find the right courses and helps them finish their courses. It also has the benefit of teaching students about how to be involved in TAFE and participate in a more structured way. Of course, private providers do not offer that service. Why would they? The private providers approach is "Get them in and get them out".

TAFE is being hollowed out to fit the business model for skills training. I am concerned about the proposed cuts to TAFE Outreach positions in several institutes, including the south western institute, where I understand it is proposed that 100 per cent of the staff in this role be removed. The Government might say that remaining staff will be able to complete the same tasks as those who previously filled the positions, but the loss of experience and expertise in the area will have significant impacts on the students we want to support—second-chance education students and the disadvantaged. We are shifting the work of outreach officers to other staff. No doubt that is a direct result of Smart and Skilled. What is important is that these TAFE outreach staff, who provide real benefits, do not fit the private sector low-cost model, and that is a shame.

My electorate has suffered a significant cost. Further, at institutes across the Illawarra, the Hunter, Northern Sydney, Western Sydney, Sydney, and south-western Sydney at least 300 full-time equivalent positions are proposed to be removed. A range of faculties will be affected, including many that feature on the 2015 skills list which were identified by the Government as priority areas to secure the future. These faculties are being chopped. Across the institute's non-teaching services that are proposed to be deleted are disability support, customer service, libraries, student association, administration and counselling. These positions, although not all front-line teaching positions, are direct student and class support staff that assist students to complete their courses.

The member for Hornsby asks why I have a problem with the private sector. The Greens do not have a problem with the private sector but we do have a problem with the nature of the private providers and the market. The Australian Skills Quality Authority is responsible for maintaining skills in registered training organisations around Australia. In a report published earlier this year, the authority said up to about a half of registered training organisations are potentially misleading customers. The authority pointed to practices promising qualifications irrespective of the outcome of assessment and guaranteeing jobs after training. That is the problem with the market. As the Australian Skills Quality Authority has told us, it is not a perfect market with perfect information providing perfect services.

These organisations collect fees in advance that are above the limits set for registered organisations. Most importantly, the organisations set time frames for courses that fall far short of the volume of learning required. The Australian Skills Quality Authority is the chief regulatory body of vocational education and training [VET] in New South Wales. Its report points to the phenomenon in which is writ the doom of vocational education and training in this State if we do not avert the sudden and rapid growth of private providers. I advise the member for Hornsby and other members of the Coalition that that is the problem. The market is mushrooming as a result of millions of dollars being cut from TAFE and money going to the competitive market. It is leading to this negative outcome. The Industry Skills Council consultation also raised a number of concerning findings. The council found that private registered training courses have applied:

- An inappropriate use of online learning that lacked work-based context;
- Training delivery that does not provide the appropriate knowledge and skills;
- Inappropriate use of recognition of prior learning;
- Trainers who lack recent industry experience;
- Enrolling students without required prerequisites;
- Delivering training that the registered training organisations are not registered to deliver;
- Training (delivery and assessment) that varies in quality for certain target groups; and
- Pressure to push students through programs quickly to address skills shortages, or deliver qualifications for required employment.

In short, registered training organisations offer a rapid path to the bottom of the market. If the Government is committed to quality public education it should not be proceeding with Smart and Skilled. In fact, it should be supporting this bill. TAFE funding is a very high-profile issue in my electorate. The former member for Balmain was also the Minister for Education and Training. I was stunned when I saw people standing at the front of her office with a sign stating, "Where on earth is Verity Firth?" I have a lot of respect for the former member for Balmain, but during her time as Minister we saw an assault on the conditions of the TAFE teaching community and TAFE workers.

At the time, under the Rees Government, we saw trade-offs, increased working hours and reduced support for TAFE teachers. It was reported that about \$55 million was being taken away from the New South Wales TAFE system. I am not using this bill to attack the Coalition or the Labor Party. I am highlighting the philosophical and ideological approach in New South Wales, which is also embodied federally, that competition is good, regardless of the state of the competitive market. The approach is, "Don't worry about the provision of critical support for our community, the market will solve the problem. Let's shunt them." The Greens say that the market is not the place to be putting public funds because of all the problems I have highlighted, and many more.

TAFE teachers, through the Teachers Federation, pushed very hard in the run-up to the last election to highlight these matters. I and various Coalition members, including the Minister for Education and the former Deputy Premier, signed a five-point pledge. I am sure The Nationals who are fighting for their TAFEs—they should be fighting a lot harder and louder—also signed it. The Committee on Economic Development inquiry into skill shortages in New South Wales, on which I served, visited rural and regional communities and noted the importance of TAFE to these communities. Ultimo, in my electorate, is a large TAFE and is part of the

provision of education in Sydney together with the University of Technology, Sydney, and Sydney university. But in rural and regional New South Wales the TAFE facility is the backbone of education for the local community and for future employment. The five-point pledge that members have committed to is:

1. Invest in services—Government must guarantee TAFE funding.
2. Look after public assets—Ensure that TAFE jobs and courses are not contracted out to the private sector.

such as happens under Smart and Skilled—

3. Plan long term—Invest in infrastructure for TAFE that ensures a skilled workforce.
4. Back our workers—Increase permanent teaching positions and invest in teacher training.
5. Govern for the common good—Ensure that everyone in NSW has affordable access to a TAFE education.

Members signed this pledge, yet up to 1,200 full-time staff will be going, not to mention all the casuals who may not be re-employed or who may have reduced hours. In this year's budget NSW TAFE's total expenditure of \$1.862 billion is being cut in real terms by \$51.7 million. In 2012 the Liberal-Nationals announced that a total of \$800 million would be cut from TAFE's budget. In relation to privatisation, the New South Wales 2014-15 budget indicates that only \$1.1 billion of TAFE's budgeted income of \$1.8 billion will be guaranteed. Further, the budget reveals that total contestable funding to the VET sector is anticipated to be worth \$635.3 million, of which \$206.4 million will go to TAFE and \$428.9 million to private providers—the private providers I talked about who are not delivering for the community or for education.

Early next year the New South Wales Government will dump TAFE into an unfair competitive market with low costs and often lower-quality providers who will cherry pick the cheaper-to-deliver courses and the easier-to-teach students. That is the problem with this model. The VET sector in the State is in crisis, with job losses, a reduction in student enrolments and TAFE campus closures. The new system will not shield us from the worst excesses that were introduced in the Victorian Skills Reform, which everyone, even the Victorian Liberals, says was poorly implemented.

I will inform the members who signed that pledge about TAFE's capital budget. TAFE's capital budget has declined from \$163 million in 2009-10 to \$90 million in 2013-14 to \$77 million in this budget. On those figures, the Government cannot argue—particularly those who signed the pledge—that it is committed to investing in TAFE infrastructure. The 2014-15 budget indicates that over the 2011-15 period more than 1,000 full-time equivalent positions will be removed from TAFE. TAFE teachers were not exempted from the New South Wales Government's program to delete non-front line public sector workers.

Fees are set to rise dramatically for many students under Smart and Skilled. The students, if they are able to successfully navigate the enormous complexity of the new fee structure, will be forced to contribute between 25 per cent and 45 per cent of the cost of their skills education. For 20 per cent of students this will mean fee increases of more than \$1,000 and for 12 per cent of students fee increases of more than \$1,500. They are the facts. Details of the additional Community Service Obligation funds are yet to be revealed but that funding is unlikely to provide TAFE with the money it needs to service communities, in particular, in rural and regional areas. I will look at the details of the cuts made in August and September.

Mr Geoff Provest: You are speculating. Is this life through the eyes of The Greens? The Greens have got to be right.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I just state the facts. At the Western Sydney Institute in the electorate of the member for Granville the number of permanent full-time job losses in 2013 was 51. At Mount Druitt plumbing has had cuts in face-to-face teaching hours, courses have been abandoned and class sizes have increased. Apprentices are forced to attend class at campuses on the other side of Sydney to complete their trade certificate and companies have no choice but to withdraw their apprentices if the budget cuts compromise safety. The metal engineering and logistic transport group also is facing an uncertain future. At Richmond, language, literacy and numeracy courses have been cut and the adult literacy officer position has been deleted. It has lost most of its agricultural courses, no full-time teacher recruitment in animal care and casualisation of the workforce and forestry is being transferred to the Nepean facility.

In the electorate of the member for Heathcote the Sydney Institute has suffered 71 permanent full-time job losses in 2013. That has had an enormous impact. The Higher School Certificate will no longer be offered at

Ultimo TAFE, which also has lost teachers in commercial cookery, information technology, English as a second language, foundation studies and migrant education consultants. Cuts to fine arts courses will undermine the cultural community and vibrant arts centre in the west.

I will talk about the members who have signed this document and what has happened in their electorates. At the Western Sydney Institute in the electorate of the member for Dubbo, Troy Grant, and the North Coast Institute in the electorates of the member for Port Macquarie, Leslie Williams, former Deputy Premier and the member for Oxley, Andrew Stoner, and the member for Tweed, Geoff Provest, the permanent job losses from 1 January 2013 to 6 March 2014 were 33 full-time staff, which is a huge impact for those areas. Fine arts courses have been cut and fewer courses are available.

I turn now to the Hunter Institute in the electorate of the member for Maitland, Robyn Parker, where job losses from 1 January 2013 to 6 March 2014 have been more than 50. I repeat, more than 50 staff in full-time employment have been taken out of that community, which has had a significant impact on the area. The cost of a community services diploma is set to increase to more than \$9,000 from a few hundred dollars this year. In Newcastle, fine arts, hospitality, tourism, metal fabrication and welding courses have been cut at several campuses and accounting, law and real estate courses are facing even greater cuts this year. Second-chance HSC courses have all but disappeared. At Gosford campus, teachers in maths, metal fabrication and welding have been made redundant and student contact hours in metal fabrication, sport and recreation courses have been cut.

Wyong campus no longer offers courses in tourism, hospitality and information technology. Wyong is a big tourism and hospitality area. Of course, the fee for fine arts at Ourimbah has been increased to \$14,000. I turn now to the job losses at the Northern Sydney Institute, in the electorates of the member for Hornsby, Mr Kean, and the member for Pittwater, Mr Stokes. The number of permanent full-time job losses between 13 January 2013 and 16 March 2014 was 102. Courses were cut and there were unaffordable fee increases for students with disabilities and it is facing an 89 per cent cut in disability funding next year, from \$1.2 million to \$138,000. The list goes on.

I have a couple more TAFE institutes to mention but the House is getting the flavour of what is going on in our TAFE system: it is being hit hard. Fine arts courses at Hornsby and Brookvale campuses are being cut with one week's notice. At the Illawarra Institute in the electorates of the member for Monaro, Kiama and South Coast job losses from 1 January 2013 to 6 March 2014 were 14. Illawarra TAFE has cut face-to-face teaching time for its apprentice electricians. Electrical trade apprentices will spend only 30 days in the classroom this year, 16 per cent less than in 2013 when they had to attend for 36 days. This is reducing the quality and capacity of education. Students with hearing impairment were forced to withdraw from the institute after the disability support service was reduced.

Mr Gareth Ward: That's not true.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: Are you saying it wasn't reduced?

Mr Gareth Ward: That's not true.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: It is true. How can you say it is not true? I look forward to the member's speech denying the truth of the matter. In the electorates of the member for Northern Tablelands and the member for Tamworth, permanent job losses at New England Institute are four full-time staff, a 13 per cent cut in the TAFE budget over three years.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The member for Balmain is misleading the Parliament. The numbers in relation to the New England Institute are not correct.

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

Mr JAMIE PARKER: If I am incorrect as to the four staff, I encourage the member to correct the record and make a statement about it.

Mr Kevin Anderson: I will.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I stick by my numbers. If he puts forward a different number, I will examine the veracity. In the Riverina Institute in the electorates of the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for

Murrumbidgee, permanent full-time job losses were 38. It is a fact that the Riverina TAFE will no longer deliver Higher School Certificate courses at any of its campuses. In the Riverina second-chance education is important and it is a real concern that students are not being offered those HSC courses. No member of Parliament representing electorates near the South Western Sydney Institute signed the pledge but permanent full-time job losses at that facility are 36 and threats to the future of specialised support for students of non-English speaking backgrounds is a particular concern.

In my concluding remarks, I will deal with the position of the Government on these issues and address its arguments as to why Smart and Skilled should proceed. The first claim is that this TAFE changes moratorium bill will put at risk \$408.41 million in Commonwealth funding over the next three years. This claim is false for three reasons. The National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform—a disgraceful Federal process that dangles money in front of State governments so that they will destroy their own publicly funded sector—does not require entitlements to training to be redeemable at non-TAFE organisations. For example, the initial implementation agreement signed with the Northern Territory allowed entitlements to be redeemed only at TAFE. That is what the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform allowed.

Clause 28 of the agreement could be implemented with State-based criteria that restricted entitlements to public providers. The progress payments to New South Wales for the implementation of the competitive components of Smart and Skilled, referred to as entitlements, would be stopped by this bill. They are relatively small compared to overall payments. The New South Wales implementation plan for the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform was to be signed by the Minister for Education, Mr Piccoli, and the then Commonwealth Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research, Craig Emerson, in June 2013. The plan contains total payments of \$408 million after three years remaining in the plan, being 2014-15 to 2016-17. However, only \$172.66 million is dependent on structural reform outputs of access and equity, of which national entitlements form only one of two components. This cut is dwarfed by their own cuts, but it is completely false to claim \$408.41 million in cuts. I invite the Minister to tell us how he can support that claim because it is false.

I know that Coalition members, in particular The Nationals, have problems with the plan and the process. What the Minister will not say is that clause 6 of the New South Wales implementation plan allows the two responsible Ministers to negotiate the plan at any time. It would be open to the Minister for Education to renegotiate the terms and conditions for progress payments with the Commonwealth if this bill were passed, so the \$408 million is a ridiculous claim. I want to address the other claim that giving students entitlements to training and a choice of courses will increase participation in training. Many members opposite will say, "We will give students entitlements to training and choice and providers will increase participation in training."

Mr Geoff Provost: Who cares what they are going to say?

Mr JAMIE PARKER: This is what the Government has claimed and I am responding to that claim. I look at the evidence of Victoria and Queensland, which have similar markets and where there has been a collapse in quality training and a damaged training sector. The latest data for the Victorian competitive market shows a 28 per cent drop in diplomas. Smart and Skilled NSW will not guarantee increased training.

Mr Matt Kean: That has got nothing to do with the quality claim.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: The claim I am addressing is that giving students entitlements to training and a choice of courses and providers will increase participation in training. I invite members to look at the data in Victoria where there has been a huge decrease, and we can surmise why. Is it because of the increase in fees or the broken dislocated sector? An entitlement to training under Smart and Skilled is for one course only. This is important. Having redeemed that entitlement, students are then exposed to the full cost of any subsequent training. Currently, the member for Hornsby can do a course and then decide to do another course. Under Smart and Skilled he has an entitlement for one course only. If he chooses to do another course he is exposed to the full cost of any subsequent training.

Mr Matt Kean: Why shouldn't people be accountable for taxpayers' money?

Mr JAMIE PARKER: We believe that undermines security in the system. Students who begin training without the fundamental preliminary skills will be required to use their one-off entitlement to a course

by enrolling in the necessary course and they will no longer have that entitlement for a mainstream course. The member for Hornsby is interjecting but this is an important point. Students who begin training without the fundamental preliminary skills that are required will have to use the one-off entitlement and then no longer have an entitlement to do a mainstream course. The member for Hornsby interjected about giving people public money. People need to be educated and vocational education is a good way to provide that. It is not wasteful for people to do a course and then in their lifetime choose to do another. That is about life-long learning. One educational entitlement is insufficient.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Hornsby will cease interjecting. The member will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I do not blame the Acting-Speaker for being cranky. If I were a constituent in his electorate I would be cranky too. The Government has stated that it had to make "tough but necessary" decisions in the budget. This bill reflects the budget situation. I now address the important issue of funding. In 2006 Allens Consulting was engaged to review TAFE New South Wales. It estimated in its study that for every dollar spent on TAFE the State economy gained \$6.40 over the subsequent 20 years.

Mr Matt Kean: Who was that?

Mr JAMIE PARKER: Allens Consulting. Further education leads to fewer people on benefits, more people moving into the work sector, and more people with increased skills, thereby delivering benefits to the State. I encourage members to examine the Allens Consulting review. TAFE plays a critical role in generating dignity, engagement, education and citizenship. A highly educated, competent and literate workforce is economically beneficial to the State. The community needs people with broad and growing VET skills. The committee inquiry into skills shortages in New South Wales, of which I was a member, found that TAFE is at the heart of providing skills, especially in rural regional New South Wales where businesses are desperate for well-trained employees.

In rural and regional areas people may be required to change employment and may need further training but that would not be available with a single entitlement. Employment in a different industry or in agriculture may require further training but this proposal does not allow subsequent training if people have redeemed their entitlement. They would have to pay the full cost for that course. Where is the flexibility? In booming rural and regional towns, people who want to acquire additional skills should not be subject to the full cost of subsequent training. That is an imposition on rural and regional New South Wales. In the city there are large industries and people can continue in the same type of employment throughout their lives. The changes in the bill introduce an imbalance. I will conclude with three points. The bill risks the implementation of reforms within TAFE which were instituted when Labor was in Government. Under Labor, TAFE was being strangled; the life was being squeezed out of it. Government members are agreeing with that proposition.

At the time Coalition members, particularly rural and regional members, argued that Labor was ripping the guts out of TAFE. They argued that the working conditions of TAFE employees and the budget were being reduced year in and year out. The Greens also did not agree with the changes. The education sector must continue to improve but the way to do it is not to dump money into the private sector in an imperfect, unfair competition model. The member for Tamworth interjected earlier, disputing my comment that staff numbers had reduced in the Hunter, the Illawarra and New England and on the North Coast. The Minister informed Dr John Kaye, a member of the upper House, in writing that the positions lost in 2013 included: Hunter, 26; Illawarra, 14; North Coast, 33; and New England, four. If the member for Tamworth has a problem with those numbers he should speak with Minister Piccoli. Perhaps the member considers that the numbers are too low?

Mr Kevin Anderson: I have got them.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Tamworth will cease waving a piece of paper around and resume his seat.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I look forward to seeing that document. Minister Piccoli provided me with that number of four staff. This bill protects TAFE from Smart and Skilled.

Mr Geoff Provost: You have spoken to one point. Do you have number two?

Mr JAMIE PARKER: It is coming. Are you encouraging me to speak longer? It is important that TAFE is protected. Smart and Skilled will not guarantee that TAFE will remain the backbone of the New South Wales education sector. Rural and regional TAFE institutes in South Australia and Victoria are disappearing under the competitive market design. I encourage members to look at what is happening in South Australia and Victoria. Prior to the market design reforms, South Australia was served by three institutes which have now been amalgamated into one. Consequently, electrical apprentices cannot finish their trade course at a regional TAFE; they have to travel to Adelaide for the final year. That is what is going to happen here.

The Victorian TAFE at Gippsland, an advanced TAFE, has lost its autonomy and separate identity and has been amalgamated into Federation Training. By 2016 it will disappear into Federation University. In New South Wales the New England Institute is most vulnerable and will face significant pressure under Smart and Skilled. It is disturbing to look at what is going on in other States. The most recent data in Victoria states that the TAFE market share is now less than 27 per cent. Members in this House who think a TAFE in their electorate will thrive and grow under Smart and Skilled should be concerned.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Murray-Darling will cease interjecting.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I thank members of the House for their active engagement in this bill. Many members signed up to the TAFE pledge, but we have not seen a commitment to TAFE as identified in the pledge. The pledge presented by the Teachers Federation, through activists and delegates, contained five points. The first two points are: Government must invest and guarantee TAFE funding; and ensure that TAFE jobs and courses are not contracted to the private sector. Any member who supports Smart and Skilled, having signed the pledge, is in breach of the first two points because TAFE funding has been reduced and jobs lost.

Members who signed the pledge include: then Deputy Premier Stoner; Education Minister Piccoli; Lee Evans, Heathcote; Tony Issa, Granville; Troy Grant, Dubbo; Leslie Williams, Port Macquarie; Geoff Provost, Tweed; Matt Kean, Hornsby; Rob Stokes, Pittwater; Gareth Ward, Kiama; John Barilaro, Monaro; Shelley Hancock, South Coast; the former member for Northern Tablelands; Kevin Anderson, Tamworth; and Daryl Maguire, Wagga Wagga. These members have been snookered by this Government. The Government has said it is going to chop \$800 million out of TAFE, take a huge pile of money and give it to the private sector and let TAFE compete for money on an unfair playing field.

Mr Matt Kean: An unfair playing field?

Mr JAMIE PARKER: It is definitely unfair.

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

Mr JAMIE PARKER: Members do not like hearing the truth. They do not like to hear about job cuts and losses and reductions in courses.

Mr Matt Kean: We just don't like your socialism.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: The member for Hornsby interjects. I do not think that providing quality public education is socialism. If asked whether quality public education should be provided, the community will say "yes" a hundred times over. The last two days of media reports on training colleges should concern every member. The market that taxpayer money is being dumped into should be of concern to every member. I thank the House for debating this bill. I am delighted to speak in Parliament about TAFE, to inform local members and to encourage them and the broader community to consider the impacts of a publicly funded VET sector. TAFE is the backbone of vocational education and we must support TAFE teachers and staff and the young people who access this second-chance education. We must support, nourish and aid those who are looking for a positive future. Public funding should not be thrown into a market that will not deliver the participation rates and results that we all want. I commend the bill to the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): I welcome to the gallery Mr Rob Long, a TAFE organiser with the NSW Teachers Federation, guest of the member for Balmain. Welcome to the New South Wales Parliament.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [10.59 a.m.]: I thank the member for Balmain for his contribution to this debate. I particularly thank him for the lesson in Alice in Wonderland economics.

Government members found it interesting and enjoyed his work of fiction. The figures he cited were obviously provided by the Teachers Federation, and I note that representatives of the federation are in the gallery. Members should see this bill for what it is: an attempt by The Greens to snatch Teachers Federation support from the Labor Party. The Greens can see the Labor Party on the skids and they are trying to pull the rug from under it in a desperate pitch for support. They are trying to replace their biggest donor from Tasmania with support from the Teachers Federation.

I will introduce some facts into this debate. As much as I enjoyed that diatribe from *Das Kapital*, we need some facts. Smart and Skilled will enable more students to access training. I point out to the member that 46,000 more students will be able to access training than would have been the case had the current fee structure been retained. It will also increase the range of choices available to students. Government members believe in choice. What is wrong with giving people more choice and empowering them to choose a product that best meets their educational needs? Smart and Skilled will apply one set of fees across approved public and private training organisations, and it will ensure that quality is at the heart of the system. Fixed prices will mean that providers compete on quality, not price.

The Government wants competition based on quality; it wants students to be able to choose the product that best meets their training needs, and that is a good thing. I do not understand why the member for Balmain does not want that. This Government wants students to get value for money, with subsidies and fees reflecting efficiently costed training. It wants students to know what they will pay up-front by charging a fee based on the qualification rather than the year they attend. The Government wants disadvantaged students to know that they will get support. That is why it is providing loadings to support higher-cost learners and community service organisations through TAFE NSW and Educational Credential Evaluators. It will make pricing more simple for providers by collapsing the three pricing models into one.

This bill makes clear The Greens' position on vocational training and education: The Greens want a TAFE and training system that is inflexible and stuck in the past. They have demonstrated that they do not want our training system to continue to evolve to meet industry and community needs. The Greens do not want the Government to focus on training that leads to real job outcomes for students and they are willing to put at risk hundreds of millions of dollars of Commonwealth funding. The member for Balmain is suggesting that we give up an extra \$400 million of Commonwealth funding over the next three years. I do not know where he will find that funding or what he is planning. We have heard a lot of numbers.

Mr Jamie Parker: We'll get it from the poker machine industry.

Mr MATT KEAN: Typically, a member of The Greens wants to gamble with public money.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Balmain will cease interjecting. He has had an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr MATT KEAN: That is a hallmark of The Greens. By opposing these reforms, the member for Balmain is putting at risk \$400 million of Commonwealth funding over the next three years, but he has not come up with a plan to replace it. Where will he get that funding? The answer is, "nowhere". The New South Wales Government opposes the bill introduced by the member for Balmain because if it were passed it would reverse the growth of skills that supports the ongoing strength of this State's economy. The vital reforms to our training markets in Smart and Skilled that this bill opposes are essential for improving training, participation rates and outcomes. This package has been carefully designed to support the Government's goal of making New South Wales the number one State in this country, and increasing employment and productivity.

I do not understand why the member for Balmain opposes increasing employment and productivity. He gave us an insight into his thinking when he revealed that he wants more people to spend more time studying for degrees that will not lead to employment. These reforms have been clearly and comprehensively explained to industry and the community and are well advanced and widely anticipated. Critically, they will be reviewed progressively when they are introduced on 1 January 2015. The Government strongly opposes this bill because if it were passed it would take TAFE backwards, whereas Smart and Skilled will move it forward. The Government supports TAFE moving ahead and continuing to evolve as a modern organisation that has a clear focus on industry, students and the community, and which is flexible, responsive and competitive.

It is important to understand that Smart and Skilled has been developed in close consultation with industry. The NSW Skills Board, established by the Government last year, is independently guiding these

reforms with expert advice. The board's membership comprises leading business, education and financial experts. It is chaired by Mr Phillip Clark, AM, who has extensive knowledge and experience in business and education policy, including chairing the Commonwealth Government's Higher Education Endowment Fund Advisory Board and the International Education and Research Taskforce. The board is responsible for advising the Government on how best to meet individual skills and training needs as well as the broader demands of industry, our regions and the State economy. Importantly, the board has responsibility to ensure that TAFE NSW remains the public provider of training in this State.

If it passes, this bill will reverse a fundamental part of the Smart and Skilled training reform package. Smart and Skilled does not undermine our training system. Rather, it provides new flexibility within the system, and creates incentives for more private investment and service provision. Specifically, it changes the way we allocate public funding. From 1 January 2015, eligible students will be provided with an entitlement for approved training that can be redeemed from a broader range of approved training providers and programs that will lead to employment. We should all be committed to programs that lead to more jobs and opportunities for the citizens of this State.

Strict controls will be imposed to ensure that public funding is not wasted on low-quality training or on training that does not lead to jobs. The member for Balmain said that he is concerned about a reduction in quality as a result of the implementation of Smart and Skilled. That will be addressed by the safeguards that the Government is putting place. By providing checks and balances we will ensure that we get the quality we want. We all want a system that ensures providers compete on the quality of the education they provide. Students will go to where the product being delivered best meets their needs and provides them with the skills to secure jobs and ongoing employment.

Last year the TAFE NSW board undertook statewide consultation about TAFE NSW. It implemented Let's Talk About TAFE to find out what people thought about TAFE and what they expected of it. The member for Balmain said that the majority of the community does not support Smart and Skilled and that it does not meet community expectations. Newspoll is better placed to determine what the community wants than the member for Balmain and the Teachers Federation. Its survey revealed that 97 per cent of respondents recognised TAFE and 94 per cent said that it makes a valuable contribution to training people for business and industry. I agree. Having been to TAFE, I understand firsthand the outstanding work it does and the quality product it delivers. We should be encouraging competition based on excellence, quality and product delivered. I would go back to TAFE in a heartbeat because the product I received was outstanding.

The survey found that TAFE needs to change, and to stay relevant and responsive in an ever-changing world. The international market for education and training in New South Wales is part of that. That is exactly what the Smart and Skilled reforms underpin—the changing needs of individuals and the economy, and the need for our public provider to keep pace. The Government is giving TAFEs more autonomy to manage their finances, assets and workforces, and to respond to business opportunities so that they can strengthen their commercial capabilities and be less dependent on government funding.

We are giving TAFEs more autonomy because we think those who are running TAFEs are close enough to the action to make decisions in the best interests of their market, whereas the member for Cessnock thinks that a centralised bureaucracy sitting in an ivory tower is best placed to tell TAFE students what they should want and need. That is what we are opposed to. These reforms will allow every institute to be more nimble and meet the challenges of the changing economy and contemporary workplaces by tailoring their training delivery to meet the needs of students, industry and the community—that is a good thing. TAFE should be responsive to the needs of the community and industry. This flexibility has been embraced by students, with approximately 42 per cent of TAFE training now being delivered outside the traditional classroom setting.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! The member for Cessnock will cease interjecting.

Mr Clayton Barr: It's very hard.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): Order! I suggest the member try.

Mr MATT KEAN: If the bill introduced by the member for Balmain is passed it will reduce the ability of TAFE to achieve business and governance reforms, locking it in the past and preventing it from evolving to remain relevant and successful. The Government's statement of owner expectations for TAFE NSW clearly and

simply sets out the role of TAFE NSW and its key reform directions and accountabilities. TAFE NSW will continue to be the backbone of the training system in New South Wales, as it should be. The intention of this Government is to empower TAFE institutes to operate more autonomously, and to be more flexible and responsive to local employers and communities so it can continue as a vital part of the economic and social strategies that make New South Wales number one. Two practical examples reflect the kind of innovation and entrepreneurship that we have come to expect of TAFE NSW, and that the people and communities of New South Wales want to see more of now and once Smart and Skilled is in place.

TAFE Western Sydney Institute, the second largest online education provider in the world through Open Training and Education Network [OTEN], announced that from April this year it will introduce an entirely flexible course offering Mix+Match, making learning easy across 12 study areas. This means students can attend the same class at different campuses as well as access them online. This gives them the choice of how, when and where they study units within a qualification, all made available through an online shopping-style website for course selection and enrolment. This initiative follows a survey of Western Sydney Institute's students that found that approximately 80 per cent want more flexibility, including the flexibility to combine classroom teaching with online learning. The institute will extend Mix+Match to include workplace-based delivery. By the same token, last year TAFE's Western Sydney Institute won an NSW Premier's Award for revitalising regional New South Wales.

The institute's Western Connect program increases access to high-quality training for students, irrespective of where they live in the vast west of the State, using flexible learning methods including online, connected classrooms and specialised mobile units as well as workplace training. The member for Balmain has run a scare campaign—that people in the bush will find it more difficult to access training—but TAFE is doing exactly what it should be doing: evolving to meet the growing and changing needs of students. Students no longer have to learn in a classroom; a range of technologies can be utilised to enhance educational opportunities. Smart and Skilled encourages this and TAFE is responding to that. Rather than locking out regional and rural people, TAFE is enhancing their educational opportunities.

More than 3,200 students gained access to training in 2012 through Western Connect—28 per cent of these students were Aboriginal and 10 per cent had a disability. This is a major achievement that should be encouraged. Smart and Skilled requires providers of education to innovate and compete on quality. That is what TAFE institutes have responded to and it is disgraceful that The Greens and the member for Balmain oppose this. In 2013, Aboriginal students enrolling in Certificate III qualifications as part of the Western Connect initiative had the best completion ratio at TAFE's Western Institute. I encourage all members to learn about Western Connect and the innovative use of mobile training units housed in specially equipped trailers and trucks to take the equipment and the training physically to the remote communities. These "pop-up" workshops provide training in child care, nursing and health, coffee making, shearing, confined spaces, conservation earthworks, welding and many other areas for students who may otherwise have missed out or had to travel significant distances.

I am advised that Western Connect's mobile welding unit travels an 800-kilometre circuit for two weeks at a time and takes in Wilcannia as well as correctional centres in Broken Hill and Ivanhoe. Likewise, the mobile library is the only library service many of these communities have the opportunity to access. Combined, these technology-based and mobile learning strategies have enabled Western Institute to add around 80 new study choices for its students. Again, this gives students more choice; we should encourage TAFE to be more flexible. It provides a quality product and people are flocking to take courses. TAFE needs to be unshackled from the constraints it has been confined in so that it can provide quality education to meet the needs of students and, importantly, industry. This State needs a well-trained workforce to grow the economy.

This bill, if passed, would stifle innovations such as Western Connect and Mix+Match. This bill would limit access to training, not least of all in the regions. This bill would take TAFE NSW backwards and undermine innovation. This Government will not support this bill. The Government has closely observed interstate reforms and their effects on TAFE systems—reforms that have had mixed success—to ensure we avoid unintended consequences. The member for Balmain said these reforms had resulted in the collapse of TAFE in other States. Let us have a look at the facts: One critical point of difference between the arrangements in New South Wales and interstate arrangements, which the member for Balmain failed to concede, is our clear recognition of the critical role of TAFE NSW as the public provider of vocational education and training.

The New South Wales Government strongly supports the new directions being led by the TAFE NSW board. This includes adapting its governance and services to meet the challenges of operating effectively in a

more competitive environment. New members have been appointed recently to the board to strengthen its leadership in meeting the Government's priorities set out in the statement of owner expectations, and ensure its readiness for reforms under Smart and Skilled. The Government also supports the excellent leadership of the managing director, Ms Pam Christie, the 10 institute directors and other TAFE executives. I am proud of the outstanding job being done by the director of the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE in delivering a quality product to students in my electorate.

TAFE NSW is working closely with TAFE staff to develop new approaches to training delivery as well as business reforms. This bill puts at risk important reforms already well advanced within TAFE NSW. Last year, following extensive consultation with staff and unions, TAFE NSW successfully negotiated a new enterprise agreement for teachers. This agreement includes a trial of new flexible education support roles, complementing existing teaching roles as well as a new head teacher leadership role. This trial opens up new possibilities in the way TAFE can deliver its services. TAFE NSW has also restructured its head office. This restructure devolves more responsibilities to institutes while still supporting front-line staff. It is critical that TAFE NSW completes its transition into a more modern and responsive organisation that delivers value to individuals as well as to the public.

TAFE NSW has to operate efficiently, and to suggest otherwise simply does not make sense to the taxpayers of New South Wales. We have moved beyond the time when budgets were simply broad targets. No Government can waste taxpayer funds. Along with all New South Wales government agencies, TAFE NSW has met and continues to meet its efficiency targets. We understand that every dollar Government spends is a dollar that the public will have to pay in taxes, or \$2 that children will have to pay in taxes when the debt has to be repaid. Like the private sector and government agencies, the Government has a budget it has to meet. TAFE should be no different: It should be accountable for its budget because it is spending other people's money. Smart and Skilled is ensuring TAFE has the flexibility to compete in that environment.

TAFE NSW also has to deliver a quality service otherwise it will not be competitive. That is why TAFE NSW rightly regards the students and employers to whom it provides services as its customers; they are key stakeholders in the Smart and Skilled package. These are customers who have a choice as well as high expectations. During this reform period and into the future this Government has set clear targets and priorities for TAFE NSW as its public provider that support NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One. That is why I reiterate to members opposite, as well as to staff in TAFE institutes, The Greens and unions in New South Wales that the changes we are making to TAFE will support TAFE's future success in operating in a more contestable environment. TAFE NSW is meeting the challenge and is actively preparing for the next step in competition. Competition is not new to TAFE institutes, which daily compete aggressively for students and win business based on the excellence and professionalism they continually demonstrate.

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

VISITORS

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis): I welcome to the gallery students who are visiting the Parliament as part of community celebrations for the National Week of Deaf People 2014. The students are from the following schools: Kogarah High School, Penshurst High School, Cromer Public School, Chertsey Primary School, St Ives High School, Auburn North Public School, Homebush Boys High School and Strathfield Girls High School. The students are guests of the Hon. Helen Westwood, a member of the other place. I welcome them to the New South Wales Parliament and I hope they enjoy their visit.

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

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.21 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the contribution of community legal centres in providing free legal advice and assistance to people and communities facing economic, social and cultural disadvantage across New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises the hard work and dedication to human rights, social justice and equitable laws and legal systems of community legal centre staff and volunteers, including solicitors, barristers, social workers and law students.

- (3) Acknowledges that through community legal centres professional solicitors and barristers, law students and large law firms are able to provide pro bono services to many disadvantaged people.
- (4) Notes that community legal centres work to achieve systemic change through community legal education, and law and policy reform.
- (5) Notes the importance of State and Federal funding to community legal centres.

Community legal centres are independent organisations that provide free legal advice and assistance to economically, socially and culturally disadvantaged and marginalised people and communities, and help them to develop the skills to advocate for themselves. Through law and policy reform and legal education, community legal centres also advocate for human rights, social justice and a better environment. Community legal centres are different to legal firms in that they develop relationships with communities and try to develop long-term solutions to help their advancement. Community legal centres are accredited by the national peak body, the National Association of Community Legal Centres.

Centres have paid staffers, usually lawyers, social workers and community educators, but they also engage solicitors, barristers, law students and social workers on a volunteer basis. This links professionals with the disadvantaged in the community, providing them with opportunities to provide pro bono services and strengthen their communities. Individual services include information and referral, legal advice, legal casework and representation in targeted areas of the law. These services are usually free, although sometimes a small fee is charged. Services can be provided over the phone or after hours.

Community legal centres work with governments, Legal Aid and the private legal profession to get the best outcome for their clients. There is a high demand for individual services, with many centres receiving thousands of requests every year. Clients are usually selected based on disadvantage and public interest, and even under these strict criteria many eligible and vulnerable people are turned away due to a lack of resources. Legal education services are often provided to particular communities. For example, Redfern Legal Centre produced a guide for boarding house residents explaining their legal rights, and a repair kit for Housing NSW tenants. The Inner City Legal Centre has developed a number of fact sheets for its communities including on police powers and drug searches, and gay, lesbian and transgender discrimination.

These tools help communities exercise their rights and access benefits they are eligible for, and establish realistic expectations from government departments and authorities—something that benefits both sides. There are 39 community legal centres across the State providing a range of different specialist and general services. Operating out of my electorate are the Arts Law Centre of Australia, the Australian Centre for Disability Law, the Court Support Scheme, the Financial Rights Legal Centre, the HIV/AIDS Legal Centre, the Immigration Advice and Rights Centre, the Inner City Legal Centre, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the Public Interest Law Clearing House, the Refugee Advice and Casework Service, Tenants NSW, the Aged-care Rights Service Incorporating Older Persons Legal Service and the Welfare Rights Centre.

Generalist centres provide individual assistance on legal matters such as compensation, tenancy, apprehended violence orders, banking and finance, children and young people, consumer rights, crime, employment, environment, family law, housing, development, human rights, immigration, neighbours, welfare, transport, health, wills and estates. Some centres also target services to specific communities such as women and young people, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] community, and homeless persons. Community legal centres work with and assist the most vulnerable in the community and have knowledge about how laws impact them. Hence, a vital part of their work is their involvement in law reform and public policy development and advocacy.

The Inner City Legal Centre played an integral role working with police, Mardi Gras representatives and the government in resolving tension between the LGBTI community and police over reports of heavy-handed policing during last year's Mardi Gras festival, and helped to improve relations and policing for the past and future festivals. Tenants NSW lobbied successive governments for laws to provide basic safeguards and access to justice for residents of boarding houses. The effective campaign, which engaged various stakeholders and advocates, spanned more than a decade and led this Government to enact boarding house legislation. The campaign stemmed from casework with boarders, which revealed their lack of rights.

The Redfern Legal Centre raised serious concerns about the impact of Millers Point housing sell-offs on tenants and is providing them with assistance in their relocation. Many centres raised concerns about how move-on orders would impact on people with a mental illness, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

people—concerns now confirmed by the Ombudsman—and how retrospective cuts to victims compensation would impact vulnerable people. I, like other members of this House, rely on this advocacy and advice on public policy matters. I often work with community legal centres when new laws are proposed and I write submissions advocating for reform. The public interest work of community legal centres must not be restricted; they play a vital role in law reform, contributing to government inquiries and campaigning to bring issues to government attention. They lobby to fix unfair and ineffective laws and policies, and address social issues affecting members of the community who are experiencing disadvantage.

I also acknowledge private practitioners, both barristers and solicitors, who provide pro bono legal and practical assistance to many legal centres and their clients. For the HIV/Aids Legal Centre, practitioners from firms, including DLA Piper, and Gilbert + Tobin, provide vital assistance including one-off advice on client matters, the ongoing sharing of expertise, the provision of meeting rooms for events, and pro bono assistance with the design and layout of various publications and resources. Almost all centres receive funding from a variety of sources including State and Federal governments and philanthropic organisations. For the 2012-13 financial year the Public Purpose Fund provided \$5.3 million to community legal centres in New South Wales, accounting for 28 per cent of their total funding. This component is vital to their existence and effective operation, and must be continued. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [11.28 a.m.]: I commend the member for Sydney for bringing this matter forward for debate. It is very important to recognise the significant role that community legal centres play in assisting people in the community who face economic, social and cultural disadvantage across New South Wales. Community legal centres in New South Wales do not provide legal advice to members of the public; they assist people seeking legal advice by referring them to an appropriate legal service provider. Community legal centres are independent community organisations providing an equitable and accessible legal service. They work for the public interest, particularly for the disadvantaged and marginalised in the community. Not only do community legal centres provide legal advice and assistance; they also encourage and enable people to develop skills to be their own advocates.

Community legal centres are important community organisations that provide free legal advice and related services to people in the community facing economic, social and cultural disadvantage. Community legal centres are able to offer effective and creative solutions to legal problems based on their experience with their community. While providing legal services to individuals, community legal centres also work beyond the individual. They undertake community development, community legal education and law reform projects that are based on client need. Community legal centres are located throughout Australia in urban, regional and remote locations.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the socially disadvantaged are able to access legal assistance. In 2013-14 community legal centres across New South Wales assisted more than 54,700 people. They provided in excess of 69,000 pieces of advice to clients, opened more than 9,200 new cases and conducted more than 1,500 community legal education programs. The hard work and dedication of those working within the centres is recognised and appreciated by the Government. Community legal centres harness the energy and expertise of thousands of volunteers, solicitors, barristers, law students and others working with staff to provide legal services.

Community legal centres are committed to collaborating with the Government and Legal Aid to ensure the best outcomes for their clients and the justice system in Australia. There are about 200 community legal centres nationally, including about 39 in New South Wales. About 20 centres receive very little or no funding and are staffed entirely by volunteers. All other centres receive funds from different sources, including the State and Federal governments. Community legal centres offer a range of legal and related services to their client community, including information and referral, advice on legal matters, legal casework and representation, community legal education, and law reform and public policy development and advocacy.

These services are usually offered free, although some community legal centres provide fee-based training. Specialist community legal centres concentrate on a particular area of law or target a specific group, offering advice, assistance and legal education to individuals and organisations. In New South Wales this includes matters such as credit and debit, environmental law, welfare rights, mental health, disability discrimination, tenancy, immigration, women, et cetera. All the services are confidential. Some centres go beyond that and provide advice on apprehended violence orders, banking and finance, children and young people, and crime and employment.

About 20 minutes ago I received a call from a constituent in my electorate who has a tenancy problem. I had no option but to refer my constituent to the community legal centre for advice. I am pleased that the services provided to the community are much needed. The New South Wales Government is committed, first and foremost, to ensuring that there is government funding for the Legal Aid sector. Community legal centres use State funding for activities undertaken in accordance with the New South Wales principles for funding of legal assistance, including law reform and policy work. The New South Wales Government appreciates the work of community legal centres, which provide free legal services and assistance to the people of New South Wales who require it. The Government is fully committed to funding community legal centres.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [11.35 a.m.]: I am delighted to participate in this debate and support the motion moved by the member for Sydney. As shadow Attorney General I indicate that the Opposition supports the motion as well. I have a political and personal commitment to community legal centres. A number of years ago—probably far too many for me to look at with any relaxation—I was a volunteer at the Redfern Legal Centre as a law student. I remember attending meetings at Marrickville Town Hall that led to the formation of the Marrickville Legal Centre. Those meetings featured Darryl Malden and Phil Bolten. In a sense, community legal centres are the unsung heroes of the legal sector. Anyone who knows anything about the legal sector knows that the most significant challenge it faces is affordability of services.

Community legal centres, in conjunction with pro bono solicitors, do an extraordinary amount of work that makes that position better than it might be. They are well short of being satisfactory but the legal sector would be considerably worse than it is currently without community legal centres. Certainly, the legal needs survey released about a year ago indicated the level of unmet legal need in this State. A number of aspects of community legal centres are important. The aspect that particularly attracts me is that of advocacy. I have had the opportunity to deal with several community legal centres since I have been the shadow Attorney. I have met with and visited the Hunter Community Legal Centre, the Illawarra Legal Centre, the Kingsford Legal Centre, and the north and north-west community legal service. The south-west Sydney legal centre is located in the same building as my electorate office.

I have also had the opportunity to deal with a number of other legal centres, such as the Public Interest Advocacy Centre [PIAC] and Women's Legal Services. The aspect of that work that has been most valuable to me is their advocacy. Indeed, some of the work they have done around domestic violence, sexual assault and victims compensation has been incredibly important both in terms of the issues they raise and the material they provide to members of Parliament. Anyone who reads the speeches of Labor members opposing the Government's appalling changes to victims compensation will clearly see some of the material we received from community legal centres.

Advocacy is particularly important, and in that respect I note the appalling attacks by some Government members on one community legal centre, the Environmental Defenders Office [EDO]. That office was the subject of sustained attack by various Government members because it was fulfilling one of its core functions, that is, advocacy. The Government's attack on the EDO and that community legal centre was a disgrace. Because of that, in 2013 the Federal Government—when Labor was in power—moved a not-for-profit sector freedom to advocate bill which would prevent funding being prohibited because non-government organisations, including community legal centres, were involved in advocacy. That is an entirely sensible and proper position.

Indeed, I indicate to the House and more generally that Labor, if it is elected next year, is committed to introducing a State version of that legislation, a not-for-profit sector freedom-to-advocate bill. It is insane to have organisations as knowledgeable and sensible as community legal centres being prevented from giving advocacy because they know things that other people do not know. As they are at the coalface they get a bird's eye view of a whole range of problems. Frankly, taking them out of the advocacy role makes the process of governance much less effective. Another issue that is significant in the sector is the comparative lack of funding. I have been known to say that they do it on the smell of an oily rag.

A study undertaken a couple of years ago indicated that the professional wages for solicitors in that sector were considerably lower than those in the rest of the legal sector. Clearly, that puts them at a disadvantage in trying to compete for people to work in the sector. That needs some sort of sensible solution in the long term. I also note the significant role of legal practitioners who devote significant pro bono time to this area. They are an important part of making community legal centres effective.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [11.39 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by my friend the member for Sydney because as a local member of Parliament I know that community legal centres

often are the place of last resort. We know that community legal centres support those most disadvantaged—those who are facing economic hardship and are most in need. The centres do outstanding work in all communities throughout the State. I acknowledge that one of my own staff has taken leave from my office to go to work in a community legal centre to develop valuable practical experience which will stand her in good stead in the legal profession well into the future.

Community legal centres aim to be innovative, effective and dynamic in the support services they provide to individuals and communities. Their assistance to community legal aid centres and individual centres is important in ensuring all people in New South Wales can access legal advice and support. Not only do these centres provide free legal advice, but in 2013-14 they conducted more than 1,500 community legal education programs. Additionally they opened more than 9,200 new cases in the course of providing legal advice to more than 69,900 clients.

In its 2014-15 budget, this Government committed to fully fund community legal centres. This funding, which is received from the Commonwealth and New South Wales governments through the Public Purpose Fund is more than \$17.11 million. It includes more than \$8 million in State and Public Purpose funding. Funding for community legal centres through the Public Purpose Fund will go to the 36 community legal centres across the State to support their incredibly valuable and important work. Those community legal centres can be found servicing the people of New South Wales from the Central Coast to the Far West Community Legal Centre, from Lismore to Dubbo, Nowra to Armidale. The Government acknowledges the hardworking staff at community legal centres and their continuing dedication in assisting very vulnerable people throughout New South Wales.

In addition to funding administered through Legal Aid NSW, direct, one-off funding of \$506,200 was granted to four community legal centres in New South Wales for 2014-15. This Government notes the contribution of community legal centres in providing free legal advice and assistance to the people and communities of New South Wales who are facing economic, social or cultural disadvantage. This Government has ensured that the vital services these centres provide will continue to be available across New South Wales through funding from the Public Purpose Fund.

Community legal centres provide outstanding service to those most in need. Often they are a place of last resort for some people with nowhere else to turn. The centres do important work. Certainly as a local member I rely on community legal centres and that is why I am proud to be part of a Government that is continuing to fund and support them to enable them to continue to do the outstanding work that is relied on by so many in our community. I commend the member for Sydney for standing up for community legal centres and I encourage all members of this House to support the outstanding work undertaken by the volunteers—the men and women who work in community legal centres, which provide an invaluable service to people in New South Wales.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I welcome to the public gallery the Curtis Park Arboretum Group, guests of the member for Kiama.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [11.43 a.m.]: I congratulate the member for Sydney for moving this motion. I acknowledge the contributions of members representing the electorates of Granville, Liverpool and Hornsby who have all indicated strong support for the motion. Why would they not? I am sure every member of this House supports community legal centres because we all deal with them directly in our communities and refer people for whom the centres are a last resort. I often fall back on community legal centres and am rarely let down by them in providing assistance to people in need.

Community legal centres are essential in ensuring equal access to our justice system. They guarantee an equal right to arms for those unable to afford the high cost of lawyers and in doing so they guarantee our fundamental human rights. Community legal centres provide essential information and advice for the disadvantaged and marginalised in our communities. These services include information and referral, advice on legal matters, legal casework and representation in targeted areas of law, community legal education, law reform and public policy development on issues as wide ranging as mental health, transport, immigration and the environment, to name but a few. In order to meet community needs, legal centres may have telephone access hours, when individuals can call the centre for advice, or they may have after-work and lunchtime drop-in sessions.

The University of Newcastle's legal centre, which serves many of my constituents and where many students in my electorate volunteer, runs Law on the Beach, which is a free legal advice clinic at Newcastle Surf

Life Saving Club during January and February, specifically aimed at young adults. This is an innovative idea which helps promote accessibility to legal services to young people who would otherwise be unable to afford them. The endless hard work of the many volunteers who give up their time to help those less fortunate than themselves is truly admirable. These community relationships, harvesting the knowledge of local legal volunteers, make the community legal centres vital organisations that are ideally situated to respond to the evolving needs of their community. It makes the community legal centres unique, capable of adding to community development, education and even law reform projects. They make our legal system and our communities stronger and more inclusive.

The emphasis on pro-bono initiatives at universities and in regional law firms helps ensure the longevity of these legal centres and must be commended. Through these centres, volunteers are encouraging others to develop the skills to become their own advocates and stand up for their rights, an advocacy role that cannot be understated. These legal centres need our continued support. The importance of State funding cannot be overstated. Without the continued support of the Government in the provision of essential funding to these centres, we can only expect access to vital legal services to flounder. Their vision is clear and is central to a healthy community—to create an empowered community that values equal access to justice and upholds and respects human rights. I thank the member for Sydney for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I trust that the State Government will continue its support and give further consideration to how it can help strengthen support for community legal centres in New South Wales.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [11.47 a.m.]: I also commend the member for Sydney for moving this motion that recognises an important contributor to our society, community legal centres. Community legal centres are independent community organisations that provide accessible legal services to many people in our community. Community legal centres in New South Wales work for the public interest, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalised people, and communities. They encourage and enable people to develop skills, to be their own advocates to some extent, and they promote human rights, social justice and a better environment by advocating access to justice and equitable laws and legal systems. Centres promote change through community legal education and law and policy reform.

Like many members in this Parliament I have a legal background. The shadow Attorney General indicated he had worked at a community legal centre in the past and I am sure that quite a number of members who are community spirited have also done so. Indeed, 25 years ago on graduating in law, I worked—despite representing these days a relatively leafy and, dare I say, more affluent area—at Newtown Community Legal Centre as a volunteer. In fact, that was during a year when I worked full-time as a volunteer for the Refugee Advice and Casework Service through a church-based sponsored organisation or program.

It gave me great personal satisfaction to work, albeit in a volunteer capacity, in that environment helping people who unfortunately did not have the advantages that many of us have in this Parliament—the advantages of education, financial resources and even the ability to communicate effectively in English. As a parliamentarian I commend the work of community legal centres. I acknowledge that in addition to New South Wales and Federal government funding for individual community legal centres there is a peak body called Community Legal Centres NSW, which is also funded by the New South Wales Government, and a public purpose fund.

The organisation has various objectives, including maintaining a functional, collaborative and effective network of CLCs in New South Wales, developing, preserving and promoting a clear identity for CLCs, building the organisational capacity of CLCs to effectively deliver quality services, advocating for appropriate law reform and effectively promoting respect for human rights, improving the funding for CLCs—which is an ongoing challenge under any government—increasing access to justice and legal services and operating an efficient, effective and best practice office. It is important in relatively small organisations like community legal services to have a network operating where they can share experiences and hopefully operate to best practice because the danger of being a small organisation is that the efficiencies, effectiveness and good practices experienced in some centres may not be the reality to the same extent as in others. I commend the member for Sydney and the motion.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [11.51 a.m.], by leave: I am happy to make a contribution to debate on the motion of the member for Sydney. Community legal centres provide free legal advice and assistance to people facing economic, social and cultural disadvantage across New South Wales. I commend the member for Sydney for bringing forward this motion. We have a wonderful community legal centre in the electorate of Wollongong. It is an independently operated, not-for-profit, community-based legal centre based in Warrawong.

It provides free legal services to the public by telephone, at the centre and at a range of outreach locations. The centre focuses on helping people living with disadvantage and people with special needs. It is one of 200 community legal centres across Australia.

The Illawarra Legal Centre Incorporated opened its doors in 1985 as a direct result of community action and support. The centre's sole staff member, a part-time solicitor, was assisted by a local solicitor to develop its inaugural advice roster. This enabled the centre to provide free legal advice to the local community and in particular to those who had little hope of accessing affordable legal help. The Illawarra Legal Centre is now one of around 200 independent, non-profit community organisations across Australia, all of whom are members of the National Association of Community Legal Centres. All offer free legal services including referral, advice and assistance to more than 350,000 people each year. The centre has grown substantially since 1985 but its primary focus remains on helping those living with disadvantage and marginalisation.

I have a son who is legally qualified and who for some time was on the list at Port Kembla Children's Court to provide pro bono advice and assistance. My son is Mark Christopher Hay and I place on record how much I think about his contribution and how very proud of him I am. The Illawarra Legal Centre maintains services relevant to the diverse community of the Illawarra and surrounding areas. It provides advice, advocacy and/or referral on a full range of legal matters. It undertakes policy analysis, reviews existing laws and lobbies in relation to law reform and legal processes that affect the rights of those in our community. It develops and implements community legal education programs that are both proactive and responsive to community needs.

Participants in the centre are Sharon Callahan, coordinator of the Children's Court assistance scheme; Philip Dicalfs, principal solicitor; Caroline Turner, child support solicitor; Warren Wheeler, staff representative; Ian Turton, welfare rights solicitor; Judy Stubbs, chairperson; and John Littrich, deputy chair. I acknowledge all the workers, volunteers and pro bono solicitors. I congratulate them on the wonderful work they do in the region for those who need the assistance most. This State would be a much sadder place, certainly in the Illawarra and my electorate of Wollongong, if it was not for the great commitment and contribution of people such as these.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [11.55 a.m.], by leave: I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Shellharbour arboretum group, which is in the gallery today. The House is debating a motion moved by the member for Sydney on community legal centres. This morning members have the opportunity to bring motions to this Parliament on issues important to them. I commend the member for Sydney for bringing forward this motion about people who make an enormous contribution to our community. Often when people are in search of a lawyer they are at their lowest ebb. They need assistance and often that assistance can come at extraordinary cost. Community legal centres provide important advice and engage in educational programs that are essential to many people who need that assistance.

In all the time that I have been either a member of Parliament or a councillor I have found that the people who work at community legal centres are not just doing a job; they are doing something they feel very passionate about, whatever their area of law, be it providing advice on financial matters, consumer protection, local council or other matters. People who work in this system are passionate about the people they support and assist because they understand the difficulties faced by many people who have interaction with the legal system. The member for Wollongong referred to a number of organisations operating in the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven and I am proud of every single one of those lawyers and organisations that work so diligently to support our community every day.

As someone who works with community legal centres across my electorate I express my thanks and gratitude for their support to people who need it when it is required. I commend the member for Sydney for bringing forward this motion. It is apt that as lawmakers, as people who pass the laws in this place, we commend those people who are charged with representing those who come into contact or who interact with the law on a daily basis. I commend the member for Sydney and those people doing great work across community legal centres in our electorates and in the electorate of the member for Sydney.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.58 a.m.], in reply: I, too, welcome our guests from the Shoalhaven to the Parliament and indeed to the electorate of Sydney. I hope you enjoy your lunch. I thank the member for Granville, the shadow Attorney General, the member for Hornsby, the member for Lake Macquarie, the member for Wollongong, the member for Davidson and the member for Kiama for their contributions on this important motion. As the Minister for Local Government is present at the table, I acknowledge the great support that many local governments provide to legal centres throughout New South Wales, particularly the City of Sydney. We have heard from all sides of the New South Wales Parliament about the important role that legal centres play in advocacy, in supporting vulnerable people, in policy reform

and in helping members of Parliament and their staff with their roles and with legislation. I call on the State and Federal governments to increase funding to further strengthen the great work of these legal centres. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

SHELLHARBOUR CITY HUB PROJECT

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.01 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Calls on the member for Shellharbour to explain why the member, through question on notice No. 5148, sought the names of the individuals and community organisations who sent correspondence, signed petitions or made telephone calls to the Minister for Local Government in relation to the proposed City Hub project.
- (2) Calls on the member for Shellharbour to stand up to the Australian Labor Party members of Shellharbour City Council and demand an extensive consultation process for the City Hub project.

For the benefit of the House I will read onto the record question on notice No. 5148 asked by the member for Shellharbour. The member is present in the Chamber and will be able to respond to this motion. The member asked the Minister for Local Government:

Has he received any correspondence in the form of letters, petitions, emails, and telephone calls from any individual or community organisation in relation to the proposed Shellharbour City Hub project?

If so, what are the names of the individuals and community organisations?

Has he or the Division of Local Government been requested to provide any funding for the project?

If so, by whom?

Can he confirm that the only involvement by the Government in this project has been an evaluation undertaken as part of the Treasury's Gateway Review process?

I thought the days of Labor dominance and intimidation in Shellharbour had ended but clearly they are continuing with this most extraordinary question put on the parliamentary *Business Paper* by the member for Shellharbour concerning the city hub project. To explain to the House what the Shellharbour City Hub project is, I will need to give members some detail. It is a \$57 million new council chamber—that nobody asked for—in the Shellharbour city area. I can imagine the discussions at the policy branch of the Shellharbour Labor Party.

Three people would be sitting around in the Kremlin saying, "What are we going to come up with? What sort of things does the community need? Do we need new roads? No, we do not need new roads. Do we need better footpaths? No, we do not need better footpaths. Do we need better community facilities? No, we need a new council office block. Of course we do. That is exactly what the community wants \$57 million of their money spent on." Those same Labor Party members will say that it meets their key criteria: spending other people's money; plunging the community into debt; and providing something that nobody wants. Tick, tick, tick from the Labor Party in Shellharbour.

Mr Mark Coure: Economic mismanagement.

Mr GARETH WARD: Economic mismanagement, as the member for Oatley points out. Then, because the community has not been consulted, people become upset. The Labor Party in Shellharbour, which controls the council, is shocked. How could people dare challenge its dominance, control and wisdom in decision-making? When people are upset they write letters. What does the Labor member for Shellharbour do? She has the temerity and audacity to use the *Business Paper* to solicit the names, addresses and telephone numbers of those who have opposed Labor's grand council project. What an extraordinary thing. It gets even better in relation to this particular project. The member for Shellharbour is reported by Alex Arnold in an article dated 22 July in the *Illawarra Mercury* as saying:

This issue is entirely a matter for the seven elected Shellharbour councillors to determine.

I can see the reasons to support it and the reasons to oppose it, but whatever I think is irrelevant.

The member states that it is a council project but then uses parliamentary privilege to solicit names and addresses. For what purpose? Clearly, the Labor masters in Shellharbour have said to the member, "We want those people. Give us those names and addresses. We want to knock on the door and pay them a visit and say, 'Why you are objecting to our grand project?'" They want to build a new Kremlin in Shellharbour. The member for Shellharbour tells the *Illawarra Mercury* on 8 April that the Parliament and New South Wales Government have no involvement in the proposal but then says it is a matter for the councillors. She cannot have it both ways. Either the State has no role or the member for Shellharbour is abusing her role. Which is it? If further evidence were required that the member's question was anything more than an Australian Labor Party [ALP] information-gathering exercise, her own words prove it.

If the New South Wales Government has no role in the project, as the member maintains, for what purpose was she seeking the names and addresses of objectors? I would submit that this is an attempt at old-style ALP bullying tactics at its worst. It is high time that the member was exposed for her abuse of parliamentary privilege. I will not be intimidated by ALP members on Shellharbour City Council and I will ensure that the right questions are asked in relation to this project. I am calling on the member for Shellharbour to explain why she sought to obtain this information, why she needed it and what she was going to use it for. If she cannot adequately explain why, the House needs to ask for what purpose did she want this information? Mark Jones, a fantastic local who has done a lot of work on the project, in a letter to council stated:

Council's business case estimates they will have 215 indoor staff by 2016.

The current hub design only allocates 70 car parking spaces for staff.

There will be 215 staff and 70 car parking spaces. That makes sense; I can see the logic! Further, he stated:

The rest of the staff will arrive for work early in the morning, occupying most of the parking at the Gadu Lane car park, causing access issues for businesses in the area.

Parking on this site is already running at high occupancy, especially during school holidays and peak periods. More commercial development is also expected around the vacant sites in this area in the not too distant future.

As a result the JRPP placed a condition on the approval that the design must include an additional 24 parking spaces. They stated that Council's design did not even meet their own planning guidelines for parking.

Their incompetence in not providing sufficient parking in the original design will now cost ratepayers more money, due to expensive consultants' fees that will be involved in the redesign ...

Parking still could be an issue when there is a function being held at the 350 seat auditorium: 350 Auditorium...

No-one has explained whether there is a business case for that. There will be administration building visitors, a cafe, a museum and car parking, as well as other dining rooms and meeting rooms. Nobody has ever been asked whether they want this project. I am asking the question.

Mrs Barbara Perry: It is a council issue.

Mr GARETH WARD: I am glad the member for Auburn interjects. That was the question the member for Shellharbour was asking. The member used parliamentary privilege to ask for the names and addresses of people who did not agree with Labor's grand vision and grand design. The member for Auburn might ask that question of the member sitting next to her. She has used this place in this regard. I will stand up for transparency and accountability but I will not see a member use this place to intimidate people who disagree with the ALP. This is not the way a democracy should be run. People have a right to their views and that includes the people of Shellharbour who object to this project.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.08 p.m.]: The motion moved by the member for Kiama at best is extraordinary. I take the opportunity to welcome our friends from the Shoalhaven. Welcome to Parliament and enjoy your lunch at the member for Kiama's expense. I had thought that the member might think better of this motion and withdraw it from the *Business Paper* rather than waste the time of this place with student sandpit politics, for which the member for Kiama is renowned. The member for Kiama likes to think of himself as having a finger in every pie in the Illawarra. It now extends to his believing that he can dictate to me how I ask a Minister in this Government questions about a specific local government project in my electorate which has been the source of some controversy.

As the House may be aware, the Shellharbour City Hub project is set down for debate on 13 November. I will leave my far more substantial remarks on the project and the 10,000 signature petition opposing it for that

occasion. The member for Kiama, in his usual bombastic fashion, sent this motion to the *Illawarra Mercury* several months ago for a bit of media coverage. The member for Kiama is clearly suffering from that well-known political disease, relevance deprivation syndrome. Unless the member for Kiama is in the media at least four times a week he gets twitchy. The member for Kiama undermines the faceless Minister for the Illawarra by leaking the Minister's announcements to press before they are formally made to ensure that he gets a run in the media. The departed Gough Whitlam once said of Billy McMahon that he was "Tiberius with a telephone." It is an apt description of the member for Kiama.

The member for Kiama told the local Illawarra media by press release all those months ago that he would "consider referring Ms Watson's use of parliamentary privilege to the Legislative Assembly's parliamentary privileges and ethics committee". So seized of the matter has the member for Kiama been that he has never done so. That is not surprising. In fact, I alerted the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly to the member's stated intentions in a letter dated 14 April. I asked her to provide me with her professional advice on whether a member has ever referred another member to the privileges and ethics committee on the basis of a question on notice being directed to a Minister. The Clerk diligently researched my request and on 6 May wrote to me stating:

In response to your questions as to whether any Member has ever referred another Member to the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics in relation to a Question on Notice, I can advise that no such reference has ever occurred.

The Clerk went on to say:

The evident fact that your question on notice has been published in the Questions and Answers Paper, and answered by the Minister, is a clear indication that your question accords with the rules and practices of the Legislative Assembly for written questions.

The umpire has spoken. I then responded to the member for Kiama stating:

I could not care less whether you refer me to the Privileges and Ethics Committee or not. You may do as you please. I am not, and will not ever be answerable to you, or be required to ever provide you with any explanation as to any question, or representation I may make to Ministers.

That remains my response to the member's provocative, silly motion. I can understand why the member for Kiama is deeply embarrassed by the Shellharbour City Hub proposal. He has tried to use this issue to claim that he is fighting for the community on a local government issue, on which he has absolutely no say or influence. He is the poster boy for coward politicians, presenting to the electorate as all caring without taking any responsibility. Yesterday he was trying to fit up the Minister for Transport with regard to train carriages. He has more front than David Jones.

The member for Kiama and the Liberal Party try to make ground at the expense of Labor Party representatives on Shellharbour council. In fact, the council has only two Labor councillors. The remaining five are a dog's breakfast of four Independents, one of whom is a former Liberal, and Liberal Councillor Kellie Marsh. Whenever this project has come before the council for a vote only two councillors have opposed it: Councillor Peter Moran and Councillor Kellie Marsh. The rest have voted in favour. Councillor Marsh has also been the mayor. Indeed, she has a most interesting history in regard to the Shellharbour City Hub project that she and the member for Kiama try to airbrush. I will say far more about that during the debate on the petition signed by 10,000 petitioners. I draw the attention of the House to a media release issued by Councillor Marsh, as mayor, on 26 April 2012, in which she states gushingly:

This is an exciting project that requires the community's consideration at various phases of its planning.

Her press release goes on to say:

This development will form the heart of our city centre and it is vital that we create a complex that will meet the needs of our community now and into the future.

Councillor Marsh then told the *Illawarra Mercury* on 22 August 2014 that:

I was rapt to get it on the table but at the time I didn't know what it would encompass.

The Liberal's Kellie Marsh kicked off this entire process in apparent ignorance of the project's details in April 2012. It is no wonder that the Liberal Party has refused to endorse her preselection as its candidate against me at

the next election—and I do not blame them. In the past, the member for Kiama and Councillor Marsh have been photographed together as though they were the Fred and Ginger of Shellharbour. Nowadays, he recoils from her as Dracula would from a wooden stake. This motion is one of the most juvenile I have seen in this place over the past four years, but the member for Kiama is known for never extending himself beyond the mediocre.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I draw members' attention to Standing Order 73, which states:

Imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on Members of either House are disorderly other than by substantive motion.

Debates are not an opportunity to conduct slanging matches. As colourful as members might like to be, they should respect other members in this House.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [12.15 p.m.]: Does Anna Watson support the Shellharbour City Hub? Does she support spending \$57 million on the project?

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: I ask that the member for Oatley be directed to use the member for Shellharbour's correct title.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I ask the member for Oatley to refer to the member by her correct title.

Mr MARK COURE: This is a huge project for Shellharbour and the local community. Does the local member support it? That \$57 million could be better spent on roads, footpaths, libraries, parks and so on. The list is endless. We do not know whether the local member supports the project. A petition has been signed by 10,000 locals opposing the project; most of them probably live in the electorate of Shellharbour. My reading of copious media reports on the issue suggests that the member for Shellharbour did not want to table that petition but was forced to do so.

Mr Gareth Ward: Shamed.

Mr MARK COURE: Yes, she was shamed into presenting it by locals opposing this huge and expensive development. As the Minister for Local Government will confirm, \$57 million is a huge amount for any council and it would be better spent on roads, footpaths—

Mr Gareth Ward: The basics.

Mr MARK COURE: Yes. That is what councils are about. Most members have experience in local government and we know that \$57 million is a lot of money for any council regardless of its size. It is a shame that the member for Shellharbour is playing politics. This project, which is opposed by many in the community and some councillors, including Councillor Marsh, was approved despite a lack of consultation. We still do not know what the member for Shellharbour thinks about it. She has 5½ months until the election and her constituents will need to know what she thinks of it before then.

Mr Gareth Ward: She is on the fence.

Mr MARK COURE: Yes, she is. I acknowledge the hard work that the member for Kiama and the member for South Coast do in the Illawarra in contrast to the members representing the seats of Shellharbour, Wollongong and Keira, who are absent from their electorates. I support the motion.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [12.19 p.m.]: I am surprised that this blatantly personal and hostile motion was allowed to be moved. I support the member for Shellharbour and protest in the strongest possible terms the moving of the motion by the member for Kiama. This motion was moved not to further any policy goal or policy agenda for the Illawarra but simply to get the member for Shellharbour's goat. It is a tactic that is beneath this Chamber and the member for Kiama. Frankly, it is a waste of our taxpayers' good money.

However, there is a substantive matter here to engage with. It is a member's duty to engage with her constituents and to find out what is going on in her electorate. That is what the member for Shellharbour was doing, as far as I can see. She was trying to find out who had engaged with the issue in question, and the

member is permitted to do that. There is nothing wrong with that; in fact, it is to be commended. The member was trying to take the pulse of her electorate so she can act in her constituents' best interests, which is more than could be said for what is happening on the other side of the Chamber.

It is not the duty of a State member of Parliament to interfere with the processes of local government, as the member for Kiama seems to call for. The city hub project, to the best of my knowledge, has gone through the usual processes for a development of this scale. On 20 October, it was reported that the project had been approved by the Joint Regional Planning Panel pending conditions. A 10,000-signature petition, I believe, is coming up for debate in this place in November. That is appropriate and how the process is supposed to work. Shellharbour City Council general manager Michael Willis said:

With any development approval there is likely to be conditions, and we will now look at the best approach to meeting each condition.

Before the panel, 11 residents spoke against the development. Is this the sort of consultation the member for Kiama is calling for? He should be glad, as I am, that residents voiced their concerns and were heard by the panel. Issues surrounding the project may have to be debated. I am not from Shellharbour, so it is hardly my place to comment on specific issues. I also find it fascinating that the member for Kiama is so interested in consultation on this project while his Government is content to go ahead with the truncation of the Newcastle inner-city rail line despite widespread community opposition in the Hunter. Where is the consultation on that much-vaunted project by this Government, or does the member simply hold the Government to a different set of standards when it is politically convenient for him to do so? I again assert my opposition to this bullying motion. It is unfair, nasty and well beneath the standards that the people of the Illawarra and New South Wales expect from their elected representatives. Shame!

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.23 p.m.]: I speak to the debate on the motion moved by the member for Kiama. I have no knowledge of the local issue that has led to members fighting each other, but I am concerned that a member of Parliament would bring a matter before the House questioning another member's right to ask a question on notice about a public matter. The motion in effect is being moved by a third party to the question. As the debate has shown, the member for Shellharbour has asked the Minister for Local Government a question seeking information. It is for the Minister for Local Government, if he so wishes, to answer the question by saying the information is protected by privacy regulations, that it is against freedom of information legislation, the Government Information (Public Access) Act or whatever safeguards are in legislation about the provision of information.

It is not for a third party, being a neighbouring member of Parliament, to use the question to attack another member of this House and that member's right to place a question seeking information on the *Business Paper*. The member for Kiama is on a sticky wicket for moving a motion questioning a member's right to ask a question or to make a speech in Parliament about a matter of concern to an electorate or constituents in an electorate. When members have debates in their local communities, the issues can be raised in private members' statements, in speeches on legislation and in press releases. Challenging a member's right to ask a question and threatening to have the matter referred to the privileges committee is unprecedented, as indicated by the member for Shellharbour. The tenor of this motion would set a terrible precedent. I indicate to the House that the Opposition will vote against this motion.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.25 p.m.], in reply: I am not surprised that Labor members are defending their colleague on this shameful abuse of parliamentary process. I will address some of the comments, starting with those of the member for Mount Druitt, who raised concerns he has about the use of parliamentary privilege. Just as the member for Shellharbour has used parliamentary privilege and asked questions, I am asking questions of the member. That is entirely appropriate given the fact that the member is asking for personal details of people who have "dared"—according to the Labor Party—to object to the council's proposal. That is entirely inappropriate. I was disappointed that the member for Wallsend attacked parliamentary staff in relation to the appearance of this motion on the *Business Paper*. Staff have said that the motion is legitimate, otherwise it would not be on the *Business Paper*. Neither of the Labor speakers on this motion is from the Illawarra. The member for Shellharbour has two colleagues from the Illawarra who could have defended her.

Ms Anna Watson: No, that was your speaker. He is from Oatley.

Mr GARETH WARD: The member for Heathcote is at a funeral. Thank you for attacking him. I am sorry the Opposition did not use members from the Illawarra to talk on this motion. The member for Shellharbour said she had written to the Clerk because she was concerned that I would refer her to the privileges

committee. I did not do so for the very reasons outlined. I will stand by the fact that the member had an opportunity today to say why she wanted the names, addresses and telephone numbers of people who disagree with the project. All the member for Shellharbour did was resort to name-calling and the empty, windy rhetoric that we expect from her. The member had the opportunity to say whether or not she supports this \$57 million investment in the community, which will burden ratepayers of Shellharbour for years to come, despite the council closing libraries, shutting down services and selling properties without recourse to the community. It is disgraceful. If those opposite think I will resile from defending ratepayers in Shellharbour then they are wrong. I have made that quite clear.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member for Shellharbour of Standing Order 52.

Mr GARETH WARD: Light travels faster than sound and it is in that vein that some people appear bright until we hear them speak. Again, we had the tallest midgets in Labor's circus trying to defend the fact that there was no consultation on the largest capital project ever undertaken by Shellharbour City Council, a council with no capital expenditure debt until Labor wrested control.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order.

Mr GARETH WARD: The council is now looking at spending \$57 million on new council chambers. That is what those opposite are defending, not money being spent on the services that ratepayers expect. Those opposite then have the temerity to use parliamentary privilege. Not even members of the Labor Party were prepared to defend the member for Shellharbour. She had to use an order of the national executive because not even Labor Party members in Shellharbour wanted to vote for her preselection. Why should the people of Shellharbour want to vote for her when the constituents could be subject to an information-gathering exercise so that the member can potentially intimidate people who disagree with her? I have every respect for people who want to object, but the member clearly does not. The member for Shellharbour clearly has no respect for the parliamentary process. She should tell this House her position on this project. She had the opportunity to do so today, but she squibbed it. She sat on the fence once again. People want to know where the member stands on this matter.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I call the member for Bankstown to order for the first time.

Mr GARETH WARD: The member for Shellharbour cannot say it is a council issue and then use parliamentary privilege to ask this question. Shame on the member!

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 51

Mr Anderson	Ms Goward	Mr Rohan
Mr Aplin	Mr Grant	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bassett	Ms Hodgkinson	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baumann	Mr Holstein	Mr Souris
Ms Berejikian	Mr Issa	Mr Speakman
Mr Bromhead	Mr Kean	Mr Stokes
Mr Brookes	Dr Lee	Mr Stoner
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Maguire	Mr Toole
Mr Conolly	Mr Marshall	Ms Upton
Mr Constance	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Ward
Mr Coure	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mrs Davies	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Dominello	Ms Parker	
Mr Doyle	Mr Perrottet	
Mr Elliott	Mr Piccoli	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Flowers	Mr Provest	Mr Patterson
Mr George	Mr Roberts	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 17

Mr Barr	Ms Hornery	Ms Tebbutt
Ms Burney	Mr Lynch	Ms Watson
Ms Burton	Ms Mihailuk	Mr Zangari
Mr Daley	Mr Park	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Mr Parker	Mr Amery
Mr Hoenig	Mrs Perry	Ms Hay

Pairs

Mr Ayres	Mr Collier
Mr Baird	Mr Lalich
Mrs Hancock	Dr McDonald
Mr Hazzard	Mr Robertson
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Rees

Question resolved in the affirmative.**Motion agreed to.****TAFE ILLAWARRA HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE COURSE**

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.36 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Calls on the Government and the Minister for Education to guarantee that the TAFE Illawarra Higher School Certificate course will continue to be available to students in the future.
- (2) Notes that TAFE provides a second chance for students who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to perform or even undertake the Higher School Certificate at high school.
- (3) Recognises that the Government has made cuts to essential education services, particularly at a TAFE level, that have had adverse impacts on both educators and students.
- (4) Notes that more than 90 students completed their Higher School Certificate through Wollongong TAFE last year, with a similar number expected this year, indicating a high demand for this service.

I first gave notice of this motion in May this year following a disturbing report in the *Illawarra Mercury* headed, "TAFE Class War—Fears HSC Course will go as part of cutbacks". I was contacted by a number of students in my electorate and by the NSW Teachers Federation representative, Rob Long, who explained to me why he was worried that a review—

[Interruption]

Of course the member for Bega interjects because he hates students at TAFE. I do not understand why he hates students at TAFE. One would imagine that the Bega area would be very glad to have TAFE services, being an area in which students have difficulty completing tertiary education. It does not matter who you are or what side of politics you are on, the fact is that by far the majority of the community across the board supports TAFE and TAFE services because they know that in many cases it is the only way students get a second chance at achieving a Higher School Certificate qualification and at a level that allows them to matriculate to university. Why should they not all have that opportunity? Why should they not all have a chance to get a decent education? That is what Australia is supposed to be about, is it not? Australia is supposed to be about a fair go for all.

But what this Government has done in relation to education and cuts to TAFE and the introduction of fees in preschools within public schools has made it more and more difficult for the disadvantaged to get access to an education. Therefore, when fewer people sign up for a course, because they cannot afford it, the Government will claim that it is unnecessary to provide the course because of insufficient usage. We are constantly creating a pool of people who are not only already disadvantaged but also more likely than ever to be uneducated. When those headlines came out, and following my discussions with teachers' representatives and students, I immediately called on the Coalition Government to guarantee that the TAFE Illawarra Higher School

Certificate course would continue to be available to students. As a mother of four children, the grandmother of seven grandchildren and the great-grandmother of one I want to ensure that all of them have access to quality education.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: No, you're too young.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I thank the member for Clarence for his interjection. During an election campaign Government members, whether they be in the Illawarra, the Hunter or wherever, make all sorts of commitments.

Mr Andrew Constance: Like a convention centre.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The Government would not give the Illawarra a convention centre. It will not give us a lift at Unanderra to help disabled people.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! The member for Wollongong will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Members opposite are the wrong lot to talk about what is being done for disadvantaged people. They have a shameful track record. I am sure there are people living in the Bega electorate who are not happy with the local member. Indeed, I think I have spoken to them.

Mr John Williams: How big do you want your local convention centre?

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Murray-Darling should go back to sleep. Someone wound his key this morning. Shame on them for waking him up.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! The member for Murray-Darling will come to order.

Ms NOREEN HAY: TAFE recognises that TAFE Higher School Certificate courses are like a second chance to some, and a first opportunity for many who may have done the wrong thing at school and who want to change their lives, get back on track—

Mr John Williams: Start a kebab shop.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Why does the member hate kebab shops? Many people run kebab shops. Many people have small businesses.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! The member for Wollongong will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Murray-Darling is now criticising people who own kebab shops. Shame on him! We have excellent kebab shops in Wollongong, and the people who run them are great.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! The member for Wollongong will return to the leave of the motion, which has nothing to do with kebabs.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Please throw the member for Murray-Darling out of the Chamber if he does not stop interjecting. What do we want? Affordable education. When do we want it? Now. It should be made available to everyone. It is better to enable people to gain skills, upskill and become work ready. More than 90 students completed their Higher School Certificate at Wollongong TAFE in the past year, with a similar number expected to have participated by the end of this year. I anticipate Government members criticising that, because that is what they do in response to any demand for any kind of improved services for people in the Illawarra and, indeed, throughout New South Wales. There are two ways in which the Higher School Certificate is currently delivered at TAFE. The first is where preliminary year 11 subjects and year 12 subjects are taught separately in a similar fashion to a school. That should continue. Our kids should get every opportunity to be educated.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! I remind members to speak to the leave of the motion and not to other issues.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.43 p.m.]: Before I commence I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your elevation to Acting-Speaker. I take this debate seriously. Education is a fundamental building block of communities. I was a proud public education student—I went through Bombaderry Primary School, Bombaderry High School and the University of Wollongong. I take education at a high school, a tertiary and a vocational level very seriously. I thank the member for Wollongong for at least giving us an opportunity to talk about TAFE in the Illawarra. I am a strong and unabashed supporter of TAFE and the services it offers. TAFE Illawarra will continue to offer a Higher School Certificate [HSC] program focusing on the areas identified in employment opportunities in 2015, because that is what TAFE should be about—providing employment opportunities and pathways for people to find work.

An annual review of the HSC program has been initiated to strengthen its vocational focus for 2015. Students undertaking their HSC at Illawarra Institute have the opportunity to complete vocational qualifications to assist them to be job ready at the same time as completing their HSC. On 1 January 2010 the school leaving age in New South Wales was raised to 17 years of age. More school-aged students are staying at school and there is less demand for HSC courses at TAFE because the age at which point people need to remain at school was lifted. More than 90 students completed the course last year, and it is anticipated that a similar number will complete the program in 2014. I acknowledge that the member for Wollongong mentioned that in her contribution.

TAFE Illawarra also offers the Tertiary Preparation Certificate [TPC] for students returning to study whose focus is entirely on higher education. The Government needs to keep working hard to contain its own expenses so that New South Wales lives within its means. We cannot leave deficits like members opposite did—\$5.2 billion and a \$55 billion State debt left by members opposite who did not meet a single spending target during 16 years in government. The whole New South Wales education sector, including TAFE, must operate more efficiently.

Under Smart and Skilled, TAFE NSW will continue to play a central role as the State's public vocational education and training provider in strengthening the skills base of New South Wales, particularly in regions such as the South Coast. As the State's public provider, TAFE NSW continues its essential role in setting the benchmark for quality and innovation in vocational education and training services, and delivering skills critical for our economy. The member for Wollongong and I support that. We have attended many TAFE graduations together and witnessed the quality that is coming out of TAFE campuses across our region. Both are proud of the graduates.

At the same time TAFE is moving ahead with its transformation agenda, meeting the Government's expectations to bring about the new TAFE NSW. It is vital for TAFE to continue to evolve as a contemporary and agile organisation so it can respond with even greater flexibility to meet the needs of students, employers and communities. It is not about meeting the need of the union; it is about meeting the educational requirements of students. New South Wales was the first State to sign up to Gonski, ensuring that young people have the best chance in life when they go through public and private education. I hope that education generally will become a debate similar to disability in that it is beyond politics. It is not a partisan debate; it is a debate in which we can all agree on doing the greatest good for the greatest number.

In terms of demand for TAFE, 2013 was a very strong year for TAFE NSW, with almost 570,000 enrolments, and TAFE staff and students being recognised for awards both nationally and internationally. This demand and recognition for TAFE continues in 2014. There is proving to be strong demand for TAFE courses across institutes, especially in skill priority areas such as children's services, aged care, community services work and nursing. TAFE's leadership role in developing essential skills for the New South Wales economy is evident in the Trade Readiness program. More than 1,000 people across New South Wales have been able to assess their suitability to undertake an apprenticeship thanks to the \$650,000 New South Wales Government initiative that increases retention by giving apprenticeship hopefuls the chance to gain a realistic understanding about what is involved in areas such as carpentry, plumbing and electrical trades. They are job-generating trades that we need to strengthen.

The Trade Readiness program is a great example of how TAFE NSW leads innovation in helping to meet the needs of individuals, employers and industry to deliver skills critical to the New South Wales economy. I am pleased that the Treasurer is in the Chamber because he delivered great news about how our economy is tracking, New South Wales being number one again. I commend him for his work in that respect, and for New South Wales maintaining its triple-A credit rating.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! The member for Wollongong will come to order.

Mr GARETH WARD: Members opposite are not interested in education. This year we have also seen an exciting growth in online and flexible course enrolments, especially through the Open Training and Education Network and North Coast TAFE offerings. The number of international students commencing study in TAFE NSW has increased by 17 per cent in comparison with the same time last year. Education is our biggest export after mining and minerals. The TAFE NSW Diploma-to-Degree programs being packaged with partner universities are proving to be very popular with international students.

As a member of Wollongong University Council, I am very proud of the work that TAFE Illawarra conducts in partnership with the University of Wollongong. It is in that vein that I commend Gerard Sutton, a former Vice-Chancellor who instigated many of those programs, Paul Wellings who continues to do so, and Di Murray from TAFE Illawarra, who does an exceptional job. The new degree programs offered by TAFE NSW continue to grow, with more than 800 students enrolled in TAFE higher education courses over the past three years, and 27 students recently graduating from TAFE NSW higher education programs in interior design, 3D art and animation, and information technology network security.

Members will also be interested to know that TAFE NSW, Illawarra Institute, in partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Industry, through the Workforce Innovation Network, is delivering the Young@Heart program. Aimed at the unemployed aged 35 or younger, this program has delivered training to almost 80 people, many of whom have gone on to find meaningful employment in the aged care sector. These practical examples reflect the kind of innovation and entrepreneurship that we have come to expect from TAFE NSW. The people and communities of New South Wales want to see more of that type of work. Recent statewide consultations for Let's talk about TAFE confirmed that TAFE is very highly recognised and valued, and that it will continue to remain relevant and responsive. I commend all of our hardworking TAFE staff and the institution. The claim made about the removal of Higher School Certificate classes from TAFE has clearly not proven to be true. I commend my comments to the House.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.50 p.m.]: I speak to the motion moved by the member for Wollongong, which states:

That this House:

- (1) Calls on the Government and the Minister for Education to guarantee that the TAFE Illawarra Higher School Certificate course will continue to be available to students in the future.
- (2) Notes that TAFE provides a second chance for students who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to perform or even undertake the Higher School Certificate at high school.
- (3) Recognises that the Government has made cuts to essential education services, particularly at a TAFE level, that have had adverse impacts on both educators and students.
- (4) Notes that more than 90 students completed their Higher School Certificate through Wollongong TAFE last year, with a similar number expected this year, indicating a high demand for this service.

As a former educator in south-west Sydney, I know the importance of TAFE. Many years ago, under the former Labor Government, I was retrained at TAFE to deliver a vocational education and training building and construction course. As a former teacher, I also understand that at times students find it difficult to be in mainstream education at school and that TAFE provides an alternative way to study the Higher School Certificate. I commend the member for Wollongong for moving this important motion. TAFE NSW has always been an institution that offers a wide range of courses, including the opportunity for those who did not have the chance to complete their Higher School Certificate.

TAFE does not discriminate. It is regarded as an education institution that offers second chances to those who were not able to complete their Higher School Certificate at high school. It is important that TAFE is well funded and has the necessary teachers, and that its courses are not disregarded and palmed off to the private sector. It is important also to acknowledge and understand the importance of education and to ensure that students undertaking their Higher School Certificate are well supported. At the moment, particularly in south-west Sydney, the outreach programs within the South Western Sydney Institute have been cut and teachers at TAFE have been sacked. As a former high school teacher and someone who has used the TAFE services for skill and reskilling in particular areas, I understand the value and importance of TAFE for students.

I firmly believe there are few things more important than imparting knowledge to students undertaking TAFE courses. Given there were 90 students who completed their Higher School Certificate at Wollongong TAFE last year, and a similar number is expected to be enrolled this year, I dare say that TAFE is very important

to people in the Illawarra, particularly in Wollongong, as there is most certainly a demand from students who wish to further their education. All members in this Chamber know that the Higher School Certificate is an entree to moving down an educational path whether it is through vocational education and training or universities.

TAFE is a springboard to further education. It should be well funded and our TAFE teachers should be supported by programs that enable them to deliver educational outcomes. It seems to me that over the past 3½ years this Government has looked constantly at the bottom line, at the dollar. The Government has never mentioned educational outcomes for students and support programs for staff. We need to get on with the program and ensure that TAFE students who are studying the Higher School Certificate anywhere throughout the State, particularly in the Illawarra and in Wollongong, are well supported and that the Higher School Certificate will be maintained at TAFE.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [12.54 p.m.]: I am a great supporter of TAFE. In fact, I am a creature of TAFE. I went through TAFE in the good old days. I do not think anyone in this Chamber would remember the Postmaster General's Department, which shows my age. Those were the days when a single organisation took 400 or 500 trainees just out of school, off the streets, and put them through a TAFE course. In my case it was a six-year course. In those days we were trained to a point where we became valuable assets to the industry that supported the course. In those days I remember the courses were a combination of formal TAFE full-time tuition, with a mix of on-the-job training and vocational training. They combined to produce workers that not only were industry-ready but also had high skill levels and high competency levels. In effect, they were very valuable assets not only to the companies that employed them but also to the New South Wales economy, and to industry.

Unfortunately, I did not complete my Higher School Certificate, nor did I go to university simply because of the burden it would have created on my family—a family from Italy in the early 1960s. However, I am a creature of the magnificent TAFE system we have in New South Wales. I must admit that I am more of a vocational training fan than anything else. It is what I call education for a purpose. I am at a loss though because the motion moved by the member for Wollongong talks about guarantees of a course that may or may not be offered in the future. A number of factors come into play when courses are being assessed in terms of different demands and different requirements. To simply make what I call a presumptuous statement that "I want the Government to guarantee" something regardless of all other factors is indeed, to the say the least, presumptuous.

The reality is that more school-aged students are staying at school and there is less demand for the Higher School Certificate at TAFE. Other factors come into play that require a real assessment of the need. In principle, I do not agree with the simplistic call of the member for Wollongong for the Government to guarantee specific courses at TAFE Illawarra, or any other TAFE institution for that matter, because I believe it smacks of populism and a waste of essential resources. Any course at any institution, especially publicly funded training institutions such as TAFE, must merit its inclusion as a course based on a number of factors. They include: demand from individuals, demand by employers or industry groups and some demand driven by economic factors. When these criteria are satisfied then the course must compete in relative merit against other courses. When that is done, one must then consider emerging trends and factor them into the assessment as to whether a course should be offered.

Against that framework, the call for a guarantee that a specific course at a specific institute will continue is somewhat presumptuous. TAFE NSW is currently adapting its governance, financial framework and services to meet the challenges of operating effectively in a more commercial environment. It also includes operating as an effective network of TAFE NSW institutes forming the backbone of our training system and leading the field in the provision of high-quality teaching and learning. This means that our TAFE institutes will continue to contribute to the wealth and wellbeing of the communities and industries in which they work. I congratulate TAFE NSW staff and students on their outstanding achievements and, in my case, the wonderful opportunity afforded me by my TAFE training so many years ago.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.58 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate the member for Wollongong on bringing forward today's motion. The member for Wollongong takes every opportunity to advocate for her constituents in this Chamber. I take the opportunity to also acknowledge the member for Fairfield. I know he is particularly passionate about education. As he clearly articulated earlier, he has always been a big supporter of TAFE and nurturing young people's skills development, which he knows is often reliant on TAFE education.

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

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 63/55****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.00 p.m.]: I thank the House for the opportunity to update members on comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in its recent digest, which was tabled on 21 October. This was the sixty-third digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. A total of 14 bills were introduced in the sitting week commencing 14 October, on nine of which the committee made comments. Given the number of bills introduced and the short time allocated to take-note speeches, I will touch only briefly on each bill on which the committee made comments.

The Education Amendment (Not-for-profit Non-Government School Funding) Bill 2014 contains provisions that will enable schools to comply with not-for-profit conditions and addresses practices which may cause such schools to be in breach of the compliance rules. The committee noted the retrospective application of a provision with respect to the recovery of payments made to non-government schools before the commencement of the Act. The committee noted also its concern at the presence of a Henry VIII clause, which enables the subordinate legislation—in this case the regulation—to take precedence over the primary legislation, the Act.

The Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment Bill 2014 seeks to reduce the electoral campaign expenditure caps for third parties. The committee noted that laws that impose limits on election campaign expenditure may be regarded as burdening the freedom of speech and freedom of political communication of those participating in the electoral process. However, the committee noted the intent of the bill to provide further integrity to the electoral process and made no further comment. The committee did, however, refer to Parliament matters with respect to the doubling or quadrupling of 11 separate penalty provisions, together with the introduction of custodial sentences in five offences, given that the penalty provisions of all these offences may be excessive and disproportionate to the offences committed.

The Electricity Supply Amendment (Bush Fire Hazard Reduction) Bill 2014 allows electricity network operators to enter premises to carry out bushfire risk mitigation work where the network operator is of the opinion that the recipient of an order has failed to do so. The committee noted that this could impact on the right to property, but given the object of this bill is to minimise the risk from bushfires to human life and property, the committee made no further comment on this issue.

The committee noted in the Health Practitioner Regulation Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 the retrospective application of a provision so that health practitioners whose registrations were cancelled or who were disqualified from being health practitioners must apply for a reinstatement order before registering as a health practitioner again. The committee also noted that a council's duty to provide the outcome of a complaint made against a health practitioner to the complainant may compromise the privacy of the health practitioner concerned. In particular, the disclosure may include material of a sensitive nature. The committee was concerned about potential impacts on privacy as an interference with individual rights and liberties. As such, the committee referred this matter to Parliament for its further consideration.

In relation to the Marine Estate Management Bill 2014 the committee noted that the declaration or variation of a marine park or aquatic reserve without the consent of the owner of land concerned may be an adverse impact on the property rights of that owner. However, given the diligent inquiry that is required before a declaration or variation can be made, the committee made no further comment. The committee also noted that the bill provides the ability for a Minister to make a notification that can set offences with a penalty of 200 penalty units or six months imprisonment or both, and that this may be an inappropriately delegated legislative power. Further, because it does not appear that section 41 of the Interpretation Act applies, it is likely that notifications will escape parliamentary scrutiny and possible disallowance. The committee referred this matter to Parliament for its further consideration.

In relation to the Mental Health Tribunal (Statutory Review) Bill 2014 the committee noted that the amendments made by the bill extend to the conduct of any investigation, the gathering of evidence and the commencement, maintenance and conclusion of criminal proceedings before the commencement of the amendments. The committee is generally concerned where provisions are drafted to have retrospective effect but made no further comment. The committee also considered the specification of powers and functions exercised by the WorkCover Authority to be matters that are more properly included in principal legislation rather than in

the regulations. The committee also expressed its concern about potential wrongful detention, in particular, provisions allowing a medical practitioner to examine a person via audiovisual link to determine whether they are a mentally ill or disordered person and who should be detained.

The committee also noted provisions that allow the Mental Health Tribunal to defer operation of its own order to discharge an involuntary patient of a mental health facility for 14 days if it is in the best interests of the involuntary patient, but without the bill providing further guidance about the factors the tribunal should take into account in making such a decision the bill may give rise to wrongful detention. Turning to the Regional Relocation Grants Amendment Bill 2014, the committee again noted the retrospective application of parts of the scheme, as well as the presence of a Henry VIII clause in the bill, which enables a ministerial order to take precedence over primary legislation.

For the Water NSW Bill 2014 the committee referenced the numerous provisions in the bill that may impact on the right to property. This included enabling officers to enter private land without notice, providing for the demolition or removal of structures on private land and providing authorised officers with the authority to enter private property. The digest is a weekly resource for members to participate in legislative debates. The committee works hard to ensure each bill is reviewed and reported on within days of its introduction. I thank the staff for the quick turnaround between last week and this week, when one considers that 14 bills were prepared. Next week the committee will prepare nine bills. I commend the digest to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.06 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I report on Legislation Review Digest No. 63 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament and take the opportunity to also acknowledge my fellow committee members and the staff. As the member for Myall Lakes stated, it is difficult during back-to-back sitting weeks to prepare the digest but as always the staff have done a terrific job. Quite surprisingly, the committee had to deliberate on 14 bills this week. I am delighted that the Government has realised after 3½ years that it might want to pass some legislation prior to the election. One of the bills reviewed by the committee this week was the Water NSW Bill 2014. I note for the record that the committee made extensive comment about this bill, which proposes to merge the State Water Corporation and Sydney Catchment Authority into a single State-owned corporation, the Water NSW Corporation.

The bill provides for the abolition of the Sydney Catchment Authority and the transfer of all of its staff, assets, rights and liabilities to Water NSW. However, the Sydney Catchment Authority will continue to operate under a separate operating licence. Several issues require more scrutiny by members of this House. Proposed section 8 of division 3 of schedule 2 to the bill provides for the transfer of employees from the public service to Water NSW. The committee made the following comment with regard to employment rights:

The Committee notes that the transfer of an individual's employment status from public servant to employee of a statutory corporation may trespass on that individual's liberty to choose their employer. Given the safeguards outlined in Schedule 2 ... the Committee makes no further comment on this issue.

The committee also considered the Health Practitioner Regulation Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, which will make minor amendments to the Health Practitioner Regulation (Adoption of National Law) Act 2009 to alter the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW). Overall, the bill will provide greater oversight of impaired medical practitioners and improve transparency of the complaints process as patients would be able to seek information regarding the outcome of their complaints.

I note the following comment made by the committee:

The Committee notes that a Council's duty to provide the outcome of a complaint made against a health practitioner to the complainant may compromise the privacy of that health practitioner concerned. In particular, the disclosure may include material of a sensitive nature.

This issue was considered in detail in this Chamber yesterday and more transparency with regard to the outcome of health complaints received bipartisan support. Following the recent decision in the New South Wales Court of Appeal case *Health Care Complaints Commission 4 v Do* proposed section 149E of the bill clarifies that former health practitioners will require a reinstatement order made by the tribunal as per section 163B of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, and as per new section 149E (2), that a cancellation or disqualification decision of the tribunal will continue:

... to apply in respect of a disqualified person and the disqualification order even if the period of disqualification has expired or specified conditions for the cessation of the disqualification have been complied with.

There were 12 other bills but I do not have time to provide further detail. I commend the digest to the House.

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

Report noted.

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Report: Review of the 2012-2013 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People

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

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [1.10 p.m.]: As Chair of the Committee on Children and Young People I will speak on the committee's review of the 2012-2013 annual report of the Commission for Children and Young People. One of the important functions of the committee, under section 28 of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998, is to review each annual report of the Commission for Children and Young People and to provide a report to the Parliament on the committee's findings. This is the committee's third annual report review during the Fifty-fifth Parliament, and my first as chair.

For the purposes of this review, the committee focused on a number of significant themes and developments which were brought to the fore in the commission's 2012-2013 annual report, along with its evidence at a public hearing and its responses to questions on notice and additional questions. In particular, I recognise the commission's work in developing and implementing the new Working With Children Check during the reporting period, and acknowledge the new check's various measures to provide better safeguards for children and young people in New South Wales. Looking forward, the committee is interested in how the commission consolidates its focus on research and advocacy and its transition to the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People. The committee also looks forward to overseeing the Office of the Children's Guardian in the coming year as it carries out its function of implementing and administering the Working With Children Check, following the transfer of this function from the commission.

I thank the Acting Commissioner and Children's Guardian, Ms Kerry Boland, for her leadership of the commission during this period of significant change. I also thank the former commissioner, Ms Megan Mitchell, for her service and wish her well in her current role as National Children's Commissioner. I thank the staff of the commission for their continued assistance during the committee's review and my fellow committee members for their insights and contributions throughout the review process: the member for Menai, the member for Orange, the member for Canterbury, Ms Jan Barham, the Hon. Niall Blair, and the Hon. Greg Donnelly. I thank the committee staff involved in the reports, in particular, Rohan Tyler. I commend the report to the House.

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

Report noted.

[The Assistant-Speaker (Mr Andrew Fraser) left the chair at 1.13 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery representatives of the Curtis Park Arboretum at Shoalhaven Heads, guests of the member for Kiama. I extend also a special welcome to Mr Richard and Mrs Pamela Parker, who recently celebrated their forty-fifth wedding anniversary and who are the parents and guests of the member for Balmain. Well done, Mum and Dad, you did a good job. I welcome also Mark Spencer and Helen Rea from Goonellabah Primary School and Wilson Park Special School, guests of the member for Lismore.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.20 p.m.]

MEMBER FOR PORT STEPHENS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I direct my question to the Premier. Given that he has previously said he would be the worst nightmare of anyone who has done wrong, why has he failed to act and allowed the member for Port Stephens to remain the endorsed Liberal candidate despite serious allegations and evidence presented at the Independent Commission Against Corruption hearings about illegal donations to property developers?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I cannot believe the Leader of the Opposition asked that question because I have been very clear about this issue. An inquiry is underway—the Leader of the Opposition might have noticed it—

Mr John Robertson: It is over.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The final report has not been handed down.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Government has taken action. The members concerned have stood aside from the parliamentary Liberal Party and we await the report. I will not take lectures on ethics—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The member for Port Stephens made admissions at the Independent Commission Against Corruption hearings. Is he, and if he is, why is he, the Liberal Party's endorsed candidate?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: If the Leader of the Opposition wants to play that game, I remind him that a parliamentary inquiry made some findings against him. It said that he made a serious error of judgement.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. If the Premier wants to launch an attack on the Leader of the Opposition he should do so by way of substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Premier is aware of that.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The same inquiry also said those opposite had inappropriate meetings and forgot to tell everyone.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is under standing orders 129 and 73. The question was quite specific. If the Premier does not want to answer it that does not entitle him to breach Standing Order 73 and launch into personal reflections on the Leader of the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am not sure the Premier has done that at this stage. I will continue to listen to the answer.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Bear in mind that the Leader of the Opposition asked this question. The Government has taken action, and I remind the House that I refuse to be lectured on matters of ethics by a Leader of the Opposition who was put in his position by Eddie Obeid. Indeed, Eddie Obeid said the Leader of the Opposition owed his position to Eddie Obeid, but the Leader of the Opposition wants to lecture the Government on ethics.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. Endorsed or not, simple.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

NEWCASTLE REVITALISATION

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: My question is addressed to our outstanding Premier. How is the Government delivering on our fully funded plan for the revitalisation of Newcastle?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Davidson for his sensible question. This Government's plan is fully funded. As the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, the member understands that, in order to deliver for the community, responsible decisions must be made and there must be funding to go with those decisions. The member for Davidson is doing a great job on the Public Accounts Committee. When the Liberal-Nationals Government came to power we inherited, after 16 years of Labor rule, a complete and utter

mess. There were differences in the electorates but there was a consistent theme—that is, the Labor Government ignored the electorates and promised things but never delivered, and those opposite know that is true. There are two different approaches to the seat of Newcastle and the Hunter region. The Government's approach is to deliver a record amount of funding, while the Opposition's approach is to promise things they cannot deliver.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In relation to the Government's commitment to the urban renewal of the great city of Newcastle, these words caught my attention: "This is by far the greatest amount of money ever committed by a State Government to infrastructure in Newcastle." Those are great words.

Mr John Robertson: Who said them?

Mr Michael Daley: Was that the Liberal candidate for Sydney?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Actually the words were from a candidate: Tim Crakanthorp, Labor candidate for Newcastle. The Labor candidate for Newcastle admitted that we had given the greatest-ever infrastructure commitment to Newcastle.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite have learned nothing. Our side of the House has a clear plan that is fully funded with close to \$500 million allocated to urban renewal. What does the Opposition have? They have promised a state-of-the-art convention centre and a sky bridge that is going to go to the moon. How much funding goes with this promise? This is a \$300 million project with a \$5 million costing project and a drawing competition. Why is that concerning? It is concerning because we know those opposite will not deliver the plan. They have a history of not delivering; they are making it up as they go along. We can have an insight into how those opposite cost their projects from the member for Wollongong who, when she saw a convention centre, put up her hand and said, "One for me as well". The Leader of the Opposition said, "Maybe not". The member for Wollongong then brought a motion before the Parliament saying there should be \$40 million for the convention centre.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. This question had nothing to do with the convention centre for Wollongong. The fact is the Premier cannot answer the question because the Government delivers nothing.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite have interesting costing discussions. The member for Wollongong asks for the convention centre to be costed, so she calls the brains trust and asks how much. The brains trust does not know, so the member for Wollongong makes it up; \$40 million sounds like a good number. That is how out of touch they are. The member for Wollongong said that she wants \$40 million because "\$40 million is a mere pittance".

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

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Opposition members are completely and utterly out of touch. If they are going to put any policy to the people of any electorate they have a basic responsibility to put funding alongside it. Every member of the shadow Cabinet knows that. When a political party goes to the people of any electorate or the whole of New South Wales and says, "This is a policy that we are going to deliver", if there is no funding no-one believes them. The people of Newcastle will not be taken for fools; they have seen what Labor delivers—which is nothing—and they know Labor's policies are not funded. There is one government delivering for them and that is this Government.

We are delivering for the people of Newcastle and the Hunter. Those opposite can pretend all they like but the people of Newcastle and the Hunter are not going to listen to bad old Labor putting forward ideas with no hard work and no funding. We are delighted to be delivering for the people of Newcastle and the Hunter,

whether it be the urban renewal project or the Newcastle inner-city bypass. The people of Newcastle waited 50 years for the money to fund those projects and this Government found the money. We are delivering for them. It is the same with the F3 and M2: the former Labor Government looked at that gap but we saw an opportunity and we have filled that gap. We are proud to be delivering for the people of Newcastle and the Hunter. Those opposite should be ashamed of their record and they should be ashamed of the policies they are putting forward with no funding. They will be found out, but thank goodness there is a government delivering for all of us.

NEWCASTLE RAIL LINE

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. It has now been more than 65 days since the Premier or the Minister for the Hunter has visited Newcastle. Do they not have the courage to front the people of Newcastle about their plan to rip out the rail line and hand over the rail corridor to developers?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Canterbury is completely wrong. We have visited the area regularly—the Ministers have been up there regularly—and we will continue to be up there regularly because we will continue to deliver for the people of Newcastle and the Hunter. How can Labor's plan have any credibility? The Labor Party has come up with a new plan for level crossings—forget about the fact that it has no funding for it.

Mr Michael Daley: It's not working, Mike.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is working. Why did the Leader of the Opposition say, "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"?

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the member's point of relate to relevance? The Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked. The member for Canterbury may not like the answer the Premier has given, but he has answered the question.

Ms Linda Burney: I would respectfully say that he has not answered my question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is answering the question. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Only the Leader of the Opposition can explain why he is happy now to pursue a policy without funding on something that he said was an incredible safety risk to that community. It is an interesting approach to take, but the Leader of the Opposition takes all kinds of interesting positions. Michael Costa put it best when he said:

The hurdle in the revitalisation of Newcastle has always been the transport component. This plan fixes it and Labor will lose all credibility if it opposes it in the Parliament.

The Leader of the Opposition can continue to try to put credibility into his policy but a policy is a pretty basic promise and if a political party puts a policy forward the community will demand to see how it is funded. We know what Labor's DNA is and the Leader of the Opposition is yet to deny it has a secret policy document. Labor has a plan to put up taxes and increase debt, and that is how it is going to fund its policies. My attention was drawn to this article in the media this week, which said:

Senior Labor sources tell [this newspaper] there is "internal dismay" at the performance of the Opposition leader John Robertson.

Where did that come from?

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: This is so entertaining that I am reluctant to take this point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the member's point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: You said you were going to go door to door and apologise. You haven't even been back there.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Is it the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who is the senior source? Is it the member for Maroubra? I am backing the member for Miranda.

Ms Sonia Horner: Point of order: Surely this malicious gossip is not relevant to the question.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Then it came to me—it all came together. There was massive disappointment somewhere when a convention centre was announced in Newcastle. There was disappointment in the approach of the Leader of the Opposition so the member for Wollongong called the *Australian*. It was the member for Wollongong. I do not care what politics those opposite play; this side of the House will continue to deliver for the people of Newcastle and the Hunter. Those opposite are, quite frankly, an embarrassment.

HUNTER INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: My question is addressed to the dynamic Deputy Premier. How is the Government getting on with the job of rebuilding Hunter infrastructure?

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the member for his question. He is a member of this Government who understands the focus of this side of the House over the past three years has been on rebuilding New South Wales—delivering hospitals and roads right across this State. The one thing that the people of the Hunter and people right across New South Wales hate the most is when governments waste money. I am pleased to say that the member for Clarence and I are part of a Liberal-Nationals Government that has delivered for the Clarence electorate. I know that part of the motivation for him being in this place was to ensure that the Grafton Bridge and the second crossing of the Clarence River were achieved.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was about the Hunter, not about Grafton or the Clarence.

The SPEAKER: Order! These are introductory remarks in answer to a question from the member for Clarence. It is quite appropriate that the Deputy Premier make reference to the member's electorate.

Mr TROY GRANT: He does not want to hear about the \$177 million the Government is delivering for that project. That is his problem. He does not like it. Infrastructure badly needed for local communities is being delivered across the Hunter, and that is clear for everyone to see. We have a plan and we have the money. As someone who was born in the Hunter, and proudly so, and who has lived and worked across regional New South Wales, I am proud to lead a party that is delivering for local communities. Yesterday I spoke about the rundown in services in each electorate I mentioned and about those in this place who are prepared to take up the challenge to correct that record. The rundown in regional infrastructure by members opposite, particularly in the Hunter, was no less tragic. As I said, everyone in the Hunter hates the waste of money. Think about how many regional schools, hospitals and roads could have been built with \$500 million. That was the amount of money that Labor wasted on the Rozelle metro. That money could have gone to the Hunter.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: One of the first things we did on coming to Government was to set up Infrastructure NSW to ensure that we developed the State's first ever infrastructure strategy.

Mr John Robertson: And then ignore it.

Mr TROY GRANT: The Leader of the Opposition spent 20 minutes on debating that plan. Yet he did not mention regional New South Wales once. Check the transcript. Members opposite did not get one word from their leader about the Hunter, which is one of the most important regional areas in New South Wales.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: The strategy identified a \$30 billion backlog, a sorry legacy left by members opposite. Our approach and our plan is to ensure that waste and mismanagement on that scale never happens again. A lasting legacy of the member for Oxley to help us address that cause was the 30 per cent of funding that is now being delivered for regional infrastructure.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: There is \$366 million for water supplies for our drought-affected farmers, \$110 million to build regional tourism infrastructure such as cruise ship terminals and rail trails; \$135 million to improve regional productivity by upgrading old bridges; importantly for the Hunter, \$200 million to improve key freight corridors, especially the Golden Highway, a key road out of the Hunter, the Kings Highway and Gocup Road in the south; and \$50 million to seal, widen, improve and deliver other works on the western New South Wales freight lines on the Cobb and Silver City highways. The Government is focused on putting the money where it is needed across New South Wales.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: We are delivering more than \$200 million for infrastructure in mining-affected communities, many of them in the Hunter. In Newcastle we can see the results of the \$5.6 million being spent to support roads, shared pathways and cliff stabilisation at Shortland Esplanade. It is truly exciting to see many of these projects being delivered and already taking shape under this Government in just 3½ years. What Labor failed to do in 16 years, this Government has turned around in 3½ years. It is not only through Restart NSW that we are rebuilding regional infrastructure. It is also through the better management of our portfolios: the Minister for Education, the Minister for Health, and the Minister for Roads and Freight.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: The hate that country people have for waste has stopped under this Government. We will not let members opposite fritter away the money and forget areas like the Hunter in the future. That is the story this Government has to tell. It is a positive story. It is one that everyone across Newcastle and the Hunter has welcomed.

Ms Sonia Horner: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129, relevance. Has the Minister forgotten about funding for the art gallery?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Wallsend will resume her seat.

Mr TROY GRANT: That would be the funding that the Labor candidate promised. He promised to spend \$7 million that he has already spent. Clearly, in 3½ years the New South Wales Government, under the stewardship of the Liberal-Nationals has not only delivered for the people of the Hunter, but we have delivered on our promises for the whole State. The only thing members opposite delivered in 16 years for New South Wales—

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

Mr TROY GRANT: —and for my family who live in the Hunter was heartbreak.

NEWCASTLE RAIL LINE

Mr CLAYTON BARR: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. I refer to the plan to truncate the train line and replace it with buses. Will the Minister ensure that trains at Hamilton station wait for the bus to arrive before departing, even when buses are caught in traffic?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is disappointing that the member for Cessnock does not read the *Newcastle Herald*.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. I cannot hear the Minister. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As we learned earlier in the week, this is what the *Newcastle Herald* thinks of the Labor Party's plan: "Pie in the sky". Another one is "55"—

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: It is disorderly to use props. Everyone, including the Minister, should know that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister cited the source as the *Newcastle Herald* and in that case I allowed the use of the prop. That is acceptable.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Another cartoon that might be of interest represents one of the 50 reports that the Labor Government commissioned about Newcastle: "A policy vacuum". I thank the member for Cessnock for his question and I hope he gives me extended time because this is what the *Newcastle Herald* said about our bus plan in an article this week:

It seems evident that quite some effort has gone into planning these interim arrangements as the Government has been able to answer most of the pressing questions up front. For example, it has promised that every bus stop will be provided with shelters, that buses will run with plenty of time to meet each connecting train, that no additional fares will apply and—

Importantly—

the buses used to provide this service will not come at a cost to other routes and services across Newcastle.

The *Newcastle Herald* has given our plan a big tick. This gives me an opportunity to refer to the Labor Party's plan.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129, relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is being relevant to the question she was asked. I have warned the member about interjecting. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I said, we got a big tick for our plan. I thank all local residents who congratulated us on what we are doing for Newcastle. For 16 years members opposite did nothing.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Interestingly, when they released their plan for transport and revitalisation in Newcastle it was an absolute embarrassment. Not only is it ridiculous in terms of adding to congestion but it is also unsafe, and dangerously unsafe. I looked to see what Labor's counterparts in Victoria had to say about level crossings, because the Labor Party wants to put six extra level crossings in Newcastle. This is the Labor Party's transport policy for Victoria and it is only a couple of months old.

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

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has been relevant to the question she was asked.

Mr Clayton Barr: The Minister is talking about a transport plan for Victoria. I ask her to return to the question, which is about bus connections.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister remains relevant. She may not give a specific answer, but I cannot rule that the Minister answer the specific question. The member for Cessnock is simply using a point of order to be disruptive.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Labor Opposition in Victoria said:

Over the past three years I have listened to thousands of Victorians and have received a very clear message. You are sick of the chaos and congestion at our level crossings. If elected, Victoria's Labor Project 10,000 will remove 50 of our most deadly and congested level crossings.

I want to add another important point. This is telling. This compares our plan to Labor's ridiculous plan. The Labor Party policy in Victoria states:

The NSW Government undertook a major program to remove crossings through the 1960s and 1970s and there are just now three remaining level crossings in suburban Sydney.

Not if the Labor Party has its way, because it wants to introduce six additional level crossings in Newcastle. Not only will that slow down the city, it will make for dangerous conditions. Our plan for Newcastle gives people hope. The Hunter and Newcastle deserve better than they got from the former Government. This Government will deliver and revitalise the city and provide great transport services for the people of the Hunter.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The Minister for Transport will resume her seat. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is on three calls to order.

HUNTER HEALTH SERVICES

Ms ROBYN PARKER: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. How is the Government improving health services to the Hunter region?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Maitland for her very deep interest in the health of her constituents and others throughout the Hunter region. I was pleased to promise planning and the site for a new hospital in Maitland before the last election in 2011. Much has been said about Labor's broken promises.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: In January 2011 an ABC transcript states:

The State Government says there are no immediate plans to build a second public hospital in the Maitland region despite the growing population ...

It continues:

A Government Regional Planning Strategy released a few years ago identified the need for an extra hospital but health Minister Carmel Tebbutt says it's not on the agenda.

Labor did not break a promise on this occasion; it never made a commitment to the people of Maitland. The member for Maitland made a commitment and I was pleased in August 2013, together with the member for Maitland, to stand on the 40 hectare Crown land site at Metford, a site that had been chosen after extensive community consultation for a new hospital for Maitland. This Government gets a big tick for delivering on its commitment. Last July the Premier confirmed that a new hospital will be built on that site, so watch this space. In the meantime, at the old Maitland site this Government has invested in additional car parking and mobile heart monitoring units. I was pleased to announce two resuscitation cots. Paul Francis from the Humpty Dumpty Foundation and many of my Hunter New England colleagues welcomed those new children's resuscitation cots in the hospital.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am pleased that this Government replaced each of the 860 manual beds across the region with new electric beds. For 16 years the former Government did nothing to upgrade those beds. In the Hunter New England Hospital—I give full credit to the local district—every single one of them has been replaced. Together with the member for Maitland, I looked at the progress of the development of 900 additional car parks at John Hunter Hospital and Calvary Mater Newcastle campus. We also looked at the new CT scanner in the Department of Forensic Medicine at Newcastle. This important initiative is used for post mortem results. When the Coroner requires a cause of death, a post mortem no longer has to be performed. A body can be scanned through a body bag or through clothes. One can imagine how much grief will be spared to the family of victims. People I have spoken to say it is an incredible investment that makes a huge difference, and it is likely to be rolled out elsewhere.

This Government has already opened a \$2.5 million emergency department redevelopment at Singleton Hospital. Cessnock Hospital has undergone a \$2 million emergency department redevelopment and its roof will be renovated. Work has begun on the \$6.5 million Muswellbrook Hospital emergency department, thanks to the member for Upper Hunter, and Belmont Hospital has received a \$4.2 million subacute unit. Most importantly, in my view, this Government has made a commitment to upgrade the long-neglected intensive care paediatric unit and neonatal unit at John Hunter Children's Hospital. I am ashamed that the former Government totally neglected this important area. In this area the Government has made huge improvements in elective surgery and waiting times and is leading the State.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: When Labor was last in office, the April to June 2010 quarter shows that 49 per cent of patients were seen in the emergency department at John Hunter Hospital within four hours. Under the Liberal-Nationals Government 61 per cent were seen, which shows a major improvement. Under Labor in

that same quarter, for elective surgery 86 per cent of urgent patients were seen on time, and under the Liberal-Nationals Government 98 per cent were seen—a rise from 86 per cent to 98 per cent for the most urgent patients. For semi-urgent patients, under Labor 81 per cent were seen on time. That has increased under the Liberal-Nationals Government to 95 per cent. I know members of the Opposition are rejoicing.

The SPEAKER: Order! If Opposition members are not interested in listening to the answer they can leave the Chamber.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: They are typical of improvements in the system from John Hunter Hospital in the Maitland area to the Hunter New England and right across the State. Today the Premier, the Minister for Family and Community Services, the member for Coogee and I attended the opening of the first stage of the redevelopment of the comprehensive cancer centre at Prince of Wales Hospital. This facility was promised by Labor just before the last election. Imagine my dismay when I looked at the forward capital works plan and noted that not one cent was allocated by the former Government. Just like the promises of the member for Wollongong in relation to convention centres, no money had been allocated. This Government has funded it. I was thrilled to be there today not only with the wonderful people from that hospital but also with Mr Frank Lowy from the Lowy Cancer Centre, Mr Peter Smith, the Dean of Medicine, University of New South Wales, and many others celebrating the opening of stage one of the redeveloped centre at Prince of Wales Hospital. It is typical of how this Government gets on with the job and Labor does not.

HUNTER COST OF LIVING

Ms SONIA HORNER: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister confirm that the Government is taking \$20 million from the Hunter New England Health budget to pay for the connection of the inner-city bypass?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Not true.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mr TONY ISSA: My question is addressed to the outstanding Minister for Transport.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the question from the member for Granville. Members will come to order. Order! I call the member for Cessnock to order for the second time. Order! I call the member for Cessnock to order for the third time. I have asked members to come to order so that I can hear the question.

Mr TONY ISSA: How is the Government delivering improved services for public transport customers including in Newcastle?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the outstanding member for Granville and I acknowledge his hard work on behalf of his constituents. Tomorrow marks the sixth anniversary of an event that I know Labor would rather forget: 24 October 2008, the day that Labor proposed the CBD-Rozelle metro. It is the sixth year anniversary, and we saw how that ended up. It ended up costing the taxpayer half a billion dollars, with nothing to show for it.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I said that Labor members would want to forget. Not only did half a billion dollars go down the drain; it left our global reputation in tatters. Not only were Labor members abysmal in delivering transport infrastructure; instead of adding services they cut, cut, cut. Unfortunately, the people of this State suffered in relation to public transport under Labor. In stark contrast, I was very pleased to be able to announce that this week we have delivered in total more than 10,500 extra transport services since we have been in government. We passed that 10,500 figure this week, and that includes more than 9,000 extra buses, 1,190 extra train services and 220 extra ferry services every week for our customers.

That includes about 3,000 in Western Sydney. I know the member for Granville, who asked the question, is very pleased about that, as are many other members. This includes around 1,000 in Campbelltown and surrounding areas and more than 2,500 in the north-west and The Hills districts. In fact, there are extra services across the entire transport network. Wherever there are transport services, there are more of them. I was also pleased to announce this week the interim services that we will be providing to the good people of

Newcastle and the Hunter when the line is truncated on Boxing Day. Fortunately, I have already had the opportunity in question time to highlight how the plan is being received. For 16 years—and I know we say that lightly—those opposite failed to do anything for the Hunter.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It took a by-election for them to show any interest in Newcastle.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Just like they cobbled together the CBD metro on the back of an envelope—they made up how much it cost and put out a glossy brochure—they did the same for the Hunter when they released their transport plan. It is extremely disappointing that after their failures they have learned nothing. They thought it was okay to say to the people of Newcastle, "Although level crossings are dangerous, although there is money to be spared, you don't deserve anything more than slowing down your city and bringing it to a standstill." I recollect what Labor did not do in government when it came to easy access. For how long did we hear about the need for lifts at places like Cardiff and Greta—places where we have delivered easy access for our customers?

For a long time Labor members spoke about it, moved motions and brought petitions, yet they failed to deliver anything. On the Newcastle and Central Coast line, I was very pleased to announce with our timetable changes an extra 105 services. We not only introduced 105 extra weekly services between Newcastle and the Central Coast but also cut journey times for people travelling from that region, saving customers up to 155 minutes a week on a commute to Sydney. That is what matters to people: improving their access to public transport, reducing their journey times and giving them more time to spend with their families. That will be the future of Newcastle once we proceed with our revitalisation plans.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What we have not done and will not be doing is what Labor members did to the CBD-Rozelle metro—and the anniversary is coming up tomorrow. They thought they could get away with cobbling together a last-minute plan and a glossy brochure. That simply will not stick in the Hunter. The Leader of the Opposition, who was the Minister for Transport, should be embarrassed about his plan for more level crossings when he knows how dangerous they are. In 2010, during Rail Safety Week, he spoke about their danger. Why is it that a few years later he thinks it is good enough to impose them on the Hunter? I am very pleased with our announcement of a \$2.8 billion investment for new intercity trains. That will have enormous benefits for people in Newcastle, particularly those travelling on the intercity services, whether they live in the Hunter region, on the South Coast or along other parts of the network.

The Government has embarked on a \$5 billion refresh of carriages in the Hunter, which will be finished by the end of the year. We have refreshed our V Sets, and if any member has used them recently they will notice the difference. Of course, we have rolled out Opal in the Hunter. Members will remember the Tcard system that Labor promised for the Olympic Games. It never happened. It took a by-election for Labor to cobble together a plan, just like it cobbled together figures on the back of an envelope for the CBD-Rozelle metro. The people of Newcastle and the Hunter deserve better and that is exactly what they will get under the Baird Liberal-Nationals Government.

ULTIMO SCHOOL PROPOSAL

Mr JAMIE PARKER: My question is directed to the Minister for Education.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Balmain will be heard in silence.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: What will the government do to work proactively with the City of Sydney to expedite the urgently needed new school for Ultimo?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am pleased to confirm that in November last year the Inner City Schools Working Party agreed upon a list of options for a new school in the Pymont and Ultimo area to cater for student demand into the future. The most preferred option was a proposal to build a new, larger primary school for Ultimo Public School in the Ultimo-Pymont area on land owned by the City of Sydney located in Wattle Street,

Ultimo. The department established a project reference group and commenced the planning for the new school. Unfortunately, negotiations with City of Sydney for acquisition of the site are not progressing as well as we would have liked. The department has a number of concerns, including that during due diligence the proposed site has been found to be highly contaminated. This fact is not in dispute but what is now in dispute is the level of decontamination required.

The department has engaged independent experts and NSW Public Works to establish the estimated costs to remediate the site to a level acceptable for a school. City of Sydney council has taken a position that it is only willing to consider decontamination works suitable for a commercial development. Of course, the department always places the safety of students and staff as its highest priority. It will not compromise on reducing the level of remediation works that are necessary for a school site by adopting a minimalist approach. It is unacceptable that the students of Ultimo will be made to use a school that is contaminated to a greater degree than is acceptable anywhere else in the State. Further, the department understands the condition that council wants is to base the value of the site at its highest and best use, not at the lower price if it were valued as an educational site.

Dr Geoff Lee: So it wants it both ways?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes. However, this puts the cost of the land at more than double its value as a school site—which is, of course, its intended purpose. It has also been agreed that a reduction in price will be made for contamination. However, the department has very high standards for decontamination, for understandable reasons, and council is insisting that the department accepts a lower standard, something the department has rejected. I assure the House that the department and the Government are committed to building a new school for the Ultimo-Pyrmont community in the electorate of the member, servicing students from the electorate of Balmain, and working hard to have the new school delivered.

I can assure the House that the department is not sitting idly by. However, if council is unwilling to accept the department's offer of a purchase price that recognises the proper level of decontamination required for a school, the department will need to go back to the community to find an alternative site. One issue has been the difficulty of securing a site in the inner city. This process would make the potential 2017 opening date impossible to meet. I have asked for council's assistance with the negotiations to ensure a new school for the area is open for the start of the 2017 school year. The department has worked with other councils in the past to ensure that appropriate education facilities are provided where required.

As an example, the City of Canada Bay council has worked closely with the department in providing a site at peppercorn rent for a primary school at Victoria Avenue, Concord West. This will deliver much-needed facilities that will be shared by the school and local community. I assure the House and the member that this Government is committed to the provision of high-quality public education and the facilities to support its delivery. We are working with the community to ensure that there are adequate and appropriate facilities for this to occur. I thank the member for the question.

HUNTER COST OF LIVING

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I address my question to the energetic Minister for Resources and Energy.

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

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: How is the Government assisting the people of Newcastle by delivering on its commitment to cut the cost of living, and related matters?

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: The Minister has produced a box with a chain. It is clearly a prop and I ask you direct the Minister to remove it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Heffron will resume his seat. The Minister has not referred to it. The object is not now visible.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for Baulkham Hills for his question on a very important issue to the people of the Hunter Valley and across New South Wales. The Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering downward pressure on the cost of living for this region. Across the Hunter, household electricity charges are falling due to the actions taken by this Government to ensure the network businesses are run effectively and

efficiently. Already, Hunter customers have experienced a decrease in network costs of up to 1.7 per cent compared with the cost in 2013-14. Thanks to our reforms, network costs are likely to drop even further through to 2019. This will be reinforced by the Australian Energy Regulator in its upcoming regulatory determination.

In addition, the Government's deregulation of the retail electricity market has delivered a 1.5 per cent decrease to the 35 per cent of customers who have yet to switch to a competitive market contract. Our reform has also opened up the Hunter market to greater competition and customer choice, ensuring more offers and better deals are available for households and businesses. Added to this, customers are now experiencing further savings on their bills following the repeal of Labor's carbon tax. This means savings for the average Hunter electricity customer of between 6 to 8 per cent. This Government is delivering for New South Wales families, businesses and the Hunter.

While Labor sent electricity prices skyrocketing, we have reined them in and dragged them back down. Moreover, under this Government energy rebates are higher than ever with more customers eligible for and benefitting from assistance than was ever the case under those opposite. Nearly \$230 million has been provided this financial year to assist families with Labor's legacy of high energy costs. This is in stark contrast to those opposite, "the family", New South Wales Labor.

Mr Guy Zangari: What does that mean?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I am sure the member has read *The Godfather* book and seen the movie. I have done both.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: I ask that you request the Minister to apologise for his inappropriate hand gesture.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fairfield will resume his seat. The Minister has the call. The member for Fairfield will be removed from the Chamber if he continues to interject.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The latest and greatest announcement from Sussex Street came out this week, the fabled Stewart Avenue bypass.

Mr Guy Zangari: He is making imputations about Italians.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Fairfield that if he continues to interject he will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It is a relatively new concept for Labor because they have only been promising this to the people of Newcastle since 1960. We all know about Labor's hollow promises. In another 50 years they will be able to get out of that promise. This commitment is similar to their promise to truncate the rail line during their 16-year reign of terror. This is more of the same from Labor. It is not over-promise and under-deliver; it is just not delivering at all. It must be acknowledged, however, that this time something is different. This time the Sussex Street propaganda machine has seen that this vital piece of infrastructure will deliver for Labor's major stakeholder in that region. I hear you all ask, "Who is this fabled major stakeholder? Is it the people of Newcastle?" No. In true Labor form, the Leader of the Opposition is putting "the family" first. Who owns the land where this bypass will be built? Who would enjoy a massive financial windfall when taxpayers in the Hunter are forced to buy this land for millions of dollars? Why, it is none other than the family of the Labor candidate for Newcastle.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73. If the Minister wishes to make allegations against another member he should do so in a substantive motion. In that way, those he is accusing have a chance to reply to scurrilous claims made under privilege.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It has been reported in the press that, no doubt, everyone will be getting a piece of the pie. This seems to be Labor's theme in the region after all. This Labor candidate does get it, he holds true to the Labor values in that he provides for "the family". [*Time expired.*]

Question time concluded at 3.17 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Sessional Orders: Valedictory Speeches****Motion, by leave, by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:**

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered:

- (1) A motion may be moved without notice, amendment or debate for the business before the House to be interrupted at a specified time (but not so as to interrupt a Minister speaking) to permit a member to make a valedictory speech without a question being before the House. Any interrupted business shall be resumed on completion of the speech.
- (2) The time limit for valedictory speeches be 20 minutes.

POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION**Report**

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 103 of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996, the report of the Police Integrity Commission for the year ended 30 June 2014.

Ordered to be printed.

CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM**Report**

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 341 of the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993, the report of the Child Death Review Team for 2013.

Ordered to be printed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business****Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Tuesday 4 November 2014 to provide for the following routine of business:

- (1) at 12 noon, Speaker takes the chair;
- (2) ministerial statements;
- (3) giving of notices of motions (government business, bills, business with precedence);
- (4) question time;
- (5) ministerial statements;
- (6) papers;
- (7) committees—tabling of reports and notification of inquiries;
- (8) petitions;
- (9) announcement of the matter of public importance;
- (10) placing or disposal of business;
- (11) Speaker leaves the chair;
- (12) at 2.00 p.m. Speaker resumes the chair;
- (13) giving of general business notice of motions (general notices);
- (14) private members' statements;

- (15) at 3.30 p.m. government business;
- (16) private members' statements;
- (17) matter of public importance; and
- (18) the House to adjourn, without motion moved, at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

PETITIONS

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

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**.

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

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

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:

Flying Fox Control

Petition calling on the Government to prepare and implement a management strategy to deal with the impacts of flying fox colonies in urban and horticultural areas, received from **Mr Christopher Gulaptis**.

Gore Bay Terminal

Petition requesting the coordination of an integrated emergency response plan covering sea and land operations at Gore Bay Terminal, received from **Mr Anthony Roberts**.

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

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson—Slaughterhouse Monitoring—lodged 18 September and 14 October 2014 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

The Hon. Dominic Perrottet—Crown Reserve Trust Lands Lot 490, Kingscliff—lodged 5 August 2014 (Mr John Robertson)

CRIMINAL RECORDS AMENDMENT (HISTORICAL HOMOSEXUAL OFFENCES) BILL 2014

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with an amendment.

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendment.

Schedule of amendment referred to in message of 23 October 2014

No. 1 **Mr Khan [C2014-130]**

Page 4, schedule 1 [4], proposed section 19C (1) (b), line 26. Insert "of or" before "above".

Motion by Mr Bruce Notley-Smith agreed to:

That the Legislative Council amendment be agreed to.

Legislative Council amendment agreed to.

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

LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (STATUTORY REVIEW) BILL 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 15 October 2014.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.23 p.m.]: I speak on the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2014 on behalf of the shadow Minister for Liquor Regulation in the other place, the Hon. Walt Secord. I state at the outset that the Opposition will not oppose this bill. The object of the bill is to amend the Liquor Act 2007, and the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007. The amendments have been drafted in response to the 2013 Review of the Liquor Act 2007, and Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007. This statutory review made a total of 91 recommendations with the assistance of more than 100 submissions from industry, community groups, local councils and health groups.

Overall, this bill will enhance the existing framework of the Liquor Act 2007 while maintaining and strengthening the policy objectives in section 3 of the Liquor Act. These objectives include the regulation and control of the sale, supply and consumption of liquor in a way that meets community expectations and provides for licensees and regulators to ensure harm minimisation from the misuse of liquor, including preventing instances of alcohol-related violence through the responsible service and consumption of liquor. The reforms in schedule 1 will exempt not-for-profit organisations from the need to obtain a liquor licence for a maximum of six fundraising events a year. For instance, local sporting clubs will not need to take out an expensive liquor licence—sometimes rarely used—for a club fundraising event or an annual presentation night. This reform has the potential to save not-for-profit groups vital funds that could be redirected to other uses. I note that the bill contains safeguards to limit the circumstances and manner in which liquor can be sold at exempt fundraising events.

Many of the requirements that apply to the service of liquor at pubs and clubs will also apply at these fundraising events. For instance, the bartender who physically serves the liquor must have completed a responsible service of alcohol training course. This will ensure that intoxicated persons and minors are prevented from obtaining service. This is a common-sense measure. Food and free water must also be offered at the fundraising event. The fundraising event itself will be limited to no more than 250 people, and liquor will be permitted to be sold from a single point. There will be a maximum liquor sales period of no more than four continuous hours, and the not-for-profit host organisation must give 14 days' notice prior of the event to the secretary of NSW Trade and Investment, the local police and the local council.

The bill describes the circumstances in which a not-for-profit organisation would be precluded from the exemption to sell liquor without a liquor licence at a fundraising event. These include when the not-for-profit organisation has already obtained a limited liquor licence; if the secretary of NSW Trade and Investment has issued an order declaring the organisation to be ineligible for the exemption; if an order has been made by the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority and is in force that a limited liquor licence is not to be granted to any person on behalf of the organisation; or if in the preceding six months the holder of the limited liquor licence on behalf of the organisation has been the subject of disciplinary action in respect of liquor laws.

The final change to licensing is the removal of the requirement for not-for-profit organisations that sell liquor under a limited liquor licence to notify the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority of each event for which the licence will be relied upon. Instead, the bill proposes that not-for-profit organisations simply notify the NSW Police Force 14 days before the event. Overall, adequate safeguards have been put in place in respect of the proposed licensing exemptions for not-for-profit organisations within schedule 1 to the bill. The policy objective to promote the responsible consumption of alcohol is maintained while the reduction in formalities for not-for-profit organisations could lead to savings in cost and time.

The bill will amend the penalty regime for selling liquor to minors. As the shadow Minister for Youth and Healthy Lifestyles and as a mother of three young children, I feel strongly about this issue. The effects of underage drinking are known to all members. These are important provisions designed to ensure that minors do not obtain liquor from licensees. The bill proposes a new division 4 within part 7 of the Liquor Act that will strengthen existing penalties for selling liquor to minors on licensed premises. These penalties include the suspension or cancellation of a liquor licence if an offence has been proven in court, a penalty notice paid or an enforcement order issued by the State Debt Recovery Office. New section 130C provides that the secretary will issue a licensee with written notice to explain within 28 days why a liquor licence should not be suspended.

Under section 130D, for a second offence that occurs within 28 days to 12 months of the first offence, the liquor licence will be suspended automatically for a period of 28 days. Under section 130E, for a third offence that occurs within 28 days to 12 months of the second offence, the liquor licence will be cancelled and the licensee disqualified from holding a licence for 12 months. Schedule 1 [48] to [50] will toughen provisions relating to the service of alcohol to intoxicated individuals. Licensees will be required to take "all other reasonable steps to prevent intoxication on the licensed premises" as per a series of publically available guidelines to be issued by the secretary. I trust that these guidelines will meet community expectations of placing priority on the safe consumption of liquor.

Schedule 1 [51] to the bill will remove the words "because the person was intoxicated, violent, quarrelsome or disorderly" from section 77 of the Liquor Act, which concerns the non-voluntary exclusion of persons from a licensed premises. This amendment now clarifies that an individual will be committing an offence in attempting to re-enter a premise after they have been asked to leave. The bill will also modify the manner in which the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority can impose long-term banning orders on a person in the Kings Cross or central business district [CBD] precinct. Schedule 1 [54] to [56] and [58] to [60] will enable the authority to impose a banning order for up to 12 months if a person has been charged with or found guilty of a serious indictable offence involving violence that was committed in any public place, licensed premises or other premises, while the person or any victim of the offence was affected by alcohol.

Such a banning order could also be imposed if the serious indictable offence was committed on or in the vicinity of a licensed premise by the licensee or manager of the premise or by any person working or performing services on the premise. With regard to the Kings Cross and CBD precincts, schedule 1 [53] and [57] will enable the Minister to exempt licenced premises from patron identification scanning requirements designed to prevent persons subject to banning orders from entering licenced premises in those precincts. In his reply, I ask the Minister to give examples of where such exemptions will be granted.

Schedule 1 [29] to [32] will have the effect of establishing a new form of extended trading authorisation. These amendments will allow licenced premises located outside of Sydney, Newcastle, Central Coast and Wollongong regions to trade until 3.00 a.m. on up to 12 occasions, on an annual basis. This amendment is designed to cater for venues that may not be able to afford the \$2,000 to \$5,000 risk-based fee for full-time extended trading hours upon commencement of these measures in 2015. Other amendments contained within schedule 1 to the bill, which will amend the framework surrounding the provisions within schedule 3 to the bill, amend the Liquor Regulation 2008 to enable the authority to suspend or revoke a person's responsible service of alcohol [RSA] certification, or disqualify a person from holding RSA certification for a specified period of up to 12 months if a person has contravened their obligations in relation to the responsible service of alcohol.

There are a number of other amendments covering parity for all liquor producers by authorising beer and spirits producers to sell their products for consumption on licenced premises and at producers markets or fairs and industry shows to create parity with wine producers. There is also the exemption from identity-scanning requirements. For primary service authorisations, the bill spells out that the primary purpose of the business or activity carried out on the licenced premises to which an on-premise licence applies must not be the sale or supply of liquor at any time. The bill will introduce an alternative liquor licence transfer process under schedule 1 [41] by eradicating the need to apply to the authority for approval where there has not been a change in the ownership of the business carried on under the licence within a three-year period and if the person has not committed a serious breach of the Liquor Act in that time. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [3.33 p.m.]: I support the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2014. This bill implements significant reforms that are consistent with the Government's response to the 2013 statutory review of the Liquor Act 2007, and the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007. I acknowledge the presence in the House of the Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Deputy Premier, the Hon. Troy Grant. I commend the Minister for his work in bringing this bill to the House. The review was informed by feedback and submissions provided by industry, community advocates, government agencies, local councils and, of course, the health sector. Not surprisingly, that stakeholder feedback provided the Government with a broad range of views on how liquor laws in this State should be shaped and options for achieving this policy mix for New South Wales.

The objects of the Liquor Act provide a framework to regulate the sale and supply of liquor, and the operation of the liquor and related industries. For the benefit of the House, those objectives provide for the regulation of the sale, supply and consumption of liquor in a way that is consistent with community expectations and needs. They also facilitate their balanced development in the public interest of the liquor industry through a flexible and practical regulatory system with minimal formality and technicality. Finally, they contribute to the responsible development of related industries such as live music, entertainment and tourism. The bill contains a number of important harm minimisation reforms and other measures that are consistent with the objects of the Liquor Act to ensure the sale and supply of liquor is appropriately regulated.

The bill also contains a suite of measures to help reduce red tape and improve business viability across the liquor industry. However, the bill also recognises that the sale and supply of alcohol and the operation of licensed premises make a significant contribution to the New South Wales economy. In a lot of rural communities, such operations are a focal point of town life. The bill also recognises the important social role that underpins most licensed premises, especially in regional areas—such as my electorate of Northern Tablelands, as well as in the Deputy Premier's electorate—whether it be the local hotel or club where people gather for a meeting or function, a local restaurant people go to for a dinner with friends or the local sports club where communities come together to celebrate grassroots success.

A properly regulated liquor industry means that it can develop in a way that is consistent with the public interest, whereby the risk of harm arising from the sale, supply and consumption of alcohol is minimised. This is critical. However, regulation of the liquor industry does not mean piling on layer after layer of rules. It means Government regulates in such a way as to manage the risks associated with the sale and supply of alcohol and achieve the objects of the Liquor Act as effectively as possible. This means that where there is a case to remove red tape without impacting on the effectiveness of the regulatory regime, the Government should do so.

This bill contains a number of red-tape reduction measures that not only relate to commercial operators but extend to improving the sale or supply of alcohol by non-profit organisations that often rely upon the sale of liquor at community events as part of their fundraising efforts. The section dealing with exemption for

non-profit organisations is very important for rural communities. The bill will enable liquor to be sold in limited circumstances by non-profit community organisations at up to six fundraising events per year without the need to hold a liquor licence.

This reform is an important measure for those community organisations that may only sell liquor at one or two events a year, but can find the licence application process daunting and complex—it hampers their fundraising efforts as it proves to be very expensive. All of us have such organisations in our electorates. I acknowledge Sally White who is involved in the Guyra Polocrosse Club in the electorate of Northern Tablelands. Sally raised this issue with me not long after I was elected. The club holds just two functions a year at which alcohol is sold to help raise money and to bring visitors to the area. The club has found the current process very cumbersome. It was contemplating not applying for a licence because getting a licence was too costly for the events being held. I commend Sally for bringing forward that very important issue and for having it reflected in this bill.

To ensure the objects of the Liquor Act are not undermined, these exempted events will be subject to a range of responsible service and community protection safeguards to ensure they are conducted responsibly by legitimate community organisations and that this measure is not abused. These responsible service safeguards include fundamental responsible serving requirements prohibiting the sale and supply of liquor to a minor or an intoxicated person; requiring responsible service of alcohol training for any person selling and supplying liquor at that event; making food and free water available at all times; and having an adult committee member supervise the bar when minors are present.

To emphasise the fundraising nature of these small-scale events, such events will be limited to a maximum of 250 people, the sale of liquor will be for up to four hours between 6.00 a.m. and midnight and a single bar will sell and supply liquor. The bill will provide an effective response to any concerns about an organisation or the conduct of an event by allowing the Secretary of NSW Trade and Investment to prevent organisations from using this exemption unscrupulously and by allowing the secretary to issue directions or impose further controls on an event. I turn to the multi-occasion extended trading authorisation—another important measure for licensed premises in rural and regional New South Wales.

Amendments to the Liquor Act in January this year provided a framework for the introduction of the risk-based licence fee scheme that commences in 2015. Under this scheme all licensees will pay an annual fee to assist in offsetting the costs of liquor regulation that reflects the level of risk and regulatory intervention that is required. That annual fee includes a base fee ranging from \$100 up to \$2,000 per liquor licence, depending upon the type of liquor licence and other circumstances. In addition, venues that are authorised to trade after midnight on a permanent basis will pay a late-trading risk loading of up to \$5,000. The Government recognises that for some venues that trade after midnight only occasionally—the vast majority of those being in rural areas—the late-trading risk loading may have a significant impact on the viability of that business.

That is a particular issue for licensees in regional and rural areas of New South Wales where the local club or hotel may be the only venue available that can meet a limited demand for late-night facilities. It might be the only venue where people can hold a wedding reception or a New Year's Eve party or other important community events. I praise and highlight the Croppa Creek Bowling Club, which currently has a total of 28 members. The club is run by President Chris Densley and licensee Lawrie Timmins. They spoke to me earlier this year when these new licensing measures were announced because they were concerned that if something was not done to allow them to trade in limited circumstances after midnight they would have to close the doors. In fact, the bar takings for the year would not match the licensing fee that they would be required to pay.

The same can be said for the Bingara Sporting Club, and I thank Secretary Jenny Hawkins for approaching me about this issue. Fred Geldof, the Secretary Manager of the Uralla Bowling and Recreation Club, Lynton Rhodes, a liquor licensee in Tenterfield, and Andy Wright, the proprietor of the Walcha Road Hotel—all from the Northern Tablelands electorate—approached me with the very same concerns. I am very happy to say that the Government has listened and that those venues will have the opportunity to purchase an extended trading authorisation for a limited number of occasions. The viability of maintaining permanent extended trading to meet a limited demand for a small number of late-night functions annually is questionable given the lack of risk associated with these venues. A multi-occasion extended trading authorisation will enable those venues to trade after midnight occasionally to meet the local demand and to continue to provide a service to their community. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

This important initiative will enable small clubs and pubs in rural and regional New South Wales to provide a very important social service to a community by hosting important community events. The multi-occasion extended trading authorisation will require payment of a \$1,000 annual fee and enable a venue to relinquish its permanent extended trading while still being allowed to trade up until 3.00 a.m. up to 12 times annually. That is a massive difference. Instead of being hit with a \$5,000 fee, venues will pay \$1,000, which is much more affordable, for opportunities to trade up until 3.00 a.m. 12 times annually. This option will be particularly attractive to eligible registered clubs that have historical 24-hour trading entitlements but are in small areas that trade on a very irregular basis after midnight. I refer particularly to the Uralla Bowling and Recreation Club. The Secretary Manager, Fred Geldof, has been quite clear and quite vocal in explaining that his club is only trading after midnight three or four times a year. This provision is, therefore, very appropriate for his club.

For most eligible venues there will be no requirement to undertake a community impact statement, which will significantly minimise red tape and ensure that the scheme is practical and focused on its aim of reducing risk. For instance, a community impact statement will not be required for those registered clubs that surrender their unrestricted extended trading rights. This very sensible and pragmatic move addresses the risk aspects, but does not stop the important role that those clubs and pubs play in the social fabric of rural communities. For other types of licensed premises, including hotels, a community impact statement will not be required where the trading hours proposed under the new authorisation do not exceed the permanent extended trading hours that are already permitted.

The bill demonstrates the Government's commitment to getting the balance right between rigorous oversight and regulation of the sale and supply of alcohol, and the sustainable development of the industry in this State. I commend all of those licensed premises I have mentioned. I thank the Minister for being so willing to listen to the concerns of clubs and pubs in my electorate and right throughout rural New South Wales. He has presented to this House a very sensible and practical suite of responses to the mandatory reviews, which allow the industry to grow but also deal with the important risk elements that are so important across New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [3.47 p.m.]: The Liquor Legislation Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2014 makes a number of changes to the Liquor Act 2007 in response to the recent review. Having a vibrant late-night economy is essential to Sydney's liveability and its status as a global city. Residents, particularly young people, and visitors need places to go for a drink and dance, to see live music and shows, and to socialise late at night. But we must also ensure safety for patrons and protect amenity for residents. Provisions in the Liquor Act are central to getting this balance right.

Some changes proposed in this bill are routine or address anomalies in the legislation. Other changes will help improve the responsible service of alcohol, such as escalating penalties for serving minors, guidelines to prevent intoxication and powers to impose late trading conditions like glass bans during the two hours before midnight. As a member whose electorate includes the highest number of licensed premises and has been the location of high levels of alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour, I support these measures. Kings Cross, the central business district and Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, in my electorate have been the subject of successive changes to the Act since 2007 to address violence on the streets and on premises, including liquor freezes, restrictions on drink purchases after midnight, identification scanning and banning orders and, of course, changes earlier this year packaged with the 1.30 a.m. lockouts.

Police and some residents in Kings Cross tell me there are some improvements; however, businesses report a significant and damaging downturn in patronage, and young people complain that inner-city night life is dying. Because there have been so many changes it will be difficult to determine which provisions have made an impact and which have merely harmed business and nightlife. I am disappointed that this bill did not take the opportunity to provide more flexibility for well-run and safe venues under the scheme. Of particular concern has been the 1.30 a.m. lockout. While lockouts are an important tool for penalising unsafe and poorly managed venues, the evidence that they reduce violence in hotspots is not strong.

Studies elsewhere have favoured earlier cessation of alcohol service as the key driver in reducing violence over lockouts; the lockout is reported to be having the biggest impact on the vibrancy of Sydney's night-time scene. The Government needs to work with well-run venues, especially those that provide entertainment late at night, as alternatives to binge drinking, to establish a more sophisticated response to alcohol-related violence. When people dance, or watch a band or show they do not drink as much. A New Democracy Citizens' Jury report supported exemptions for venues with a proven record of good behaviour, no incidents and lower risks to public safety, and I believe there is wider support for such a policy.

The Government should provide exemptions during important tourist events, such as the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, for well-run safe venues so that the city can provide a great experience for visitors who will otherwise be disappointed by the restrictions. I call on the Government to work with Mardi Gras and Oxford Street venues towards this outcome. The bill introduces a new requirement for the primary purpose of an on-premises licence to be available at all times that liquor is served. Many small bars in the inner city—I mean bars with a capacity of up to 120 patrons—have on-premises licences because they serve specialty food. They often close the kitchen before they close the bar, allowing the chef and staff to clean up while the bar continues serving liquor. If kitchen staff have to clean up after closure, the extra cost would make these bars unviable.

This is a problem for all restaurants, including fine dining. Often customers remain seated after their plates have been cleared and continue to socialise over a few drinks while restaurant staff clear the kitchen. It is well known that it is difficult to make a profit from food, and liquor services usually subsidise the primary food purpose. One aim of the Liquor Act 2007 was to diversify the types of liquor venues available, in response to Clover Moore's small bars campaign. We do not want a return to the days when Sydney had nothing but beer barns and loud nightclubs. I understand the concerns about preventing restaurants morphing into beer barns. However, this could be addressed through a grace period such as one or two hours during which liquor can be served after the primary purpose concludes, as recommended in the report on the statutory review of the Liquor Act 2007 by former Commissioner of the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing Michael Foggo.

The Act must retain the flexibility to ensure that boutique restaurants and bars remain economically viable, and I call on the Government to withdraw the proposed changes to section 24 (3). I support changes in the bill that will allow venues in the Kings Cross and Sydney CBD precincts to apply for an exemption from identification scanning requirements for the whole or part of the premises where the Minister is satisfied that it is unlikely to increase alcohol-related violence or antisocial behaviour. The Kings Cross Liquor Accord, which supports ID scanners in venues, is concerned that smaller venues that close early but after midnight are therefore subject to the scanning requirements, which the accord states is onerous given the risks.

The accord also states that while bottle shops attached to licensed venues in Kings Cross have to close at 10.00 p.m., many cannot let customers in after 9.00 p.m. without scanning their IDs, putting them at a disadvantage to other bottle shops. I hope the new provisions will help address these problems. I am concerned that ID scanning is still required on week nights when risks of violence are very low and most patrons are locals dining or having a quiet drink. The impost on venues and locals is great. I have been contacted by constituents in their 50s who do not drive and cannot afford new identification and who are now unable to drink at their local after 9.00 p.m.

The accord reports that venues say they are increasingly turning back patrons with expired or unacceptable ID. There needs to be more flexibility in what forms of ID are acceptable. I support changes to allow community organisations to sell liquor at fundraising events with restrictions. This will make it easier for non-profits to raise funds and engage with their communities. Our relationship with alcohol is complex and our legislation must reflect that. I hope that the Government will bring forward the review of the lockout laws to next year so that we can ensure that Sydney has a vibrant nightlife scene and safer streets.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [3.53 p.m.]: Nothing would give me more pleasure than to give the Deputy Premier a good whack around the ears with this bill, but it is not bad. I have some concerns and I reserve my non-opposition to the bill on the basis of the advice I have been given about some of my concerns. I will read them into *Hansard*. The Liquor Legislation Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2014 follows legislation introduced earlier this year to deal primarily with violence in the Sydney CBD and specifically Kings Cross. I imagine that this comes as a surprise to people in the Cessnock community, whether they be publicans, licensees, wineries and vineyard producers with cellar doors, or even wine producers who do not sell to the public at any time. I mention wineries in particular.

I note that the Minister has adjusted the fee or charge for wineries. Indeed, after talking to the Minister's staff on this matter, I am a little surprised that we do not have a registration process for all liquor licences in the State. In essence, the fee for wineries and vineyards will be about \$100. It would be something akin—these are my words, not the Minister's words—to an administration fee which simply allows for a licence to be followed, tracked and pursued during any given year. That is reasonable. I am concerned that wineries and vineyard producers may or may not need a licence in the future and be tracked. I am talking specifically about wineries that produce wine and juice but do not have a point of sale. They simply sip their juice or ship their juice or wine to another label or brand. A number of wine producers in the Hunter Valley do not hold a brand. They do not bottle the juice they produce but they certainly produce a good juice.

Another concern relates to sporting clubs. I note that the bill provides for not-for-profit organisations to sell product on up to six occasions. Most of us appreciate that there are more than six games in a football, cricket or netball season. Indeed, there may be 10, 12 or 15 games, or whatever the case may be. After talking to the Minister's staff, I understand that the first six occasions will be exempt and free. However, if a sports club wants to sell alcohol on more than six occasions, because it has 10, 12 or 15 home games, it will need to pay a minimal fee of about \$100 on each occasion. Again, it is about tracking when and how frequently alcohol is sold. Another concern relates to pubs in regional areas that are simply not a high risk. The publicans and licensees in my area were afraid that they would be charged \$5,000 per year.

It frightened the heck out of many operators. Again, after talking to the Minister's staff, I understand that the fee will be more like \$1,000; if they want to trade until three o'clock in the morning there will be an allowance to do so on some special occasions but they may face other charges if they want to do so repeatedly and regularly as part of their business. I return to the point that this legislation is before us today as a result of terrible violence in the Sydney CBD and Kings Cross in particular. We need to act, and the bill will go some way towards that. I thank the Minister and his staff for engaging with me about my concerns and for the adjustments that have been made which will directly affect the people I have the great pleasure to represent—the wineries and cellar doors.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [3.58 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2014. The 2013 statutory review of the Liquor Act and the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act recognised that the objectives of the liquor regulatory system are valid and appropriate. However, the review found that improvements could be made to achieve greater transparency and improved efficiency, and to promote a targeted risk-based approach to enforcement and compliance.

The Liquor Legislation Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2014 will help to achieve these outcomes by implementing key recommendations made by the review, as well as additional reforms outlined in the Government's response. Time lines and greater transparency will be promoted through mandatory publication requirements, as well as through the inclusion of new objects in the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act. Important harm minimisation reforms in the bill will help to ensure the sale and supply of liquor is appropriately regulated in a way that is consistent with the objects of the Liquor Act. These reforms will help protect young people through a tough new escalating penalty regime where liquor is sold to minors, and by requiring responsible supervision where parents and guardians supply liquor to their children.

The bill will also emphasise the need for industry staff to comply with their responsible serving obligations through measures that can result in a person's responsible service of alcohol certification being suspended or revoked for non-compliance. These measures build on the wide range of reforms introduced by the Government since 2012 to help reduce alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour in the community. The bill will also reduce unnecessary costs and red tape by exempting non-profit organisations from having to acquire a liquor licence for infrequent fundraising functions that are low risk, and by introducing a streamlined process for liquor licence transfers. Other measures in the bill will help to improve business viability, particularly for producers who support local economies and tourism in regional and rural areas.

I thank the member for Bankstown for her contribution to this debate. She supported the measures taken by this Government to increase penalties relating to the sale of alcohol to young people. This legislation is not about targeting good, honest, pubs, clubs or bottle shops. The Government knows of issues in the packaged liquor sector and it will throw the book at anyone caught selling takeaway liquor to minors. In relation to the exemption process for ID scanners, the member for Bankstown asked if I would cite an example of an exemption being granted by the Minister under the Act. It would be unwise to predict what those circumstances would be, without proper examination or judgement, other than to say that with the exemption lying with the Minister, the level of scrutiny of any exemption for an ID scanner would be significant and would only be granted on good and valid grounds. The community has already given us a number of examples that may well qualify for that exemption where there is a duplication of ID scanners in premises because of the rigidity of the current rule, where the exemption may or may not be appropriate.

I thank the member for Northern Tablelands and the member for Cessnock for their contributions. They talked about people in their communities who have approached them to raise very real issues about the application of the Government's proposed reforms and legislation, and the significant impact it would have on

community and industry when there was simply not the commensurate risk for those actions. Since this Government was elected to office it has listened to the community and responded appropriately. The member for Cessnock approached me with some of the very real and live issues concerning the impact in his electorate of the recommendations of the review and the Government's position. I believe that we have landed at the right place in that regard, and further work is being done to more clearly and accurately describe in regulation the issues he raised concerning producers rather than points of sale and volumes. I am not sure whether Dr Jurd's Jungle Juice, a well-known beverage in the Cessnock electorate, will be included.

Mr Clayton Barr: It should be banned by legislation.

Mr TROY GRANT: I note the interjection of the member for Cessnock. I thank him for making himself available to cite some real case studies of how it will impact on his community. His contribution was very helpful. As I committed to, I operate on an open-door policy and welcome any member who wants to raise their concerns regarding my ministerial portfolio. I thank the member for Sydney for his contribution. He asked how we know if the measures introduced last January or February have worked. He has correctly noted the significant density of licensed premises in his electorate so this reform, and the ongoing regulation of liquor licensing in the Sydney electorate, is acknowledged as very important to him.

I am happy to inform the member for Sydney that we have already committed to a thorough evaluation of the plan of management for Sydney's central business district. There is also a provision in the Act requiring a review of the lock-out and cessation service after two years. This is appropriate as the full impacts of behaviour change will take time to manifest, and the Government will respond appropriately. The Government does not accept that it is unreasonable to require current identification to be available for scanning. No identification regime could be rigorous if it accepted expired identification. The intention is to ensure that the identifications scanned are appropriate records of the people entering these high-risk venues. Early results are showing reductions not only in assaults but also in other crimes such as theft in the Kings Cross area. This is because people are aware that they are being scanned, and if they are doing the wrong thing they will be held to account.

Finally, the member for Sydney asked about small bars. I am happy to inform the House that the challenge for restaurants with a primary service authorisation is that they remain a restaurant. If a premises wishes to operate as a bar, a small bar licence is available and is the appropriate licence. This is not subject to the current licence freeze in the Sydney central business district area. The Liberal-Nationals Government understands the need to strike the right balance between individual and industry responsibility. The bill will help to achieve this balance and in doing so will ensure that liquor regulation focuses on supporting vibrant and safe communities across New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Troy Grant 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.

BIOSECURITY 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) [4.08 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The biosecurity status of New South Wales is the envy of the world, and it is crucial that we maintain this status to protect our primary industries sector from pests, diseases and weeds. The Biosecurity Bill 2014 is a single

piece of modern legislation that will give New South Wales the essential tools and powers to manage pests, diseases, weeds and contaminants and minimise biosecurity threats to the New South Wales economy, environment and community. It will ensure we can respond efficiently and flexibly to biosecurity risks, regardless of whether it is an emergency or an ongoing management issue. I have spoken on many occasions about the seriousness of biosecurity risks not only within this State but across our nation.

A major biosecurity event can have far-reaching implications, from on the farm to the entire nation's economy, through trade restrictions and implications. For example, the infestation of red imported fire ant in south-eastern Queensland has severely impacted on trade in fodder and nursery products from the infested area. Left uncontrolled, it can result in major impacts on people's lives and recreational pursuits. It has cost the Australian and State governments more than \$400 million in eradication costs to date and has the potential to cost the Australian economy \$8.5 billion over 70 years if not controlled.

Closer to home, last year an outbreak of the highly pathogenic H7 avian influenza on two farms in the Central West led to the destruction of half a million layer hens. And who can forget the equine influenza outbreak in 2007 and 2008, which temporarily shut down the racing industry and did terrible things for pony clubs and show societies? These biosecurity outbreaks are serious and have far-reaching implications, which is why it is crucial we have a legislative framework in place that is modern and responsive. In 2013 I released the NSW Biosecurity Strategy, which outlined a clear vision for a more streamlined, effective and integrated biosecurity system. The strategy is underpinned by the recognition that biosecurity is a shared responsibility. This means that everyone has a responsibility to protect our economy, environment and our communities from the harmful impacts of plant and animal pests and diseases, weeds and contaminants.

This bill supports the nationally agreed principle that biosecurity is indeed a shared responsibility between governments, industries and individuals. While government is not solely responsible for biosecurity, it does have some specific responsibilities such as providing the legislative framework that I am presenting today. The primary objective of the bill is to provide modern legislation to better manage biosecurity risks in New South Wales. It provides a framework for the prevention, elimination, minimisation and management of biosecurity risks. The bill adopts a risk-based approach for biosecurity. People and organisations with biosecurity duties, including government, will be expected to evaluate biosecurity risks posed and to develop appropriate solutions to address those risks.

Science and intelligence will continue to be used to identify, assess and prioritise risks. Pests, weeds and diseases do not recognise jurisdictional boundaries or fences. It is therefore crucial that we adopt a tenure-neutral approach to management and have legislation that is compatible with neighbouring jurisdictions. We also need to be working together at a regional level to achieve shared outcomes as efficiently and effectively as possible. These principles form the cornerstone of this bill. As part of the extensive industry and community consultation process on the framework for this bill, stakeholders identified that biosecurity is fundamentally important because it is the biggest threat to agriculture, it can result in a loss of competitive edge, active management is required to protect our natural environment, current legislation can result in business and government being buried in red tape and it is a protection against irreversible damage.

Stakeholders also noted that industry codes of practice are the most effective process to manage risk and encourage innovation supported by government regulation to enforce compliance. This bill responds to all those points. The passage of this bill will pave the way for the repeal, either in whole or in part, of 10 full Acts and sections of four other Acts with a single Act that has the flexibility to effectively respond to all biosecurity situations. This will equate to the repeal of over 570 years worth of legislation, significantly reducing the red tape impact on our farmers. Authorised officer powers will be consistent across the biosecurity spectrum and government, industry and the community can work in partnership to determine priorities and management responses. Our world-class biosecurity system will be strengthened and our State cemented as a leader in biosecurity.

The bill provides modern tools that will minimise response delays and ensure responsibilities are clear during an emergency. It will help New South Wales maintain its enviable market access and reputation for high-quality, safe and disease-free food and fibre. The bill will importantly complement the New South Wales Government's Local Land Services reform, which has brought together the State's agricultural production advice, biosecurity, natural resource management and emergency management into a single customer-focused organisation. Working closely with the Department of Primary Industries, Local Land Services is accountable for delivering services to protect industries from pests and disease and help communities respond to

emergencies. Local Land Services and its associated planning activities will reflect national priorities in relation to biosecurity and emergency management, such as the National Livestock Identification System [NLIS] and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity.

Where appropriate, this bill will provide statutory support to underpin actions required under regional plans, for example, obligations outlined in any adopted regional strategic plans for widespread weeds. These regional plans must be approved by the Minister for Primary Industries and, where there are natural resource management components in the plans, the concurrence of the Minister for the Environment is required. When we came to government we said we would make New South Wales number one again. This Biosecurity Amendment Bill delivers on goal 28 of our 10-year plan to achieve that—the need to ensure that New South Wales is ready to deal with major emergencies and natural disasters. A priority action under this goal is to develop nationally consistent plant and animal biosecurity legislation and implement it by 2015.

Following the successful passage of this bill, a further bill will be brought to this place at a later date that will provide for the repeal or partial repeal of the current relevant Acts and the enactment of any necessary savings, transitional and consequential provisions. This bill has been brought forward so there is no delay in progressing the development of the subordinate legislation with stakeholders and thus the commencement of this important reform. For biosecurity management to be effective and timely, it is important that everyone accepts responsibility and actively participates. The bill defines key concepts such as biosecurity matter, carriers and biosecurity impact. The bill includes a biosecurity duty that requires any person who deals with biosecurity matter or a carrier and who knows, or ought reasonably to know, the biosecurity risk posed or likely to be posed, to ensure that as far as reasonably practicable, the biosecurity risk is prevented, eliminated or minimised.

The bill provides clear guidance on what is meant by "as far as reasonably practicable". In practical terms what this means is, for example, a person should not allow weeds to spread to a neighbouring property. However, if certain weeds are endemic and widespread, there is little risk that the weeds would have an adverse impact on surrounding properties so a person's duty to prevent or minimise the risk is proportionate to the impact. This could mean that the person would not have to do anything or just control the weed along his or her boundary. However, if a particular weed has been determined to be a priority for a region, the occupier should comply with the management arrangements that are in place to eradicate or suppress the spread of that weed. Where a property has signposted instructions on how to comply with a quality assurance program that it is a part of, or certain sanitary steps are required to be performed prior to entry, or if certain areas are off limits to unauthorised entries, any person entering that property or area will be on notice about the biosecurity risks.

If that person deals with biosecurity matter on the property and fails to take all reasonably practicable measures to discharge the general biosecurity duty in relation to that dealing, that person may be liable to prosecution. The bill provides for mandatory measures to be included in regulation with regard to particular biosecurity matter. For example, this could include things such as how to manage a certain weed, restrictions on swill feeding of pigs, the type of information that must be captured and provided in relation to the movement of stock or how agricultural machinery should be cleaned before leaving a particular area. Industry standards may also be developed that provide clear direction on how a product should be treated before it is sent to market or how enclosures should be constructed if non-indigenous animals are kept or where a vehicle may be parked overnight if it is carrying bees.

The bill does not require prescriptive lists before action can be taken to respond to a risk. The bill provides the tools to allow a biosecurity response to be mounted regardless of whether something is included on a list. Rather than this list-based approach, the response will be dictated by the level of risk posed. This means that preventative or mitigation action can be taken immediately reducing the risk of spread and impact in that initial critical period. Longer-term management controls can also be implemented regardless of whether the matter in question is on a list. This will result in less confusion for stakeholders and improved administrative and operational efficiencies. There will, however, be a list of prohibited matter included in a schedule to the Act that can be amended by regulation. This list will include biosecurity matter that is prohibited in the whole of the State and also biosecurity matter that is prohibited in only part of the State.

Prohibited matter is matter that we do not have or do not want in New South Wales or in a part of the State because it will result in a significant adverse impact on the economy, environment or community, for example, foot and mouth disease, parthenium weed and highly pathogenic avian influenza. Matter that we know is here but only presents occasionally, such as anthrax and tick fever, is also listed as prohibited matter, as it can have a significant adverse impact on the economy, environment or community, and active programs are in place

to eradicate every new outbreak of these problem pests and diseases. Owners, occupiers and persons in charge of premises or things where prohibited matter is present or suspected to be present will have to notify the Department of Primary Industries immediately.

This notification obligation will also apply to professionals who are consulted about the prohibited matter. These people will also have a duty to ensure that the biosecurity risk is prevented, eliminated or minimised, although this duty will usually be discharged in consultation with the Department of Primary Industries. The bill also provides that it is an offence for any person to deal with prohibited matter. There was some discussion about whether a permitted list would be a more efficient way to manage biosecurity matter. Consistent with the Government's response to the weeds review, we believe the tools prescribed in this bill are a much more effective and efficient way to manage risk. Just because something is not on the prohibited matter list does not mean it can necessarily be imported into New South Wales.

There are other tools that can be used to prevent or limit its entry. The bill contains a number of tools for managing biosecurity risks. I will start with emergencies. Strong and decisive action is required immediately and it is appropriate that government lead such a response. If such action was not taken, highly pathogenic and contagious diseases like avian influenza or mad cow disease could quickly spread and cripple industries, with devastating impacts on the environment and economy. The bill provides that the Secretary of Trade and Investment may make an emergency order if satisfied or if it is reasonably suspected that there is a current, suspected or imminent biosecurity risk that may have a significant biosecurity impact.

Also, if an authorised officer reasonably suspects that an emergency is happening or is imminent, he or she will be able to activate some limited emergency powers until an emergency order is made by the secretary. A Hendra outbreak is a classic example of where these powers may be exercised. Hendra virus is zoonotic and often fatal to humans. Accordingly, if an infection was suspected in a horse, measures to restrict access by humans to infected or at-risk animals would immediately be necessary. As first responders to an emergency, these powers are considered appropriate. Training and governance arrangements will be implemented to ensure these powers are used as intended. The secretary may make an emergency order for up to six months, with the first objective being to isolate an affected or potentially affected area, limit the spread of the emergency biosecurity matter and, ultimately, eradicate it.

Similar to what occurred when we had that dreadful outbreak of equine influenza in 2007, the emergency order will allow for zones to be established so that less stringent rules can apply where appropriate. Emergency permits may also be issued to allow for restricted movement into and out of the area if considered appropriate. These measures will allow the experts to get on with the job of eradicating the risk while minimising the disruption to business and the community as much as possible. The second tool that can be activated to allow a rapid response where a biosecurity risk or impact is identified, or in those instances where short-term management of a biosecurity risk or impact is required, is a control order.

The primary aim of a control order is to eradicate the biosecurity matter, although an order may also be made for preventative or interim measures. A control order can apply to the whole of the State or to parts of it. The order will be issued for a period considered necessary to achieve an outcome but no longer than five years. Five years is considered appropriate as some plant species have varying germination periods due to physiological differences and environmental factors. Success cannot be measured until that cycle is complete. A control order can be extended if necessary. For example, parthenium weed can drop 25,000 seeds per plant every four weeks if left unhindered. It could be up to seven years before that seed bank could be considered exhausted. Chilean needle grass seed typically remains viable for four years. If we stop management action too early the program may lose momentum and compromise the end goal of eradication.

Biosecurity zones may be made to manage, reduce or eradicate a biosecurity risk or impact over an extended period. A biosecurity zone can also apply to the whole of the State or to part of it. The actions and limitations that may be required within a zone are similar to those for a control order. The main difference between a biosecurity zone and a control order is that biosecurity zones are primarily for long-term management of particular biosecurity matter, and that they are made by regulation and therefore subject to the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989. A biosecurity zone could be used to manage Queensland fruit fly, an endemic pest in much of eastern Australia that can seriously impact market access.

While Queensland fruit fly is not a regulated pest in the majority of New South Wales, it is regulated in the Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area in south-western New South Wales and north-western Victoria, where there is large-scale production of citrus, table grapes and stone fruit destined for interstate and export markets.

These three industries have agreed to partner with the New South Wales and Victorian governments to fund an ongoing program to control fruit flies so that export market access opportunities can be maximised. A biosecurity zone could restrict the movement of potential carriers of Queensland fruit fly, provide for an ongoing monitoring program to determine whether infestations of Queensland fruit fly have occurred, and authorise treatment of those infestations.

Another important tool in this bill is the ability to issue permits for appropriate actions that would otherwise be contrary to the Act. For example, in relation to dealing with prohibited matter, or a dealing that would otherwise contravene an order, regulation or condition imposed under the bill, a permit may be issued. A permit may be issued either to an individual or to a group of people. Approval to grant a permit will be commensurate with the situation and level of risk, and will include appropriate conditions. In addition to control orders and biosecurity zones, where the mandatory requirements for mitigation and management of specific biosecurity risks are specified, the bill provides for the adoption of regulatory standards.

These standards could include industry codes of practice that provide details on how to identify hazards and manage risks in relation to particular biosecurity matter—for example, hygiene measures for dealing with sick or dead birds or cattle, or hygiene practices that must be followed on poultry farms and in piggeries. In some instances compliance with these regulatory standards may be sufficient to discharge a person's general biosecurity duty; however, in other cases they may specify that they are minimum standards and that further risk measures may be required. As happened in the development of the framework for this bill, biosecurity zones and other regulations will be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including relevant levels of government, community, industry and professional associations.

As always, any regulations made under this bill will also be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. The Department of Primary Industries will continue to implement a risk-based approach to compliance and enforcement in line with the quality regulatory services initiative. Authorised officers will continue to play a crucial role in promoting biosecurity as a shared responsibility, identifying risks and assisting people in the discharge of their biosecurity duties and other obligations under this bill. Powers of authorised officers in this bill are consistent with those available under current legislation. There has been no softening of these powers and there are clear limitations prescribed as to when powers can be exercised. Authorised officers will continue to have balanced and flexible enforcement tools available, which range from undertakings, directions and orders to penalty infringement notices.

Offences in the bill reflect the high risk and impact of someone not doing the right thing, including executive liability offences, and are based on two categories or tiers. A category 1 offence is one that is committed intentionally or recklessly and attracts a higher penalty than a category 2 offence, which is a strict liability offence. Authorised officers may be appointed by the Secretary to NSW Trade and Investment and, in the case of weeds, by a local control authority consistent with current arrangements under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993. Registering people who deal with certain biosecurity matter such as bees or non-indigenous animals, provides an opportunity to better manage the risk imposed by those animals through stronger tracing capacity, advisory opportunities and the ability to notify about relevant developments in a timely manner.

Registration provisions are available under some of our current legislation. This bill will consolidate the best sections of those requirements and ensure that they can be applied to a variety of biosecurity matters or dealings as appropriate. The bill includes a provision that may be issued via condition of registration, if appropriate, to require a registered person or entity to take out and maintain a policy of insurance, or evidence of alternative arrangements, to ensure continuity of care for a registered animal in cases where the registered person is no longer able to provide that care. The bill also makes provision for dealings with biosecurity matter that will be prohibited. These are set out in schedule 3 to the bill and include dealing with a non-indigenous animal that is currently classified under the Non-Indigenous Animals Act as a category 1a or 1b animal. While new registrations with respect to these animals will be prohibited, it is proposed that the second bill I referred to earlier will include appropriate transitional provisions to enable persons who currently have a licence to keep a category 2 and category 3a animal.

The bill will also allow for recognition of registrations in other jurisdictions—for example, short-term keeping of bees that are registered in Victoria, or if an animal needs to be brought into New South Wales for veterinary care. This can be accommodated either via an exemption or the issuing of a permit. The bill also includes a regulation-making power that will ensure that New South Wales can continue to recognise existing schemes such as the National Livestock Identification Scheme [NLIS], property identification codes and registers, and for additional schemes to be implemented in the future if identification and tracing schemes are required for other biosecurity matter or carriers of biosecurity matter.

Other sections of the bill outline interstate certification assurance and audits. They also outline the fact that New South Wales is a signatory to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity that was developed to improve the national biosecurity system by identifying the roles and responsibilities of governments. It outlines the priority areas for collaboration to minimise the impact of pests and disease on Australia's economy, environment and the community. All those things are taken into consideration. Local Control Authorities also play a crucial role in weed management and their functions are reflected in this bill. It is appropriate that they continue to participate in regional planning activities.

It is appropriate that those stakeholders who create or propagate risk or market failure should contribute to the cost of minimising those risks. The bill therefore provides for the recovery of administrative costs and other amounts. The biosecurity strategy includes a threat decision tree that provides guidance on when government should be involved in a situation and who should pay. This process will be used to ensure that costs are efficiently and equitably allocated. A new Biosecurity Act will expand the scope of our existing legislation to include protection of the economy, environment and community, consistent with our national commitments. The bill will deliver a responsive and consistent statutory framework which will promote economic growth, productivity and competitiveness in line with the goals of NSW 2021 and the NSW Biosecurity Strategy.

Importantly, the bill facilitates shared responsibility and takes a risk-based approach using a responsive regulatory model, which is more likely to achieve long-term biosecurity outcomes by creating positive social norms around biosecurity engagement and compliance. This bill has been a mammoth undertaking. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work and tireless dedication of people such as Dianna Watkins and Andrew Sanger, two very fine public servants within the Department of Primary Industries. I also acknowledge staff from the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services and the Department of Primary Industries, including Susan Alchin and Jessica Bommer, who are seated in the gallery today. Time precludes me from going into the detail of every section of this bill, but if members have any questions about any aspect then I invite them to approach my office. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Pursuant to resolution condolence motion for the Honourable Ronald Joseph Mulock, AO, proceeded with.

DEATH OF THE HONOURABLE RONALD JOSEPH MULLOCK, AO, A FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN AND MEMBER FOR PENRITH

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I welcome to the gallery Mrs Mulock, Mark and Liz, Paul and Cathy, Jane and Kevin, and their children.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this House extends to the family the deep sympathy of members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained by the death on 4 September 2014 of the Hon. Ronald Joseph Mulock, a former Minister of the Crown.

I pay tribute to the Hon. Ron Mulock, AO, who passed away recently at the age of 84. Ron Mulock led a life of extraordinary service to the Penrith community, to the church, to the sports of rugby league and cricket, and to the people of New South Wales. Ron spent his formative years in Penshurst during the Great Depression and his experience as a foster child helped to inform his wonderful devotion to family in later life. As a young lawyer Ron made the momentous decision to move to Penrith with the idea of starting his own law firm, a decision for which our local community will forever be grateful.

Penrith in the 1950s was a country town. As Ron himself noted, it was basically "a long main street with some structures where you could tie up your horse, four or five hotels and a lot of small-dwelling development on-site on the western end of where the plaza is now". Ron became a regular attendee at meetings of Penrith council and in 1965 he made the decision to run for council as an Independent and was duly elected. Ron joined the Australian Labor Party [ALP] in 1968 and held the position of mayor between 1968 and 1971. He was approached to run for the State seat of Nepean. As a member of the Liberal Party who now represents Penrith, our side's missing out on recruiting Ron was a lost opportunity. I have heard rumours that we had another crack but missed out again.

Ron was elected as a member of this place in February 1971, and he remained here for the next 17 years. After a redistribution he became the member for Penrith in 1973. It is an honour for me to be representing the seat that Ron held with such distinction for so many years. He completed his parliamentary career as the member for St Marys. Ron became a Minister in the Wran Government and held a number of portfolios, including Justice, Health and Education, before being elected as Deputy Premier in 1984. Most appropriately, he finished his time in government as Attorney General. I may be corrected by historians in this place but there are very few people who have held four such significant portfolios. In 2008, Ron was made a life member of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party, an honour which he regarded as one of his finest achievements.

Ron's service to the people of New South Wales during his parliamentary career was remarkable, yet it is his lasting legacy to Penrith and Western Sydney in the form of providing higher educational opportunities that will endure. His foresight and hard work led to the establishment of the University of Western Sydney in 1989, which will go down in history as something that transformed the region and the lives of future generations. Thousands of young people are now able to attend university in their region. For many, they will be the first in their families to go to university. It is a lasting legacy of a truly great man. There can be no greater gift than the gift of education.

Ron also made a wonderful contribution on the sports field. As a cricketer he played first grade as a fast bowler for St George. I heard that coming off a long run he had a pretty mean bouncer, which he regularly peppered batsmen with. He played also for Waverley and Cumberland between 1949 and 1962. He was pretty good. He was the competition's leading wicket taker in 1959 and 1960 and spent two years in the New South Wales squad. He served as vice-president of the New South Wales Cricket Association for many years, under the great Alan Davidson, where he continued his love and passion for cricket.

I recall that I had been a member of Parliament for about 12 months when I ran into Ron at a Tiger O'Reilly lunch at the Sydney Cricket Ground. I felt I was being tested by the master. I spent 45 minutes in the back corner of the room, did not have a drink or eat lunch, while he tested me on my knowledge about the Parliament and Penrith and gave me his views on every single issue. Even at that lunch he was connected to his community and wanted to know what was going on. It was a remarkable experience for me. As I said, I felt like I had been tested by the master. Ron began a lifetime of support for the mighty Penrith Panthers upon their admission to the national rugby league competition in 1967. Win, lose or draw, he would be in the sheds after a game to help celebrate or commiserate. In the early days there was more commiserating than celebrating, and no doubt that is why he is held in such high esteem by all those who have donned the Penrith Panthers jumper.

A lasting memory for many in Penrith is Ron sitting on the sidelines of the ground when Penrith won its first premiership. Ron was a patron of the club for more than 30 years. One of the happiest days of his life was when Penrith won the premiership in 1991. Ron's support for the Panthers was just an extension of his commitment to the local community, a community which he grew to love. I could argue it is a community that he grew himself. Ron moved to Penrith at a time when it was small enough that everyone knew each other. His willingness to assist everyone, especially those less fortunate, meant that he was always amongst friends. He was held in high regard and his ability to remember people's names was legendary.

Ron had two other great loves: his family and the church. Ron and his wife, Desley, were active members of the Catholic Church at St Nicholas for many years, where they formed many enduring friendships. His service to the church was recognised with a Papal Knighthood earlier this year in a ceremony conducted by the Bishop at Parramatta Cathedral. I am sure he held this appointment in high regard, probably higher than his commitment to the Labor Party. Ron and Desley were the proud parents of five children. Sadly, two of their sons, Peter and John, died tragically at a young age. Ron and Desley would attribute their deep Christian faith and commitment to the Catholic Church with helping them through those terrible tragedies.

Ron's mind was sharp, as I can attest to when he tested a rookie MP at a Tiger O'Reilly lunch. At his funeral his son Mark told a story of Ron in his final days. As Ron lay in hospital, conversations taking place around him, he had his eyes closed and seemed at peace. Desley had with her a little black book which contained an exhaustive list of phone numbers. I have no doubt there would have been plenty of "47" prefixed numbers in that book. She needed to order some medication but could not remember the number. She said, "Ron, what is the number for Steve's Pharmacy?" As Mark related, Ron slowly opened his eyes and, without looking at the book, said "4721 2074" before closing his eyes again.

Mr Clayton Barr: No way.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes way. That is exactly what happened. It is quite remarkable. I remember very early in my time as a member of Parliament seeing Ron at the police citizens youth club at a community event for people with a disability. I gave an introduction in which I recognised his considerable service and said, "If I can be a member half as good as Ron Mulock, I will be doing a pretty good job". That is the benchmark for me as a member of Parliament. I did not know Ron well but I met him a few times and he left a lasting impression on me. There is no doubt his legacy was much greater to his family.

On behalf of the New South Wales Government I offer my sincere condolences to Ron's wife, Desley, his children, Mark, Paul and Jane, and his grandchildren, Max, Beth, Georgia, Dominic, Gabby, Ruby, James, Tess and Peter. It is a pretty good list. Not quite 11, but I am sure he was happy with it. Ron made a fantastic contribution to our Parliament, our community and our nation. It is the week of the Labor Party with the loss of Gough Whitlam, a giant in Australian public life. If in Gough Whitlam we have lost a giant in Australian public life, in Ron Mulock we have lost a giant in Penrith.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [4.39 p.m.]: I am deeply honoured to pay tribute today to Ron Mulock, a former Deputy Premier of New South Wales, who passed away on Thursday 4 September. I pay special tribute to Ron's wife, Desley, his children Mark and Liz, Paul and Cathy, Jane and Kevin, all the grandchildren and other family members and associates who are in the public gallery today. On behalf of the Opposition, I welcome you. We are here from all sides of political life to honour one of the State's finest, one of Western Sydney's finest, and a Labor man through and through. He was regarded as a pillar of integrity, he was well regarded across the political divide and he was especially well respected by the public servants who worked with him.

Ron's political career was one of extraordinary distinction, with 17 years of committed constituency work as the member for Nepean, the member for Penrith and the member for St Marys in the State Parliament. He was Deputy Premier of New South Wales from 1984 to 1988. He served as the Attorney General of New South Wales, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Transport. These are great ministries of State, both in terms of their budget allocations and their ability to transform people's lives. Political life has its struggles as well as its triumphs. We all deal with the everyday challenges, the long hours, the heroic burdens shouldered by family members, and the friendships, mixed with the rivalries, the hurts and the disappointments. Ron, like all of us, was not immune to any of those. He led a full political life and he encountered its slings and arrows.

Yet all of us, in one way or another, have chosen this life in the Labor Party because we know in our hearts that the sacrifice is worth it. Ron, more keenly than most, felt a deep calling to make society better and to extend opportunities to the people who lacked them. This included a special empathy for the needs of people with intellectual disabilities. Labor governments exist to advance the ideals of social justice and reform. Ron was a leading and hardworking contributor to the Wran and Unsworth governments, which enacted many far-reaching reforms. This afternoon we gather to honour a man who has undoubtedly left this State a much better place.

Ron Mulock was born in 1930 and educated at De La Salle College Marrickville, where he was an accomplished student. He studied law at the University of Sydney and was admitted as a solicitor, before moving to Penrith and establishing a practice. As the Minister outlined in his speech, Ron's political career began in local government. He was an alderman for six years and Mayor of Penrith for three terms. His tenure coincided with the beginning of Penrith's journey from an isolated outlying suburb to a proud and parochial city in its own right.

In 1971 Ron entered Parliament as the member for Nepean. Following electoral redistributions he served as the member for Penrith and the member for St Marys. These were epic years in Australia's political life, the years in which Gough Whitlam redefined what our nation could be: a modern cosmopolitan country, open to the world and with a humane safety net at home; a society where everybody had the opportunity to obtain decent health care and education. Whitlam's dismissal in 1975 was the cruellest of blows, but the election of Neville Wran in New South Wales restored hope.

Ron Mulock became a Minister in the new government. He was the leader of a new vanguard of members of Parliament from Western Sydney. He was an independent thinker and an iconoclast; he was decent, capable and incredibly hardworking. Within no time at all, Ron was a significant political presence in this Parliament. As I mentioned earlier, he served in a variety of portfolios, including Justice, Housing, and Mineral Resources and Development, before ascending to the very top of the government. The Hon. Richard Amery, the member for Mount Druitt, recalled of that time:

I soon learned upon my election to Parliament that Ron Mulock was a man to look up to, to respect—and to take seriously any advice he gave you.

The respect for Ron in the Labor Party was affirmed in 1984 when he won a remarkable ballot for the Deputy Premiership without the backing of a major faction or even the Premier. It was characteristic of Ron Mulock. He started that vote with the loyalty of his Western Sydney base and won a merit-based victory due to his hard work and good performance. In fact, as long as he lived Ron would be a principled and impassioned voice for decentralising and opening up our great Australian Labor Party. This is the direction Labor is moving in today, with community preselections and a direct vote by members for the party leader. Although it is fair to say that not every hope Ron had for his party would be fulfilled during his lifetime, it was nonetheless people like him who served as its conscience and planted those seeds of reform.

As Deputy Premier and a senior Minister in government, Ron's primary contribution was to be a major advocate for Western Sydney. He was a pioneer for the notion that the region needed a massive injection of resources and attention from government. He had vision and foresaw the rapid population growth that was to occur in and around Penrith and the Nepean. He understood that a sprawling region required schools, hospital beds and housing, it required carers and facilities for people with disabilities and that that, in turn, required a revolution in the government's way of thinking. State government of that era was often accused of being city-centric. Ron's focus on Western Sydney was way ahead of his time.

Ron left Parliament in 1988. Upon his retirement he was made an officer of the Order of Australia and awarded the title of Honoured Citizen of the City of Penrith. He also became a leader in sports administration. Throughout his life Ron was an immensely talented cricketer who played first grade cricket for St George and Penrith. I am told that his lightning-fast bowling terrorised members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery. In later life he would serve as vice president of the New South Wales Cricket Association, as the Minister referred to earlier. Rugby league was another love of Ron. It is fair to say that very few people throughout history have been honoured with life membership of both the Australian Labor Party and the Penrith Panthers. I do not think anyone else has acquired both those honours, and it is unlikely to occur in the near future.

I had the honour of attending Ron Mulock's funeral last month. It was held in a packed church in Penrith, with many people standing outside and others watching a broadcast of the service in a hall away from the church. As Rodney Cavalier observed, Ron's reputation blossomed and grew through his retirement. Ron's funeral was a fitting celebration of his life. It was attended by the people he had touched from all walks of life and the friends he had accumulated from across the political divide. Ron lived his life fully and deeply and conscientiously, from the political heights to the private tragedies which he and his family suffered, fortified always by his deep faith and love of family and his idealism for what the Labor Party could be. I say to all of Ron's family who are here with us in the Parliament today, I know you are proud of him, just as we are proud of him and commit to continue his legacy. Ron Mulock was a stalwart of Labor, a champion of Western Sydney and the greatest advocate that Penrith has ever had. May this diligent, good and decent man rest in peace.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal) [4.50 p.m.]: I also pay tribute to Desley Mulock, Mark and Liz, Paul and Cathy, Jane and Kevin, and the grandchildren, who have joined us here this afternoon to honour the memory of a wonderful man: Ron Mulock. I did not serve in Parliament with Ron Mulock; I was elected in 1988 and he vacated the seat of Penrith at the 1988 election. However, I got to know him well in what might seem unusual circumstances. I attend mass at Our Lady Star of the Sea at Terrigal and he would often attend mass there when he holidayed in the area. He recognised me and approached me after mass one Sunday and introduced himself. I did not know who he was immediately, but I had seen him on television and recognised him when he identified himself. We spoke on a number of occasions when we saw each other.

Ron Mulock was a surprising man of great distinction. He achieved a great deal, yet he was surprisingly humble. He was extremely good natured, affable and generous of spirit. I was touched by him, I respected him and I was always very glad to catch up with him and talk in a general sense rather than specifically about politics and what was happening in New South Wales and in government. When I researched him I was amazed at his story. So many eulogies dwell appropriately on members' achievements, especially those to whom tribute is being paid. We talk about their sporting prowess, their intellectual achievements, and their ministerial and parliamentary service. However, not many of those eulogies detail a member's life story.

Two aspects of Ron's story stand out and should be mentioned. The first is his extraordinary life. You, Desley, will be familiar with it, but not many people are. He revealed his life story in an extensive interview he gave to a *Catholics Weekly* journalist in 2008. His is an extraordinary story of battling against the odds, overcoming hardship and personal achievement. The other story I have relates to something that happened when I was appointed Minister for the Environment. I met a public relations officer working for the National Parks and Wildlife Service who had been on Ron's staff when he was a Minister and Deputy Premier. Without

revealing the confidence of the conversation, she made some points about Ron that resonated with me and which I learnt from my own experience of him were true. She said he was a great Labor man; he was devoted to the Labor Party and loyal to it.

However, above all—and long before he was a Labor man—he was a Catholic. It was his Catholicism that propelled him into the Labor Party and it sustained him more than anything else in his political ideology. Ron Mulock experienced a period of Australian history that is now long since gone. Gough Whitlam played a great role in ending the era of sectarian conflict that prevailed in this country, especially over the issue of state aid for Catholic schools. Ron was born in 1930 and lived through an era when the Labor Party and the trade union movement were among the only vehicles available to the Catholic community to be upwardly mobile in Australian society. I have said before in condolence motions about other Labor leaders—for example, Frank Stewart—that it is a great credit to the Labor Party that it gave the Catholic community those opportunities, as it did the Jewish community. The Liberal Party and the then Country Party were essentially closed to the Catholic and Jewish communities.

Ron Mulock took advantage of the opportunity to be upwardly mobile that the Labor Party afforded him and he served it well with a lifetime of loyalty and dedication. He never wavered. The last time I met Ron was at Penrith. I was having dinner and Desley and Ron were at an adjoining table. We discussed the recent change of premiership from Nathan Rees to Kristina Keneally. Ron Mulock's life story is not private because he revealed it in the 2008 interview with the journalist from the *Catholic Weekly*. It is an extraordinary story. He attended De La Salle College Marrickville, and was captain of the school, the debating team, the athletics team, the swimming team, the cricket team and the rugby league team. There is no doubt that he was a pretty active boy. At the age of 16, Ron played in the curtain-raiser at the 1946 Rugby League test between Australia and England, which was the first test after the Second World War. He ran onto the field before the crowd waiting to see the game between Australia and England. He said:

We ran on at 11 o'clock in the morning, so there wasn't a big crowd there then, but it wasn't much of a game from my point of view; later that year we won the State under-10-stone rugby league knock-out competition, but that day on the cricket ground we were beaten by Marist Brothers Randwick and I didn't have a very good game either. I think it was nerves.

As members have said, Ron was keen on rugby league and was a lifelong fan of Penrith Panthers. He was also a champion cricketer. However, it is Ron's family background that tells an interesting story. The *Catholic Weekly* interviewer asked him to talk about his family background, and he replied:

I couldn't say I came from a traditional Catholic family of that era. At 14 I consented to my own adoption by my adopting mother, that is my foster mother who'd had me from when I was a baby. She was a widow—a lapsed Catholic but with a very sound value system that would be classed now as Gospel values.

How extraordinary to consent to being adopted at 14 years of age. At that time social security was scarce and opportunities for working class boys and girls were limited. That tells the story of a real battler and a man who overcame enormous disadvantages. The interviewer continued by asking him whether that meant he had a sad boyhood. He replied:

No, I feel very fortunate and blessed for the life I've had right from the start. My foster mother was a wonderful woman. She had three children. She was actually twice widowed, so I had two brothers and a sister, all older than me: in fact, I was the youngest. My sister was 13 years older; in effect I gradually became an only child; I had a very happy, comfortable childhood.

Despite the difficulties, Ron looked back, as a positive man, on a happy childhood. Ron's church involvement was not a result of his adoptive mother's beliefs. As he said, she was a lapsed Catholic. When he was 10 and moved from Penshurst to Hurstville, he lived close to a Catholic family and he would go to mass with them. How many kids at the age of 10 make those choices in life? How many would find a Catholic family in a neighbouring street and attend mass with them? That is the sort of guy he was. That demonstrates not only his early precociousness in faith but also his determination to take advantage of the opportunities that life presented to him. He went on to say:

I went to church regularly with them. They had a newsagency so I was a 'paper boy' with a paper run in the afternoons, until I got to secondary school at De La Salle, Marrickville, and then worked only weekends on delivery runs, wrapping the papers and then being the gofer. If a paper missed the target I'd jump off, fix it and then jump back on the T-model Ford's running board; I had to be pretty lively because the driver had a sense of humour: as I'd go to jump on he'd suddenly accelerate off. Fortunately no accidents.

It was fortunate that there were no occupational health and safety rules in 1940. The next question was, "So is your childhood widely known?" His answer says it all:

Not really, although I never avoided it and never set out to promote it; though now I have a gap in the fabric of my life. When you get to a reflective stage and something's missing, I continue to pick up murmurs here and there, but I haven't got the full picture. Does it really matter in the full scheme of things?

No, it did not really matter because, as I have said, he was determined to go forward and not backward. He did not have regrets but sought to advance and maximise his opportunities. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it was notoriously known at the time that Ron became Deputy Premier not just without the blessing of then Premier Neville Wran but actually against the wishes of that powerful Premier. His appointment came about as part of the Western Sydney push by Labor members to assert the importance of Western Sydney in the caucus of the Australian Labor Party.

Ron Mulock was a man of achievement. He could look back on overcoming obstacles in his life and above all he could look back with pride on his faith and his family. They were clearly the two most crucial elements that shone in his life. It is a great honour to us that Ron's family is present to hear us pay tribute to him today. It was a great honour to Ron, given his commitment to his church, that St Nicholas of Myra was overflowing at his funeral. As the Leader of the Opposition rightly said, his life membership of the Labor Party was not nearly as important to him as his knighthood from the Pope. Vale Ron Mulock. May he rest in peace.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [5.01 p.m.]: I join with Government members and the Leader of the Opposition to offer my condolences to Des and the extended Mulock family who are in the gallery. I will start by making a comment about the Government—do not worry; there is no need to interject. I record my appreciation of the cooperation of the Leader of the House and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in making sure that time was allocated for this fitting tribute. I have been a member of this place for a little longer than the Minister and I explained to him that there is a great tradition that condolence motions are moved by a Minister of the Crown. He offered to yield that honour to the Opposition but I thought it appropriate that a Minister move the motion. No-one who heard the contribution of the Minister, and member for Penrith, could say that he did not do an excellent job moving the motion.

The Minister was the second person to ring my office the day news broke that Ron Mulock had passed away. My former staff member Anne Platovnjak, nee Dwyer, had called earlier in the morning to tell me. It was a shock. Only an hour later the member for Penrith called to ask whether my contacts were any different from those who broke the news to him. I appreciated his call and I thank him for his cooperation since then. As has been said, today we talk about the passing of yet another giant of the Labor Government that was elected on 1 May 1976. It seems like only the other day that Ron Mulock was sitting in the public gallery, just to the right of where his family sits now, as the House debated the condolence motion on the passing of Neville Wran.

What a tragic year it has been for Labor in the losses it has sustained with the passing of Neville Wran, Ron Mulock, Gough Whitlam just this week and others. Like many, I attended the funeral service in Penrith during which Ron's life was honoured. The service and the broad base represented by those in attendance showed that Ron was more than just a giant of a past Labor Government, the Labor Party or any other entity that has been mentioned such as his church and various sporting organisations. I will say nothing about his sporting prowess except that, as President of the NSW Parliamentary Bowling Club, he was a great loss to our bowling team—as I am sure he was to the other sporting codes.

Ron retired from Parliament in 1988. That is more than 26 years ago, yet the turnout at his funeral could not have been greater had he died in office. Even if he had remained as Deputy Premier the crowd at his funeral could not have been larger or the breadth of representation wider. The funeral was held in a packed church and relayed to a neighbouring hall. Among the crowd were the who's who of politics, the Labor Party, the Penrith Panthers, the Catholic Church, the community, the law—I have never seen so many lawyers in one place in my life—and, of course, his family. The large number of attendees showed the respect in which he was held as a member of Parliament 26 years ago and in his subsequent life as a person of substance in his proud city of Penrith.

Ron's life and official record were spelt out at the service by his son Mark. Much has been said today and I will try not to retrace too much of it. It has been recorded in *Hansard*. But I will say to Mark that one could not hope to hear a better or more fitting eulogy. The eulogy has been reprinted in at least one journal and I suggest it must be kept with any record of the history of this special person. I am sure that it will be used in writings about his life, the politics of the era and Ron himself. The life story of Ron Mulock is becoming more known since his funeral and his *Catholic Weekly* question-and-answer interview, which the member for Terrigal referred to.

In the past couple of years Ron was working to put his life down on paper—I hope I am not letting out a family secret. I was always happy to make available to him the Opposition Whip's office so that he could discuss his project with former parliamentary librarian and historian David Clune and others. I acknowledge the

article by David Clune in the *Sydney Morning Herald* this week, which is another fitting tribute. Ron would come into this place, go to the library and look back on old newspapers, speeches and documents. I know that if he could speak to me today he would ask me to pass on his thanks and appreciation to the parliamentary and library staff, who were so courteous and helpful.

It was always nice to get a call from Ron. From the first day I entered this place he shortened my name to "Rich"—I have been called many other things, some of them very flattering. He often said to me, "Rich, do you think you could get some information on ..." whatever subject he was researching at the time. His work is now incomplete. I hope that those who were working with him will join with his family to complete it because New South Wales history and the history of Penrith demand it. The record of Ron is well known. Much of it has been referred to by other members. He was the Mayor of Penrith, a member of Parliament and a shadow Minister. He then became what I have always referred to as a "big portfolio" Minister, with responsibility for portfolios such as Justice, Health, Transport, Education, Attorney General and so on. He administered every one of his portfolios with a high level of proficiency and skill. Not one hint of scandal ever touched Ron Mulock's reputation.

Long before I was elected Ron Mulock was known to me as a polished Wran Government Minister who spoke with authority and clarity each time I heard him on the radio or television. Yes, young members, we had television back then. I had met him a few times, mainly through my predecessor, Tony Johnson, who was the member for Riverstone and for Mount Druitt. I also met him in my role as secretary of the local Rooty Hill branch. However, at that time I did not really know him. Upon being elected to this place in October 1983, I got to know Ron very well. Not only was he a major player in the Executive Government—as evidenced by his substantial ministerial career—but also he was a dominant figure in the party room and in the corridors of this place. That is something to think about considering it was such an exciting time in New South Wales politics.

I think it was on 1 February 1984 that I came to Parliament to circulate a flyer for a testimonial dinner for my predecessor, Tony Johnson. I thought that would be my main duty that day; however, I was quickly approached by Minister Terry Sheahan, who informed me that Deputy Premier Jack Ferguson was to announce his retirement that day at the caucus and, of course, he wanted my vote. Terry was, and is, a good friend of mine but I knew that Ron Mulock also coveted that position and so, as they say, I kept my powder dry. That week, I soon learned that the parliamentary Labor Party was not a simple left versus right factional set-up. The Left had already been given the heads-up on this issue, and in a preselection for their factional members selected Frank Walker over Ken Booth to be their nominee to replace Jack Ferguson.

The head office right-wing machine, sometimes known as "centre unity", supported Terry Sheahan, a very successful Minister and good parliamentary performer. It had people like Steve Loosely, the general secretary, and former general secretary Graham Richardson at its disposal to lobby—or, more accurately, to pressure members to vote their way. One of Ron's greatest supporters at the time was his unofficial numbers man and then member for Seven Hills, Bob Christie. I know Bob would love to be here today, but he could not make it so I will send him a copy of the *Hansard*.

To talk about how Ron Mulock was respected and effective within the Parliament, we need look no further than this contest for the Deputy Premier's position. The organisations behind the established functions were backing their candidates, none of whom was Ron Mulock. The ensuing battle was a great learning experience for me, as a new member with only four months experience. It was easy for me to commit my vote to Ron, but it was not so easy to hold that commitment under the pressure applied. It was that battle that made me make a decision about how I would conduct myself in every ballot that I would be in for the rest of my career in Parliament—that is, no-one will ever have to guess how I voted. People seeking my vote will know in advance whether they have it or whether they do not.

After I was called by both the general secretary and the former general secretary I told them, "I am committing myself to Ron Mulock. Further, if I was able to be broken and yield to pressure, every time in the future when I commit myself to a vote that you do not like, you will know that I can be pressured to break a commitment." It never happened then and it has not happened since. The fact that I was put to the test on such an important issue involving someone very special like Ron Mulock made the rest of my life in this place much easier. It is one of the many things for which I thank Ron Mulock. History shows that he won that ballot, as I indicated. An election was held the following month and Ron was re-elected unopposed as the Deputy Premier, picking up just about every senior portfolio for the next four years of his parliamentary career. No Labor member in my time in this place has had a factional group named after him. We have the Left, the Right, the hard lefts, the soft rights, the Terrigals, the Trogs and many others.

I refer members to an article by Paul Bailey in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 8 June 1985 about the lower House and upper House parliamentary caucus amalgamating for the first time. I note that the vote that made Ron Mulock Deputy Premier took place with only lower House members voting; Legislative Councillors did not get a vote as the upper House was not part of the parliamentary caucus—I notice the Hon. Mick Veitch in the Chamber today. The article gave a fair, if not 100 per cent accurate, list of the members of the parliamentary Labor Party. The members were broken up into left-wing lower House and left-wing upper House; right-wing centre unity lower House and right-wing centre unity upper House; and the third bloc, Mulock-ites. I am pleased to say I am in the third bloc. This goes to show the significance of Ron Mulock's grouping. Ron Mulock stunned everybody when he won the position of Deputy Premier, so much so that the media found a descriptor for the people who voted for him, and so came about the name "Mulock-ites".

In 1984 Ron Mulock started his last term as a member of this House. It was then that one of his policy initiatives had a major impact on my electorate and led me to being involved in the most substantial community campaign of my 31 years in this place. The issue revolved around a cluster of high schools in Mount Druitt. When schools were built in the 1960s and 1970s enrolments in some primary schools numbered up to 3,000. High schools were built to cater for this enormous population of school-age students. However, by the 1980s enrolments declined as the population of the area aged. This left a problem with a number of high schools covering the Mount Druitt estate having an ever-reducing retention rate for years 11 and 12 in each of those schools. The result was class sizes as low as one student and limited subject choices for students of Mount Druitt high schools compared to schools in other areas.

Ron Mulock was Education Minister and he proposed that one of the schools, Whalan, be turned into a senior high school for years 11 and 12 only, and that other Mount Druitt high schools teach only students in years 7 to 10 and act as feeder schools to the senior high school. Parents and students were supportive, but the Teachers Federation and some in the Education Department were vehemently against it. When Ron was reshuffled out of Education, the proposal never progressed. I then started a community campaign to resurrect the senior high school concept. I was strongly supported by the Federal member, Roger Price, local parents and citizens, and Labor branches—the local media gave the story favourable coverage. We took the matter to the Labor Party's annual conference on at least three occasions. You can imagine that Ron, as the former Minister, had to tread lightly, as it is very hard for a Minister to campaign on an issue that his successor did not support.

However, Ron was always there to give me advice and, more so, took an active role on many occasions, particularly when he addressed a public meeting at the Dawson Public School against a rowdy performance by the Teachers Federation and various other people opposed to the proposal. Ron spoke about the benefits of the senior high school for the area. The establishment of the Chifley College in Mount Druitt years later by the Carr Government is a local achievement that I hold up with much pride, but I always recognise that the man who first proposed it, the man who actively supported me throughout the campaign, was Ron Mulock. In fact, I once put out a press release, which I found the other day, suggesting that the senior high school should be called Ron Mulock senior high. There are such schools in other parts of the State these days and the Chifley College is well established, but the senior high school in Mount Druitt is another thing for which I thank Ron Mulock.

When Ron Mulock retired, I always knew he was there. He would phone occasionally, as mentioned earlier, asking about issues that he wanted to research, or he would organise a dinner with me or with Bob Christie. We would go to a Chinese restaurant in the Parramatta Leagues Club—and the people of Penrith knew that—or to a restaurant near Parliament. He became a good friend and a mentor to another of my good friends, the late Jim Anderson, a former member for St Marys and also for Londonderry. It was a great honour when the Mulocks, Des and Ron, attended my dinner to celebrate 20 years in Parliament. I will always remember that when I was being applauded after making a speech, Ron stood up clapping openly, causing all those at the function to give me a standing ovation. It was a proud moment, and I thank Ron for that. In recent years, I think at the behest of his family, he was putting together a history of his life. I hope it is published for all of us one day. It was always a pleasure to think that I could have been of help in some way.

The last call from Ron, towards the end of August, was not so pleasant. The call started in the usual fashion, talking about someone contacting him about a comment in the media and I thought it was just another request. When I thought the conversation was about to end he said, "Rich, I didn't get a good report from the doctor. I've got some spots on the scan." Ron had had many battles with cancer and I thought, perhaps hoped, he was telling me that he would have to lie low for a while and have some more chemotherapy or other treatment. But he bowled me over, to use one of his cricketing terms, when he said, "Rich, the specialist I am seeing this week is the palliative care specialist." I still did not believe that he had so little time to live, even when he

finished the call with: "Say a little prayer for me, will you, Rich?" I am not one for prayers, but on this occasion, once again, I did what Ron Mulock asked. I offer my condolences to Ron's family, to Des and all those I have mentioned. May Ron rest in peace.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [5.21 p.m.]: A lot of people in this House may wonder why I am contributing to the motion of condolence for Ron Mulock. As the member for Broken Hill, I know that Ron Mulock has a connection to Broken Hill. I met Ron when I went to Mark and Liz's wedding—he left a lasting impression on me. He was a great gentleman. This is as much as I know of the family: Mark is a great friend of mine. He got me out of a lot of trouble. Trouble used to follow me around in those days. I must tell Mark that in Broken Hill we sadly miss good legal advice and we would love to have him back. I do not know how Liz feels about that, but we would like to see him back at Broken Hill.

I can only say that recently when I heard Ron was in the House, I sought him out. He was with Richard Amery. We had a long yarn and Ron said he would pass on my regards to Mark and Liz. Ron left giving this advice, "I'm trying to tell Mark to bring more conveyancing into his business. He needs that. He needs to do it and he's not listening." That was Ron as a dad, still giving advice. As a young man—I was young, once—I met Ron at that wedding and I subsequently met him on a few occasions. He left a lasting impression. He was a great man and a humble man; I can understand why he was well loved. On behalf of Broken Hill, I extend my very best wishes to the family.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [5.22 p.m.]: I join with other members to contribute to the motion of condolence for Ron Mulock—a man who had a very distinguished career that included a term as a Deputy Premier of New South Wales for four years, a member of this House for 17 years and holder of numerous portfolios, and a former Mayor of the Penrith City Council. The Labor Party is known for its tribal approach to revering its leaders. We love our larger-than-life heroes—those who sometimes seem to occupy a space beyond being mortal: Gough Whitlam, Neville Wran and Ben Chifley come to mind. There are other leaders who are quieter in their approach, less flamboyant in style, less likely to be quoted, but they are loved because of their decency, their values and their commitment to achieving Labor goals. Ron Mulock was such a man.

Ron Mulock has been described as the quintessential grassroots member of Parliament. He said in an interview in 1981, upon becoming education Minister, "I don't worry much about style—only performance, getting the job done." But no-one should mistake that unassuming manner for a lack of toughness or a lack of determination. Ron Mulock was known for his tenacity. As he also said in that interview, "Some people wouldn't see me as tough, but other people who have taken me to the brink in public life know that when I reach the brink I am as tough as anyone about." Subsequent events less than three years after that interview were to demonstrate how true that was when Ron Mulock, after the resignation of Jack Ferguson, campaigned to become the Deputy Premier. As we heard from the member for Mount Druitt, who was in this place at that time and who has spoken so eloquently today, Ron Mulock won the ballot 36 votes to 33, despite the fact that he was not the candidate of either the Left or the Right. That was no small feat in the New South Wales Labor Party caucus in 1984.

I did not know Ron as well as some others who have spoken to this motion, but we did have some common connections: We were both Deputy Premiers and we both held the portfolios of Health and Education. Ron was educated at De La Salle, Marrickville, so we share a Marrickville connection. I can remember what seems to be just a few months ago sharing a cup of tea and a chat with Ron after the condolence motion for Neville Wran. Ron Mulock was then, as he always seemed to be to me, intelligent, gentle and genuinely interested in people. As we have heard from other members tonight, Ron was elected to the New South Wales Parliament in 1971 after six years as an alderman on the Penrith City Council and three years as the mayor. He achieved a lot during that time, but perhaps will be best remembered as the mayor for his role in initiating the Penrith Lakes scheme, which transformed the old quarries into a major scenic and recreational area.

There is no doubt that Penrith and Western Sydney were very fortunate to have a representative of the calibre of Ron Mulock. He fought hard for Western Sydney, including pushing for a proper allocation of health resources and the establishment of what became the University of Western Sydney. He also campaigned to protect the eastern escarpment of the Blue Mountains from development. In his time, Penrith went from a country town to the vibrant and bustling city we know today—in no small part due to the efforts of Ron Mulock. He had a stellar ministerial career that spanned 12 years and covered more than 10 portfolios. In that time, he accomplished many achievements, as we heard from members who spoke previously. Ron Mulock was known as a troubleshooting, skilled all-rounder who strove to achieve good policy outcomes through consultation and

consensus. Life is never quiet when a Minister holds big service delivery portfolios, as Ron Mulock did. Ron dealt with truckies blockades, teachers strikes, disputes with militant doctors and—that perennial of State politics—reforms to the School Student Transport Scheme.

I had to smile at Ron's misfortune in successfully pushing, as the education Minister, for the transfer of responsibility for the scheme to Transport against the wishes of the then transport Minister—only to subsequently become the transport Minister responsible for the scheme and, of course, its budgetary problems. I am sure Ron would have been aware that those issues still have not been resolved, much to the chagrin of many Treasurers and transport Ministers. No tribute to Ron Mulock would be complete without referring to his love of sport, his skill on the sporting field and his support and advocacy for his beloved Penrith Panthers club. It was Ron who was largely responsible for keeping Penrith Panthers as a stand-alone entity. According to the Panther's chairman, Don Feltis, "Ron has been acknowledged around the district as the man that stepped in and made sure there was no possibility of the Panthers amalgamating with anyone."

Ron Mulock was a true Labor legend. He was dedicated to his family. He was dedicated to his community. He was dedicated to his Catholic faith and he was dedicated to his party. New South Wales is a better place for Ron's service. The Labor Party is very fortunate to have had such a fine representative. I pay tribute to Ron and express my deepest sympathy to Ron's wife, Desley, who is present in the Chamber. Politics is always tough on the families of those elected to Parliament, so I express my deepest sympathy to Desley, Mark and Liz, Paul and Cathy, Jane and Kevin, and to all the grandchildren. Vale, Ron Mulock.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [5.27 p.m.]: My contribution to the motion of condolence for a man who made a distinguished contribution to Parliament, the people of the Penrith region and to the citizens of New South Wales, the Hon. Ron Mulock, will be brief. I acknowledge Ron's family, who are in the gallery today, and express my condolences and sympathies to them. My contribution will reflect some personal experiences, and will include some memories and anecdotes from my family. I was born and grew up in Penrith. Nobody who spent any time in the great Penrith region could have lived there without knowing of Ron Mulock and his family: whether it was through his service as an alderman and mayor of Penrith or his leadership in the parish of St Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church—I went to school at St Nicholas of Myra School—or as a driving force behind the mighty Penrith Panthers Rugby League Football Club or in his more high-profile roles as the member for Nepean, Penrith and St Marys, everybody knew of Ron.

His warm and genuine nature was reflected in his success at local elections. Initially as a non-aligned alderman and then later as the Labor representative for the Nepean, Penrith and St Marys electorates, Ron's decency and integrity saw him achieve outstanding results. In 1981 Ron's personal support and the high regard in which his community held him saw him achieve a nearly 75 per cent primary vote for the seat of St Marys—a remarkable result, which, I am sure, most of us here would envy. As members may be aware, I am the proud son of migrant parents who were cleaners and who worked in the early hours of each day and during the night at offices, schools and banks in and around Penrith. As with many migrant families, the family business was actually a family business: If you were old enough to walk, you were old enough to work.

I have early memories of a time before I was at school helping my father at one of his cleaning jobs. It was always a thrill to spend time helping dad with his work. The nature of his job meant that outside of work, my brothers and I did not see a great deal of him. So emptying the rubbish bins and ashtrays, wiping down the skirting boards and generally mucking around were not really a chore. It was while helping dad with one of his cleaning jobs that I became aware of Ron Mulock. For a time Ron's electorate office was on High Street, Penrith. My memory is of an old sandstone building not far from the old Waltons store near the intersection of Station Street. Dad had the job of cleaning the office and it was through this role that my family experienced the charm, the warmth and the decency of Ron Mulock.

My dad was a gregarious guy, and although he had quite a strong accent, he was charming and managed to develop strong friendships with people right across the social spectrum. Dad loved to invite people to our home and share his renowned hospitality. He would welcome local bank managers, the local postmaster, parish priests and principals and, from time to time, we had a visit from our local member of Parliament. When preparing for this motion I asked my family if they had any memories or anecdotes of Ron. My brother Jeffrey shared this memory, which provides an insight into Ron's nature and decency. Jeff said:

Ron came around to our place one day while my sister Vilma, the oldest of my parents' 5 children, was still living at home.

Vilma had just bought a wig and was using one of my other brothers Peter to model it. Peter was standing on the coffee table in the lounge room when Ron arrived. He was ushered in and sat down on the lounge to admire the impromptu fashion show.

Peter was at his cheeky best and expressed his utter disdain for the role thrust upon him. Ron stood and took the wig from Peter and put it on his own head, to show that no-one is above the dignity of self-mockery and deprecation. The household (and Ron) fell about in laughter and the performance entered the family's treasury of magical moments.

This highlights for me the warmth and genuineness of Ron. There he was, a civic leader, a popular and well-respected representative of the community, a lawyer and accomplished sportsman, engaging with a five-year-old on his level so as to reduce his embarrassment and discomfort. That to me says a great deal about Ron's character and fundamental decency. Another of my brothers also shared his memories of Ron and the Mulock family. Joseph, the oldest of my parents' four sons, recalled the following:

I do remember Ron visiting us at Rodley Avenue—he seemed to fill the house and just showed a genuine interest and enjoyment in dad's story and his hospitality. I also remember mum being upset for Desley when their son Peter passed away. She understood it must have been hard. They didn't make a big deal about it but it was a shared loss for the whole community.

My own path to this place followed a similar path to Ron's: a stint in local government, serving as a councillor and mayor, before entering Parliament. I remember when I was first standing for council, I organised a dinner to help with the campaign. I wrote to Ron and introduced myself as I was not sure if he would remember me or my family. I told him of my ambition to represent my community on council and invited him to attend the dinner. I was delighted to receive a handwritten letter from Ron assuring me that he remembered my family fondly. Although he was unable to make the event—I think it was possibly because Neville Wran was the guest speaker—he enclosed a cheque and wished me good luck.

Some of my colleagues have spoken of Ron's achievements in his various portfolios and his service as Deputy Premier of New South Wales. Others have recalled his commitment to the mighty Penrith Panthers and the role he played in elevating that team to be a major force in the First Grade rugby league competition. My contribution is more of a personal reflection of a man and his family—a decent, genuine and accomplished civic leader, who could connect with people of all ages and across all levels of society and make them feel important and special. My father, Nino, who passed away in 1999, and my mother, Toni, who passed away a decade later, would both echo these sentiments if they were here today. They would probably also be proud that I have the opportunity to stand in this place and make a contribution to the condolence motion for Ron Mulock. On behalf of my family, I express our deepest condolences to Desley, their children and grandchildren. Vale, Ron Mulock.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I thank the Mulock family for being in the Chamber this evening. Please accept our sincere condolences on your loss.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

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

KINGSCLIFF COASTAL RESERVE

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.35 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak on the petition to save lot 490, tabled by the Leader of the Opposition. This petition has attracted more than 15,000 signatures to date and its aim is to save from dodgy and inappropriate development Crown Reserve trust land at lot 490, Kingscliff—the Kingscliff Coastal Reserve. On 6 September 2013 the Crown Lands Office vested lot 490 to Government Property NSW for it to be sold. A letter from the relevant Minister, Dominic Perrottet, received by the Clerk of the Parliament on 22 October 2014, makes it clear that this is still the preferred option of the Government.

I particularly congratulate the community groups behind the campaign to stop the sale of lot 490 on the work that they have performed to date. The driving force behind Save Lot 490 is Ron Cooper and Jeremy Cornford. They have been outstanding and unyielding in their efforts. Their efforts are entirely necessary because, as I indicated, the letter from the relevant Minister dated 22 October confirms that it is still the Government's preferred option to sell the land. I also acknowledge the outstanding community candidates running for the Australian Labor Party, who support the campaign against overdevelopment and against caving

in to North Coast and Gold Coast developers: Ron Goodman, the candidate for Tweed, Isaac Smith, the candidate for Lismore, Paul Spooner, the candidate for Ballina, and Trent Gilbert, the candidate for Clarence. I also acknowledge the efforts of the Federal Labor member of Parliament for Richmond, Justine Elliot, and the shadow Minister for the North Coast, Walt Secord.

Lot 490 has been the subject of a long-running community-based campaign and this petition is part of that campaign. The land concerned is the last coastal reserve in the Kingcliff area and it comprises two blocks, lots 1 and 2, respectively totalling 11 and 15 hectares. It has been the desire of local and interstate property developers to get this last remaining piece of open space. There are resorts and housing developments nearby. The former Deputy Premier said that lot 2 should be kept as Crown land and managed for public recreation and environmental protection; however, he said that lot 1 would be ideal for a holiday park. This is, of course, the last link to the ocean in Kingscliff, an area which is currently regarded by many as being significantly overdeveloped.

There is broad concern in the community, and certainly on the North Coast, about the lack of environmental protection being provided by the State Government. Many locals complain quite significantly about the attitude of the State Government and the attitude of the rather hapless and hopeless member for Tweed. The Nationals State member of Parliament wants to sell lot 490, Kingscliff's last coastal reserve, for commercial development. The Save Lot 490 group has released its own concept plan, which is entirely opposed to the, as I said, hapless and hopeless member for Tweed. Local residents certainly do not want a caravan development there, although that seems to be the preferred option of The Nationals.

When the first 500 signatures were tabled in August 2013, a move calling for a written response from the Minister for Crown Lands, the Deputy Premier and the Minister responsible, Andrew Stoner reiterated the Government's determination to sell or lease lot 490 as a resort. The Government also moved covertly to change the status of lot 1, the area of lot 490 between the Coast Road and the ocean, from Crown land to government property. This means the Government may sell or lease the land without such a move being in the public interest. I note the current petition has more than 15,000 signatures—which, I understand, is equivalent to 31.35 per cent of registered Tweed voters. Labor has a proud record on the environment on the North Coast, certainly with a long tradition of Neville Wran and Bob Carr.

It is regrettable that such a tradition is under challenge from The Nationals and the current sitting members. The petition before the House calls upon the Department of Lands to cease its undertaking for Crown Reserve Trust Lands to be subject to any tourism resort or like substantial commercial development. It calls for the restoration of the ecological values and the protection of lot 490, and calls for the preservation of the endangered plant, animal and birdlife species there. The bottom line is that The Nationals want to flog off this pristine piece of land to their developer mates. It must be protected from The Nationals white shoe brigade. The local campaigners and the Labor candidates running on the North Coast are committed to that cause.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.40 p.m.]: In addressing the matter raised in the petition I would like to make a number of points. The first is that one of the petitions referred to by the member for Liverpool was lodged by me, not by a member of the Labor Party or anyone else. I stand behind the local members, but there is a little bit of history to this land. Tony Kelly, the luminary in the Labor Party, stood on the back of a truck when I was there and said that he was going to take this land from council and use it to create a holiday venue for working-class people. He immediately presented papers to sell this land off to the highest bidder, which was Leightons.

In response to the petition that I lodged, the Deputy Premier made an offer that the council buy the land, saying that the majority of the funds raised would be returned to council for coastal funding. That is the truth of the matter. Council, in its wisdom, at a later time wanted to rezone the land E2, which was an enormous proposal. One of the most relevant points about this matter is that the Labor Party started the mess. The Labor Party, through Tony Kelly, took this land out of public hands. It was Tony Kelly who authorised its sale or long-term lease to Leightons. Labor did that, and the Coalition is left with a big mess. Fortunately, or unfortunately, Leightons pulled out of that process and this Government is left to clean up the mess.

I had some respect for the member for Liverpool. I really did. He has been a member of this Parliament for a long time, and so on. But there is one key thing that he forgot to mention—apart from the fact that I lodged the first petition urging that this land not be sold, perhaps a minor thing, but nevertheless he did not let the truth get in the way of his argument. That key thing is that that land is currently the subject of a native title claim. So what does the member for Liverpool want? Does he want to override the hard-won rights of our Indigenous

people? Has he spoken to the Tweed-Byron land council? The answer must be no, because in recent times the Hon. Victor Dominello, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and I sat down and spoke with the Tweed-Byron land council. The land council has lodged a claim, and it is excited about that claim. So what is the member for Liverpool trying to do here? He should apologise to the Indigenous people of the Tweed. He is totally ignoring their rights, hard won over many, many years. We all know that story.

I stand behind my local Indigenous people. I do not want to see their rights dissipate. I do not want to see the value of their land claims dissipate. I think the majority of the local people agree with that. The member for Liverpool perhaps does not realise that just south of this lot was another tract of Crown land. Once again, I lodged petitions on behalf of the community seeking to reserve that land for the people. I am totally in favour of what the local people want. Back in 2007, when this issue bubbled to the surface, I appeared for the local Greens candidate in the Land and Environment Court about overdevelopment of a marina in the local river. So my environmental credentials are right up there, and they are on record here.

Why would the member for Liverpool want to override Aboriginal land rights that have been hard won? I believe we should resolve that issue. Once that is resolved then we can talk about the future of this land. It needs to be preserved. I am on the public record, both in this Chamber and in the Tweed, supporting the local people but also supporting the local council. The council wants ownership of this land. The offer was made by the then Deputy Premier that council could get ownership of this land, and that moneys it paid for the sale of that land would be returned to council through the coastal reserve trust. So the deal was struck. Council proceeded with the proposal to rezone the land.

Then along came the Labor candidate. Meanwhile, the Federal Labor Party member did absolutely nothing. All of a sudden, they put themselves forward as the guiding light of the local community. I think that is just rubbish. They knew nothing about this. It was their party that wanted to sell this land to private enterprise, not The Nationals. The Nationals would probably be the strongest party on the environment and local land areas that we could ever have. It was a Labor Party Minister who came up to the Tweed and said Labor proposed to sell this land. The member for Liverpool comes in at this late stage. He should apologise to the local Indigenous people because he is suggesting that this Parliament should override their rights. I support the petition. Why does the member not consider protecting local Aboriginal rights? He should apologise. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [5.45 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the North Coast community in this debate. The community is demanding that government-owned lot 490 should remain in public hands. This is the last remaining piece of open space to get access to the ocean in Kingscliff. The time has come to stop alienating coastal land to developers, including Gold Coast developers. In fact, I would have thought that much of south-east Queensland is a testament to the failure of attempting to control coastal development. I wish to pay tribute to Ron Cooper and Jeremy Cornford, who have been outstanding in what they have done to draw attention to this issue. They have ensured that the voices of the North Coast are heard and they have been personally instrumental to the success of this petition.

Labor in opposition has a very proud record on environment on the North Coast and is committed to having this government-owned land of lot 490 sold to Tweed Shire Council for the peppercorn amount of \$1, and designated as open space. This last link to the ocean in the Kingscliff area is currently overdeveloped and must survive. With us so close to the State election in March, the Government should not proceed down this path and must allow the community to have its say. Let the community judge Labor's outstanding candidates on the North Coast including, in Lismore, Isaac Smith; in Tweed, Ron Goodman; in Ballina, Paul Spooner; and in Clarence, Trent Gilbert. I know that Labor's Tweed candidate, Ron Goodman, has been particularly interested in protecting lot 490 and stands alongside the community in ensuring that it should remain in public hands.

I commend our strong Federal Labor member for Richmond, the Hon. Justine Elliot, for her commitment to protect this coastal area. I continue to be impressed with our outstanding shadow Minister for the North Coast, the Hon. Walt Secord, who has pursued this issue for the people of the North Coast relentlessly. It is time for the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals to listen to the people and protect this piece of open space before it is devastated by the greed that the New South Wales Government will open it up to.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [5.48 p.m.]: I am absolutely staggered by the hypocrisy of the Labor Opposition. The same people who issued all the coal seam gas licences all of a sudden are born-again activists. They are born-again activists in the same vein as the Labor Minister Tony Kelly, who leased the land to Leighton's. Why would the Labor Government have done that? It was targeted for a high-end

tourist development. What was Labor after? It was after the money that would come from a high-end development on the North Coast. Labor came to the North Coast, raped and pillaged, and left behind a mess for the Coalition to sort out, as we are trying to do with the coal seam gas industry. This is not a simple matter. Lot 490 has been subdivided into two lots.

One lot, of about 11 hectares, is regarded as suitable for development, and that was zoned for tourist and visitor development under the Tweed local environment plan. Lot 2 of about 15 hectares is riparian land and is recognised as having significant environmental values. Why then did Tony Kelly lease Lot 1 to Leighton's in 2008 if it was not for profit? Now all of a sudden members opposite are carping on about preserving the land for North Coast communities. It so happens that they are not in government. This is the same Tony Kelly referred to in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 1 August year in the headline, "Tony Kelly escapes prosecution over Currawong purchase". And members opposite want to take hold of public lands in New South Wales. The article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated:

In December 2011 the ICAC found Mr Kelly engaged in corrupt conduct by backdating a letter to mislead investigators and give the impression ministerial approval had been given for the Currawong purchase when it had not.

What grubby deal had Tony Kelly done with Leighton's on the North Coast? Now members opposite come here all bathed and clean, trying to put in a paid political advertisement for the Labor candidates on the North Coast. Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO NICK STEPKOVIC

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [5.51 p.m.]: Tonight I recognise Nick Stepkovic, a recent recipient of the New South Wales Carers Award. Nick cares for his 23-year-old daughter, Anna, who suffers from a rare brain disease. Anna needs constant assistance, and Nick feeds her, keeps her safe, organises all care appointments and juggles often violent mood swings. Nick also cares for his family, his boys, Ben and Joshua, and his wife, Wendy, who has been diagnosed with cancer. Nick has actively dedicated his life to caring all while working in his own physiotherapy practice for more than 30 years. He shares his story in the hope of helping others. Together with Wendy, Nick also cares for his ageing mother. Nick is one of the many unsung heroes in New South Wales who devotes his life to helping and caring for others. I congratulate Nick on his tireless efforts and selflessness, and I wish his wife, Wendy, all the best with her battle against this insidious disease. We thank Nick for the incredible work he does on behalf of our community.

VIETNAMESE AUSTRALIAN WELFARE ASSOCIATION

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.52 p.m.]: On Wednesday 24 September I had the pleasure of attending the Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association's annual general meeting on the occasion of the association's twenty-fifth anniversary. The Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association was formed in 1989 to provide services for the broader Vietnamese and Indochinese community in south-west Sydney, in particular. The organisation now provides a range of services to families and the broader community. I take this opportunity to thank Ambrose Dinh, President of the Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association, for his generous invitation to attend the annual general meeting. I recognise the hard work and efforts of his management committee and the staff and volunteers. I congratulate the Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association on the milestone of its twenty-fifth anniversary. I acknowledge past executive members of the Vietnamese Australian Welfare Association, and I wish the organisation continued success into the future.

CHAPLAIN GENERAL KENNETH HERBERT SHORT, AO

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.53 p.m.]: I pay tribute to the life of Chaplain General Kenneth Herbert Short, AO, who was born in Kenya in 1927 to Australian missionary parents. Ken Short came to Australia as a child and joined the Army in 1945, at the age of 18 years. He was commissioned and in 1946 he was posted to Japan as infantry platoon commander of 56th Battalion as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. Ken remained for two years in southern Honshu, Shikoku and the Hiroshima Prefecture. On

his return to Australia he left the service and studied for the Anglican priesthood. He was ordained in 1952. He left for Tanganyika in 1955 and worked as a missionary until 1964. He returned to church duties in Australia and in 1975 was appointed Bishop of Wollongong until 1979, when he became the Chaplain General to the Defence Forces, where he served until his retirement in 1989.

Ken was then appointed Bishop of Parramatta until he was transferred to Sydney as the Dean of St Andrew's Cathedral until his second retirement in 1992. He became a resident of Kiama and chaplain of the Kiama-Jamberoo Sub-branch of the RSL. He prepared and conducted all Remembrance and Anzac Day services up to and including 25 April this year, during which he formally took the salute from the marching veterans. He died unexpectedly in hospital on 20 October 2014 after a brief illness. He leaves behind his wife, Gloria, two daughters, Catherine and Marion, and his son, David, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. He was a tireless and dedicated worker. He was an Officer of the Order of Australia and a life member of the RSL. He was a man of exceptional presence and influence, and guided all those with whom he came into contact. His passing was met with great sadness. He was a man of humility and great achievement, and a true servant of the church and his country and community.

NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY, GYMEA

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [5.54 p.m.]: On 29 September I had the privilege of attending the Police National Remembrance Day service at St Catherine Laboure Catholic Church in GyMEA. The moving non-denominational service, held to honour New South Wales police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the execution of their duty, was conducted jointly by the Police Chaplain, Reverend Rod Harding; Reverend Stephen Gibson, Senior Minister of St Luke's Anglican Church in Miranda; and Father Dan Sinclair, representing Monsignor Brian Rayner, OAM, parish priest of St Catherine's.

The names of 11 police officers killed on duty in St George and Sutherland shire, as well as an honour roll of 61 deceased police who served the local area, were read to the 150 people in attendance. I thank all the organisers for our local Remembrance Day service, in particular Mr Phil Peters, Chair of the Local Retired Police Branch, and the service coordinator, Mr John Prince. I know all members join me in thanking the members of the Police Force who put their lives on the line daily to keep our communities safe and in honouring those who have paid the ultimate price in doing so.

SHOALHAVEN RIVER FESTIVAL

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.55 p.m.]: On Saturday 25 October and Sunday 26 October I will have the pleasure and privilege of attending the Shoalhaven River Festival, which showcases industry and local talent in my electorate. I am a proud supporter of the festival, and was pleased to secure, together with the member for Kiama, a \$7,500 grant, with the support of the Premier. This comes on top of a New South Wales Government grant of \$7,500 for last year's successful event. This year festival organisers were successful in receiving \$3,000 from Arts NSW to conduct Shoalhaven's own Vivid.

Last year the festival was well attended not only by local community members and families but by many visitors from Sydney and regions throughout New South Wales, giving the Shoalhaven, particularly the Nowra central business district, a great financial boost. The festival is now an important part of the Shoalhaven's development as the most visited region outside Sydney. A street parade, markets, a marine expo and concerts from local performers provide an opportunity to celebrate the many skills and achievements that have contributed to creating a vibrant local culture in Nowra. I take this opportunity to thank the organising committee, particularly Lynn Locke from the Shoalhaven City Turf Club.

LIVERPOOL LOCAL AREA COMMAND AWARDS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.56 p.m.]: Tonight I recognise the recipients of awards at the Liverpool Local Area Command [LAC] awards ceremony held on Friday 17 October at the John Edmondson VC Memorial Club at Liverpool. The host officer was Superintendent Peter Gillam, Commander of Liverpool LAC. A number of national medals were awarded—the National Police Service Medal and the National Medal including clasps. There were also awards of the New South Wales Police Medal for Diligent and Ethical Service for 10-year, 15-year, 20-year and 25-year clasps.

In addition, there were awards of the New South Wales Police Medallion and pins, the presentation of Sergeants Warrants of Appointment and a long service award. Additionally, there were LAC commendations, citations and certificates, which included some quite extraordinary stories. Two certificates were presented to

volunteers in policing. The stories that surrounded some of the citations were the most interesting part of the proceedings. For example, there was the Liverpool police constable who attended an address in Hammondville, as a result of which 34 lives were saved in a boat off Sri Lanka. There were also extraordinary stories about investigations of old cases. It was a privilege to attend the event.

FAIRFIELD RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [5.57 p.m.]: As the patron of the Fairfield Relay for Life I attended the launch of the 2014 campaign, Saving Lives for 2015, at the Uruguayan Club in Hinchinbrook on 12 October. The event was attended by more than 400 guests and marked the start of the campaign in the Spanish community. This year the group aims to outdo its great efforts of raising \$12,000 last year. The relay is significant for funding cancer research and advocacy, as well as information, education and support services. That is why last year I set out on a 55-kilometre journey by foot to raise awareness at 12 schools. I successfully raised more than \$26,000, which all went to assist research at the Cancer Council of NSW. In attendance were the member for Fairfield and the member for Liverpool. I specially thank the co-chair and coordinator of Fairfield Relay for Life, Sinilia Radivojevic, as well as Mrs Multiverse Australia, Mrs Yolandi Franken, and all the volunteers and sponsors. [*Time expired.*]

ITALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.58 p.m.]: On 16 October 2014 the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry held its thirty-sixth annual business awards and gala dinner at Doltone House, Sydney. The awards were for outstanding efforts in business and industry. The award recipients were: Pasticceria Papa, which received an award for small-medium enterprises, and Salini Impregilo Australia Branch took the award for large enterprises. Congratulations to all award nominees on their efforts and contributions to the State's economy and on the promotion of Italian culture in New South Wales.

ALBURY-WODONGA CHAMBER BUSINESS AWARDS 2014

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.59 p.m.]: During the Albury-Wodonga Chamber Business Awards held on Friday 10 October Mrs Rosalie Martin, director of Martins Bus Company and Martins Travel Group, Albury, was inducted into the Hall of Fame. Since the death of her husband in 1984 Rosalie has run the business for 30 years with her son David. She is recognised also for her prominent commitment to community service and promotion of our region over many years. Congratulations Rosalie on a well-deserved honour. Business Awards 2014 were made to Twin City Roller Doors for excellence in small business; Parklands Albury Wodonga for excellence in innovation; Grind on Olive for excellence in microbusiness; Albury DJ Entertainment for excellence in hospitality, leisure and retail services; Border Pathology for excellence in commercial and professional business services; the Personnel Group for employer of choice; and Laura Chanter for outstanding young businessperson. Congratulations to all these fantastic business operators on their professionalism and customer focus.

MILLERS POINT SPRING PICNIC DAY

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [6.00 p.m.]: I congratulate the Millers Point Spring Picnic Committee and all who attended the fabulous picnic day on 14 September—a day of celebration and solidarity. Events on the day included flamenco, Scottish and Irish dancing; Sydney trade union display; Stairway to Heaven and Sydney Street choirs; Police Band; a question-and-answer session with Quentin Dempster and speakers, including resident Barney Gardner, Lord Mayor Clover Moore, Paul McAleer from the Maritime Union of Australia, representatives from the Greens and Labor, and me; an art exhibition; history tours; film screenings; banner making and mural workshops; street stalls; and a raffle. The City of Sydney sponsored a barbecue. The picnic committee included Sally Cushing, Cara Cumming, John Dunn, Margaret Bishop, Bev Sutton, Wendy Vandermayn, Peter Muller, John McInerney, Eszter Olah, Marcia Chalmers, Chris Hinkley, Sir Ron Jennings, Kelli Haynes, Alana Walton and Paddi O'Leary. The residents of Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks form a remarkable community whose strength and connectedness remain an important part of the living history of Sydney. I thank everyone involved.

SOUTH CRONULLA UNITING CHURCH NINETIETH ANNIVERSARY

ST ANDREWS ANGLICAN CHURCH CRONULLA SPRING FAIR

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.01 p.m.]: On 5 October I was delighted to join the South Cronulla Uniting Church, previously a Congregational church and the only church on the South Cronulla

peninsula, for its ninetieth anniversary service. The service had plenty of stirring traditional hymns and a fine sermon by former moderator Niall Reid, followed by an enjoyable morning tea. I thank chairman and elder Helen Armstrong and parish minister Reverend Simon Lee for their kind invitation. I wish the church every future success.

On 11 October I opened the spring fair at the iconic St Andrew's Anglican Church, Cronulla, known locally as the Elephant House. I was honoured to do so as the church has been an important part of my family's spiritual life. I congratulate fair convenor June Whitehead, senior minister Rich Wenden and all the volunteers on a successful morning that included a barbecue, a variety of teas, a chocolate fountain, jams, cakes, books, music, DVDs, trash and treasure, jumping castles, face painting and more. I look forward to next year's fair.

SOUTHERN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES AWARDS

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [6.02 p.m.]: A remarkable client and family awards event was held in Wollongong on Thursday 9 October, and I congratulate the Southern Youth and Family Services [SYFS] on the life changing work it does with vulnerable young people and families. The awards event was a celebration of the achievements of young people who had experienced disadvantage. Thirty young people received awards and we heard their hopes and aspirations, and stories of completing education, finding work, improving their health and starting their pathways to independent living. Six Family Awards acknowledged people who have never lost sight of the fundamental values of supporting, caring for and appreciating the young members of their families. I was proud to be one of the 320-plus people who attended the celebration, proud to be the member for Wollongong, proud of my electorate, proud to have Southern Youth and Family Services operating in my electorate, and more proud than is easily expressed of the young people and the families with whom SYFS works.

ST GEORGE YOUTH PROGRAM

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [6.03 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to recognise a six-week periodic program organised by the St George Youth Services, police and the Police and Community Youth Club. The program includes team building, outdoor adventure activities, sports and personal development, and life skills workshops. Involved in the partnership are 16 Muslim boys aged 14 to 16 years who volunteered to participate from schools in the local area to work with police with the aim of building positive relationships and respect. I congratulate everyone involved in this program and wish the youth and police involved every success.

LINDFIELD FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [6.03 p.m.]: I recognise the wonderful work of the Lindfield Football Club in my electorate of Davidson. While it is already the club for many of my constituents, including my youngest son, the Lindfield location of its clubhouse also soon will fall within my electorate. Unfortunately, its club president, Gilbert Merlo, passed away early last month at too young an age. Gilbert made a significant impact in his local community and beyond, particularly as long-term president of the Lindfield Football Club and in coaching senior women's football. Gilbert would be very proud to see the success of the club's recently completed synthetic, small-sided football fields. It is a model for future similar developments elsewhere and was funded in substantial part through the New South Wales Government. I look forward to attending the annual Northern Suburbs Football Association dinner on 1 November, where I will see members of the Lindfield Football Club executive and no doubt again remember the huge contribution of Gilbert Merlo.

FRIENDS OF INDIA GANESHOTSAVA FESTIVAL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.04 p.m.]: I recognise the nineteenth annual Ganeshotsava held on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September at the Whitlam Leisure Centre at Liverpool. This festival celebrates the Hindu deity Lord Ganesha and is an event organised by Friends of India Australia and grows directly from the Indian community, many of whom live in the Liverpool region. The festival has grown over the many years that I have attended. Thousands of people now attend each year. The principal coordinators include Lakshmi Ramayavaran, Divya Dhanaram and Renuka Janardhan, and cultural program coordinators include Vijaya Ihat and Ramani Dokka. The festival had many cultural performances from within the community, particularly from younger community members. The festival has been a very conscious and comparatively successful attempt to maintain cultural tradition. I note also the presence of Charisma Kaliyanda and Mayasandra Sridhar.

MILTON TIMBER FESTIVAL

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [6.05 p.m.]: Recently, I was pleased to attend the Milton Timber Festival on Sunday 5 October. The festival plays an important role in celebrating the

history of my electorate, and the broader Ulladulla region. The timber industry played a significant role in establishing the South Coast, and this yearly festival raises awareness, celebrates historical achievement and involves the community in timber-related events. The festival this year included a broad range of events: chainsaw displays and demonstrations, and bush poetry readings that brought together a great number of interested members of the community and families from wider New South Wales.

Not only is this an excellent cultural event, but the proceeds raised from the festival go towards the Dunn and Lewis Youth Development Foundation. The foundation is committed to ensuring that youth are able to live the best life by providing a number of services, including trauma retreats, grief services, and opportunities for youth to enhance their vocational and leadership skills. Foundation activities are a vital support for local youth, and provide individuals with opportunities to live independent and fulfilling lives. The festival organiser, Mr Jim Butler, should be commended for his efforts in bringing the South Coast together for this occasion each year.

INSPIRE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.06 p.m.]: On Thursday 17 April 2014 I was delighted to be with the Inspire Community Services team, Canley Vale, at its weekly food care program. Every Thursday Inspire provides 130 families with food hampers. It was a special day, with the team handing out Easter eggs as well as cooking up a fresh breakfast for its clients. Inspire serves the community well with its second-hand store as well as courses in information technology and the provision of refurbished computers for underprivileged families. I was pleased also to see the new kitchen facilities, which received funding under the Community Building Partnership program. Inspire is a team of great local champions.

NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [6.07 p.m.]: On 1 October I attended the National Police Remembrance Day service for the Fairfield and Cabramatta local area commands in Fairfield Local Area Command. Each year on 29 September this service is held to pay tribute to police officers who lost their lives while performing their duty, as well as those who retired from sterling careers. Since its formation in 1862, the NSW Police Force has lost 252 officers while serving and protecting the community. I am certain that their legacy will live on and empower other officers to continue ensuring the safety of our community. The names of the gallant police officers who passed away in the past year were mentioned, and the service continued with the chaplain's address, church hymns and scripture readings. I extend my sincere sympathy and respect to the families of those officers who have fallen in the line of duty and thank the retired officers for their tremendous contributions in making our communities safer.

AHMAD AL JAZEERI, INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [6.08 p.m.]: I congratulate one of my Arncliffe residents, Mr Ahmad Al Jazeeri, on being presented with an award at the 2014 International Student of the Year Awards. Ahmad Al Jazeeri received the award in the English language intensive courses for overseas students category. Mr Al Jazeeri hopes to study medical science at the University of Sydney next year, and I wish him all the very best.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PUTTING FOOD ON THE TABLE CONFERENCE

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.09 p.m.]: I advise the House of an issue of concern to a number of my constituents, which was the subject of a conference held recently at Casula Powerhouse in the Liverpool area. This was the Putting Food on the Table Conference—the inaugural Food Security Conference subtitled Food Security is Everybody's Business. The conference was held on 13 and 14 October and I was able to be present for part of it and certainly heard the keynote speaker. The conference was organised and presented by

the Right to Food Coalition. The coalition consists of more than a dozen organisations, including the South Western Sydney Local Health District, Australian Red Cross, several councils, the NSW Refugee Health Service and the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance, amongst others. The coalition describes itself as follows:

The Right to Food Coalition is comprised of representatives from a range of Sydney based organisations working to raise the profile of food insecurity. We believe everyone has the right to access fresh, nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food. Putting Food on the Table is our first collaboration and aims to stimulate discussion and action on this important issue.

It argues that it wants to put hunger on the agenda, and states:

About five per cent or over a million Australians regularly can't put adequate food on the table to feed their families. The numbers are even higher in some areas and amongst particular populations. This hidden hunger may not be visible, but can have serious short term and long term effects on health, education, employment and productivity (National Health Survey 2004-05). We'll be tackling this challenge at the inaugural Putting Food on the Table Food Security Conference. This two day event will bring together policy makers, academics, community development workers and health promoters exploring solutions at a range of levels.

These are important issues for my electorate. I have spoken in this place on other occasions about food insecurity in Warwick Farm and the local strategies that were pursued in an attempt to minimise it. Some of the individuals and institutions involved in those events at Warwick Farm are involved also in this conference. The conference commenced with a welcome to country by Uncle Steve Williams. The emcee was Peter Sainsbury, Director, Population Health in south-western Sydney and the Sydney Local Health District. He is also an associate professor at the University of Sydney. There were a number of sponsors including Settlement Services International, UnitingCare Burnside and the Australian Health Promotion Association. The conference organisers put the issues in these terms:

Over one million Australians regularly experience food insecurity. This estimate is even higher in particular regions, and among particular populations, as emergency food relief organisations struggle to meet growing demand for support. The community sector is witnessing an escalating problem.

Food insecurity in our communities is not highly visible, and has been referred to as "hidden hunger". It can have serious short-term and long-term impacts on health, education, employment, productivity.

The conference aims to draw attention to the issue, and start a solution oriented conversation at policy, program and project levels.

The keynote speaker was Joel Berg from the New York Coalition Against Hunger. Other speakers, presenters and participants included academics, community development workers and health promoters, among others. Joe Berg, who presented the keynote address and to whom I listened, was an interesting speaker. He was described as leading the anti-hunger movement in America, as executive director of the New York Coalition Against Hunger and a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress. He is also a published author in this field. The New York coalition is a not-for-profit organisation that works to "enact innovative solutions to help society move beyond the soup kitchen to ensure economic and food self-sufficiency for all Americans". In his speech his analysis of hunger in the developed world seemed as relevant to Australia as it did to the United States of America. In wealthy and agriculturally abundant nations food insecurity and hunger affects large numbers of people and is caused by inequality of wealth, low wages and social services cutbacks. He said:

This epidemic harms health, hampers education, traps families in poverty and eviscerates hope, while sapping the US economy of \$167.5 billion annually. In contrast, Scandinavian countries have virtually eliminated hunger.

Berg argued forcefully that Australia should follow the lead of Scandinavia, not the United States of America, on social policy in order to end Australia's food insecurity. Many people contributed to the conference but I would like to acknowledge Mary Enkababian, who has been raising these topics with me for some time. In August 2011 I spoke in this House about the Food4Life program based at Warwick Farm. That program was launched in 2009 by the Salvation Army and what was then the South West Area Health Service. Whilst that model did not challenge national income and wealth distribution, it was more than just a handout program concentrating as it did on community development strategies as well and involving TAFE outreach. None of that removes the need for government to understand that it has a role to play when dealing with issues about equality and distribution of wealth and income—in short, to ensure that people have enough money to buy the food they need to eat.

SHOALHAVEN CANCER CARE CENTRE

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [6.14 p.m.]: A significant anniversary is to be celebrated shortly in my electorate with November 2014 marking 12 months since the opening of the

Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. The new centre has changed the way that cancer care is delivered in the Shoalhaven and it has enabled patients to be treated in their own community, close to their families and support networks where they feel most comfortable. The Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre provides outpatient consultations for haematology, medical oncology and radiation oncology. This state-of-the-art facility includes a linear accelerator, oncology CT scanner, an orthovoltage treatment unit and other specialised equipment to deliver radiotherapy as well as multidisciplinary clinics that enable patients to have their treatment program planned in one visit, with increased access to medical oncology, radiation therapy, allied health and support services.

During the first six months of operation more than 2,400 individual patient consultations have been provided to local residents, demonstrating the increased cancer medical support available locally in the Shoalhaven. The centre has also provided more than 125 new courses of radiation therapy treatment to local residents. This equates to almost 2,500 occasions of service. Previously these residents would have had to travel to Wollongong, Sydney or Canberra for this vital treatment. The provision of local radiation therapy treatment has also seen an increase in chemotherapy treatment locally, largely influenced by the combined modality treatments being provided at the new facility. In the first six months more than 2,300 occasions of service have been provided from the new chemotherapy suite overlooking the Shoalhaven River. I will read correspondence received by medical staff from a constituent whose wife utilised the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. The letter states:

Lynne and I would like to pass on to yourself and staff our profound appreciation for all the kindness, consideration, comfort and professionalism extended to us, Lynne in particular, during the 30 radiation therapy treatments she recently underwent. All staff we met were courteous, kindly and supportive during this time. The facility is a most welcome addition to our area and the fact that we did not need to travel outside the area for this treatment was a significant factor in agreeing to go ahead with the treatment. Lynne has a range of health issues and it is most unlikely given the facts of her breast cancer extent that she would have ventured too far for treatment. We found that 'Spes et Cura' was indeed the case.

We wish the centre well for the future and its ongoing support for the many cancer patients that it will care for over the coming years.

I also congratulate the hardworking doctors, nurses and health professionals for their continued first-class care of local patients and their families. The Shoalhaven could not be better served by a more dedicated and professional team. The \$34.8 million Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre came about through the linear accelerator community fundraising program spearheaded by the community for the community, with support from the New South Wales Government and the Commonwealth Government. Use of treatment facilities at the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre has been overwhelming, with local physicians reporting that fewer women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer are undertaking mastectomy procedures as they no longer have to travel long distances for treatment.

Courses of radiotherapy treatment have exceeded expectations, with the centre now finding itself under greater pressure than initially anticipated just 12 months after it opened. The Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre is a state-of-the-art facility that was built for the future. Provision has been made in the centre for an additional linear accelerator machine with the construction of the number two bunker. The Linear Accelerator Cancer Treatment Fund, formerly the LINAC committee, has already raised in excess of \$700,000 to be utilised for the purchase of additional equipment for the facility. This is in addition to the \$1.115 million contributed during the initial phases of construction of the centre.

An additional linear accelerator is estimated to cost in the vicinity of \$2.5 million, as well as additional ongoing costs. Given the availability of the additional bunker, strong community and financial support and the higher than expected courses of treatment currently provided at the centre, it is timely for the New South Wales Government to consider provision of an additional linear accelerator machine at Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. I thank the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, for her continued support for the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. In opposition Minister Skinner was the first to commit an elected Liberal-Nationals Government to constructing the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. This Government delivered on its commitment 12 months ago. I trust that the Minister will investigate the provision of a second linear accelerator in due course.

24 HOUR FIGHT AGAINST CANCER MACARTHUR WALKATHON

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [6.17 p.m.]: I refer to the very successful 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur walkathon that was held in Campbelltown last Saturday—something that I have attended for many years. Unfortunately, last Saturday when my son, Tom, was playing cricket, he copped a cricket ball to the

mouth so I had to stay with him and was unable to attend the walkathon. However, it has filtered back to me that the tenth anniversary celebration was a wonderful event. The 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur annual event raises much-needed funds and provides services and equipment to the Macarthur Cancer Therapy Centre, the oncology ward and the Paediatric Ambulatory Care Unit at Campbelltown Hospital, and the Palliative Care Unit and associated outreach service at Camden hospital to assist in the treatment, care and comfort of children and adults dealing with cancer in the Macarthur area. We all know cancer is an insidious disease that affects not only the people who have been diagnosed but also those who care for them.

The success of this annual event keeps growing. This year there were 19 teams comprising 1,500 participants. Communities from Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly came together for the special purpose of raising funds for local cancer care. Many people participating in the local walkathon have their own special story to tell about how cancer has affected them. They are survivors or they know a friend or family member who has been affected by cancer. I make mention of those who spoke at the opening ceremony of the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer event, particularly Fred Borg, the organising committee chairman; Ken and Liz Stonestreet; and Uncle Ivan Wellington, the local Aboriginal representative. The Hon. Jai Rowell, member for Wollondilly, Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health had the honour of presenting Mr Borg with a \$5,000 cheque from the Government to support this worthy cause. My good friend and colleague the member for Campbelltown, that opal of the south, was also there to support the people of Campbelltown.

Over the past 10 years approximately \$2.5 million has been raised. This year's event hopes to reach \$3 million, which will be a remarkable achievement. The event is made possible by the hardworking committee, chaired by Fred Borg, who is supported by committee members Matthew Borg, Karen Burgoyne, Dr Stephen Della-Fiorentina, David Dykes, Gabrielle Dykes, David Eckford, Christine Edge, Adam Galway, Sharon Galway, Thomas Hatch, Isabella Hatch, Dot Lechner, OAM, Brian Laul, Nicole Lefoe, Brooke Manzione, Sue McGarrity, Jeff McGill, Warren Morrison, David Muller, Matthew Muller, Bernadette O'Neill-Siambis, Emily Purcell, Rebecca Purcell, Sue Scobie, Sandra Speechley and Gail Van Dyk. Without the generous support of major sponsors, the event would not have been possible. I thank Aquafit; ANZ; Bob Jane T-Marts; Campbelltown Mall; Clinton's Toyota; Direct Uniforms; McDonald's Macarthur; Mr Rentals; the Quota clubs of Macarthur; Richardson and Wrench, Campbelltown; the Rotary Club of Campbelltown; the Rotary Club of Ingleburn; the Rotary Club of Macarthur Sunrise; Sleeping Giant, Campbelltown; Splendour Interiors; the *Advertiser*; and the Wizard of Oz Funland.

I also make mention of individuals and teams from my local area who supported and participated in the event. They are: Mark Wallington and the Dawn Breakers from Camden, Nicole Lefoe and Team Freckle from Mount Annan, Sharon Galway and the Long Way to Galway, Brenda Clarke and the Narellan Community Congregational Church team, Marilyn Estephan of Camden Splendour Interiors, Belinda Clark and the Bunny Nuts from Harrington Park, and Gai Ashby and Ashby's Angels from Currans Hill. I am sure all those who participated had a wonderful time. Congratulations on their fantastic effort in supporting local cancer care in the Macarthur area. This is an outstanding local community event. I am sure that the member for Campbelltown will attest to the fact that the people of Macarthur come from a tremendously giving community and that they support their region. I commend everybody involved.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.22 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to commend the member for Camden for his outstanding commitment to this important cause. I acknowledge the commitment by the member for Campbelltown, Bryan Doyle; the member for Wollondilly, Jai Rowell; the member for Macarthur, Russell Matheson; and all those involved in the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer. It is a fight that all of us in this place must take up. Every dollar that we raise takes us a step closer to finding a cure for this insidious disease. One in three Australians will suffer from cancer at some time during their lifetime. If they do not suffer from cancer they will know someone who does. Cancer affects us all. We have a responsibility to get behind great initiatives such as the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer. On behalf of the Government I thank all those involved in organising this fantastic event. In particular, I thank the member for Camden for continuing to champion such a great cause.

ST GEORGE YOUTH SERVICES

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [6.23 p.m.]: St George Youth Services is a not-for-profit community organisation situated in Moate Avenue in Brighton-Le-Sands that provides free services for young people and their families. This organisation continues to deliver an extensive number of services to those across the St George region. Service provision is a challenge facing everyone in the community service sector.

A strong team of dedicated staff, led by Valentina Angelovska, manager, are to be congratulated on the dedication and enthusiasm they provide for the benefit of the whole community. A number of specific projects are designed to improve the lives of those persons in need. One of these services is Youth Connections in Rockdale which is located in the Police Citizens Youth Club building. Assistance is provided to young people aged 11 to 19 who are most at risk of disengaging or who have already disengaged from education, training and/or family and community. The assistance that is provided includes case management, personal development, workshops, recreational activities and life skills development.

Employment, education and training also are available, which provides an employment service for people with mental health disabilities. Special plans are designed for individuals to cover employment training and related areas such as vocational assessments, job search, personal development, work experience and job support. St George Youth Services also organises discussion groups for special purposes such as assistance to fathers, step-dads, grandfathers and all other male guardians of teenagers aged 12 to 18 about relating to and caring for youth in difficult situations. Meetings are arranged to cover areas such as respect, setting boundaries and limits, parenting strategies and involvement, teenage risk-taking behaviour, bullying, alcohol and other drugs. These discussions focus on the means to deal with anger and conflict situations and are attended by highly skilled professional staff.

The Ready Group is another service that is available to families and young people aged 12 to 25 years and it provides information and resources as well as practical and emotional support concerning alcohol and other drug use. Reconnect is another important program that supports young people aged 12 to 18 years who are experiencing problems at home, who suffer anxiety and who are at risk of homelessness. On any given night around Australia 105,000 people are homeless. Thanks to the excellent work carried out by St George Youth Services and other aligned community services the website www.sgshomelessness.org is now available to aid those individuals most in need.

The website provides a wealth of choices and makes it easier for people to find the appropriate services for their individual needs. This link will be an invaluable tool in helping those members of our community who cannot help themselves and it covers areas such as accommodation, financial and counselling assistance, domestic violence, housing for Aboriginal people, food provision and local support group contacts such as the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, Bay City Care, and others. The assistance that such groups provide to the vulnerable people in the wider community is priceless. Enough praise cannot be given in recognition of those who make selfless sacrifices to care for people in need.

WOLLONGONG PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [6.28 p.m.]: I further strengthen my written question to the Minister for Education and my notice of motion that was tabled in Parliament today regarding the real concerns of the Wollongong Public School Parents and Citizens Association and staff alike. The school is currently undergoing some building works that the Parents and Citizens Association believes are not only a danger to students but also impede their learning. I have called on the Minister for Education to answer these questions of concern relating to Wollongong Public School as a matter of urgency.

Mr Jon Masters, President of the Wollongong Parents and Citizens Association, contacted my office on behalf of approximately 600 parents and staff. Mr Masters has claimed that the building works are being rushed through because the Department of Education and Communities had to use the funds allocated by the end of the financial year, with the official reason for the rush being given that the school will need these changes completed by 2020. Mr Masters has asked if a risk assessment was undertaken prior to the commencement of construction and, if so, what key points were assessed, such as, fire exits for a large number of children and the renovation of a building that was built in the 1880s.

I have visited the school many times and it is full of charm. It was one of the first public schools opened in the area. With older buildings comes the need to stay on top of maintenance and safety concerns are made all the worse with decay and wear and tear over the years. Currently, a community space that is used as a vibrant teaching and learning area is having a makeshift wall constructed in the middle to create another classroom. Mr Masters has informed me that there is only one way in and one way out for staff and students. He questions how their safety can be guaranteed in the event of an emergency. It will also mean that 150 children, their bags and teaching staff will be cramped into one very tight space.

Plans on the hop that place our children at risk are poor forward management and are simply not on. The Minister needs to make clear to the Wollongong Public School community the department's plans for the

future of the school. The school is expected to grow rapidly over the next couple of years as it is an inner-city school in a CBD that is rapidly expanding. I congratulate Mr Masters, the parents and citizens association and all the staff on bringing these concerns to my attention. I call on the Minister for Education to come clean as to his plans, or lack thereof, for Wollongong Public School and its community.

I raised this issue some time ago, having visited the school to view the area. Some years ago Wollongong Public School was experiencing low enrolments but with population growth and more development in the CBD enrolments have increased tenfold and the school no longer has the capacity to cope, particularly in view of its age. The suggestion has been made that a single-storey building could have been erected on the parcel of land next to the school and that this would not have been too difficult a task. It would have involved some money being spent but for a school that is packed to capacity it would have been the better option. Instead, there has been a rush to create an additional room. I do not know whether the original plan has gone ahead but the original plan involved inserting a hallway and cutting the original room in half to create an additional room.

This is a public school, not a high school. Although high school students are no less important, it is of concern that there is only one way in and out. In the event of a fire, this poses a hazard to the children. I would not want my grandchildren being exposed to this type of risk, nor I am sure would other members. It is unfortunate that, despite the campaign by parents, one wall has already been demolished. Nonetheless, we are entitled to know the future plans for the school for the benefit of the children.

BROKEN HILL WATER SUPPLY

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [6.33 p.m.]: Since 1884 Broken Hill and its regions have faced the crisis of a reliable water supply. The first creation of a water supply was via soakages at Stephen's Creek. Water was purchased for 5 shillings to 8 shillings per 100 gallons. By 1886 protests started when residents found that the soakages needed to supply the community, stock and the mines and it was always scarce and expensive. The government of the day was dragging its feet to fund a solution, in times when housewives were paying twopence for a bucket of water. It supported private enterprise to supply Broken Hill's water needs.

Later, a solution was provided by Silverton Tramway tracking water from the government tank at Silverton and the Rat Hole tank. Private enterprise, with the support of BHP, saw the Broken Hill water supply syndicate, a gentleman called Joe Nolan and the Stockdale syndicate propose a pipeline to Broken Hill from Lake Speculation. Broken Hill over time saw the development of a reservoir at Stephen's Creek and Umberumberka. Unfortunately, those two reservoirs, during a dry period, could not meet demand and water was sent by train from South Australia and later from the Darling River, when the train line was completed from Menindee and the Darling River had water.

Today Broken Hill has about 18 months supply of water available from storages at Menindee. A combination of El Niño predictions and a long-term drought, now over two years old in the catchment area that supplies the Darling River, has seen the river stop flowing. There is criticism of the State Government from some citizens that releases from the lakes scheme have created this critical situation and irrigators along the river that supplies the Darling have taken the water and left our end of the river dry. As to the releases of the lakes water, this is created by a historical situation that allowed all but a reserve of the water supply to Broken Hill to be managed by agencies.

The Menindee Lakes Scheme was developed when South Australia protested that the introduction of the Snowy Hydro scheme would see a reduction of flows to that State. Two sites were considered to provide storage to capture water to supplement flows into the Murray. Johnston Rocks and the lakes at Menindee eventually were considered. The Menindee Lakes were chosen because they would not only provide supplementary flows to South Australia but also secure the Broken Hill water supply. The matter of irrigators taking the water from the Darling River is always cited as the reason Broken Hill is in a critical position regarding its supply. It is interesting to note two facts. In 1936 when the Minister for Public Works, the Hon. E. S. Spooner, was introducing a bill for a storage augmentation scheme for Broken Hill, he made the following comments in his second reading speech:

After examination of 10 different supply proposals, including a supply from the Darling, it was still considered too costly and not sufficiently reliable.

In other words, the Darling was not sufficiently reliable, even without irrigators. The later Dridan report of 1943 suggested the Murray River was a far more reliable option than the Darling River. It is interesting to note that when the Menindee-Broken Hill pipeline was completed in 1951 water had to be transported on trains from

South Australia because the Darling River was not at a sufficient height to pump. It took a flood in the Darling River and the creation of Weir 32 to start the pumps to Broken Hill. As to the most recent allocations to irrigators on the Darling River and its tributaries, I offer the following advice from the Department of Water.

In 2012-13, 200,000 megalitres of supplementary water was accessed, with 1,613,000 megalitres of flows into Menindee. The majority of the water accessed was a result of floods in local areas. In 2013-14, irrigators accessed 34,000 megalitres, with 138,000 megalitres flowing into the Menindee. In 2014-15 there was zero allocation, with 11,000 megalitres flowing into the Menindee. This makes it very difficult to accuse the irrigators of taking the water. The drawdown in the lakes is another problem for local residents. In the past the Broken Hill Water Board allowed for six feet of evaporation to occur in storages. One would have to think that if the water was not released from Menindee, it would be in the same situation that it is today—empty.

INTERFAMILIAL SEXUAL ABUSE

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [6.38 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a sinister and little-spoken-about blight in villages, towns and cities across this State. As I said in my inaugural speech in 2011, as a member of Parliament I will attempt to protect those in our society who have fallen, are falling or could fall through the gaps. Tonight I speak about interfamilial sexual abuse of little children who are being systematically abused. In my time in this place I have come in contact with some most disturbing issues, but this is the most disturbing tale. Unfortunately, this tale has no happy ending.

Often when a perpetrator is discovered and reported, they immediately apply to the Family Court of Australia. Whilst government agencies, including the Department of Community Services, the Joint Investigation Response Team and the NSW Police Force have the best of intentions, on many occasions they will simply close the book on an investigation because the Family Court of Australia has been asked to deal with the matter. The Family Court operates the Magellan program, which is supposed to effectively and efficiently deal with these matters, but it does not judge or charge perpetrators. The Family Court of Australia should not be the court to which these cases are taken. This is where little children, families and mostly women are let down by our system. Without going into detail of the hundreds of cases I have reviewed, each of them has a similar path that leads to the Family Court. Ultimately, this system is not protecting our children.

I will now outline a scenario of a similar vein in a large number of those cases. A mother finds that her child has been interfered with by a partner, spouse or stepfather; she confronts the perpetrator; she reports it to the police or a doctor; the perpetrator engages a lawyer; the lawyer applies to the Family Court; and the investigations by authorities grind to a sickening halt. The Police, the Department of Community Services and the Joint Investigation Response Team shut the investigation down because an application has been accepted by the Family Court. After two to five years of Family Court proceedings the mother is financially and mentally broken. The applicant or perpetrator applies for custody of the child and/or children and in a large number of cases the mother loses custody.

How do we stop this practice in New South Wales? My suggestion is to hold all Family Court applications in the New South Wales jurisdiction until all investigations of child abuse have been thoroughly concluded. How do we do this? What needs to be done to arrange Federal-State negotiations? I acknowledge that there will be calls from vexatious women who want to persecute innocent men. But are we to just stand by, as we do now, and allow these perpetrators to continue on their merry way to the Family Court? We must keep any child abuse investigations within the New South Wales jurisdiction and the Family Court should not be allowed to accept an application until any such investigation has been concluded. This will leave us with either a criminal conviction or an innocent finding, but at that point the case will still be in the New South Wales jurisdiction. These are criminal acts and that is how they should be dealt with in this State. In summary, we do not want child sexual predators in New South Wales using the Family Law Court of Australia as their hiding place. The system is not good enough. We need to take action now.

NORTH BONDI RSL SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [6.43 p.m.]: Tonight it is my pleasure to pay tribute to North Bondi RSL in my electorate, which recently celebrated its seventieth anniversary. I was honoured to join the branch last Thursday evening for a wonderful celebration in my capacity as the local member of Parliament, and also representing the Minister for Citizenship and Communities. To provide some history, North Bondi RSL was founded on 22 March 1944, shortly before the end of World War II. Many of the club's founding members had fought in Tobruk and thus came to be known as the Rats of Tobruk. The club was also known as the Sub-branch Tobruk House and The Rathouse.

The so-called Australian Rats of Tobruk valiantly defended Tobruk from the siege of German forces during World War II. Their nickname was derived from the description attributed to them as having been "caught like rats in a trap" by Nazi propaganda. The morale of our Diggers was clearly not weakened by the description, choosing instead to embrace it when forming what is today the North Bondi RSL. It is located in a beautiful spot, just above the Bondi Beach promenade facing south, with possibly the best views of the beach in that vicinity. The sub-branch has a long history of supporting our returned service men and women who have fought, and are still fighting, for peace and freedom. North Bondi RSL is proud to have a relatively young membership base of 530 people at present, 80 per cent of whom are currently serving in our armed forces. That is quite unique.

North Bondi RSL hosts a dawn service every year on Anzac Day. The service is held in a picturesque location and is one of the best services one can attend anywhere. Since being elected I have been impressed by these very moving ceremonies. Thousands of people come along to these services, which are perfectly located on the backdrop of a rising sun across the Pacific Ocean, just steps from the sand. In recent years, Anzac Day services across Australia have attracted more people willing to brave the cold mornings to pay their respects to our Anzacs. This is indicative of the cultural shift we are seeing in Australia where more people are becoming interested in our history, in particular the history of Anzac Day as we approach its centenary. This is a positive shift. It promotes a greater level of patriotism and reinforces the idea that in order to move forward productively as a nation we must understand our history.

This is particularly clear at the services held by North Bondi RSL. As I said earlier, this is one of the most iconic destinations in Australia and many attend the North Bondi dawn services. This year there were more than 3,000 people on the beach. I commend North Bondi RSL for its Anzac commemorations each year. I know that it will continue to hold wonderful services, particularly over the next three years as we continue to observe the Centenary of Anzac. As well as supporting our veterans and their families, RSLs across Australia are often the epicentres of a community's activity. Whether it is for socialising, hosting community functions or birthday parties, North Bondi RSL plays an important role in the life of the Bondi community. It is where many people go to unwind on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday evening after a long week, to have a good meal and watch a football game. The RSL has a very diverse membership and patronage because the young and the elderly in the local area make use of its great community facilities.

I thank sub-branch president Robert de Graaf and his wife for inviting me to join the RSL, and I thank all club members for their warm welcome on that night. I also acknowledge senior vice president James Brown, treasurer Rod Bain and secretary James Isbell. I always enjoy visiting the club where I always have the opportunity to catch up with many members of my community. I look forward to returning soon. Finally, on behalf of my local community, I congratulate North Bondi RSL Sub-branch, its members and president on this wonderful milestone. Bondi Beach is all the better for the contribution of North Bondi RSL, which is a fixture in my local area. I have no doubt it will continue to be an important community facility well into the future. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.48 p.m.]: I thank the member for Vaucluse for bringing the seventieth anniversary of the North Bondi RSL Sub-branch to the attention of the House. I, on behalf of the Government, congratulate and wish North Bondi RSL all the best on its anniversary. The member for Vaucluse highlighted the interesting and welcome cultural shift that has been seen in recent years in the observance of Anzac Day and our military history generally. That observance is not about glorification of war but, rather, one of recognising the hardship and sacrifices that so many Australians have made in defence of our country. I thank the member for Vaucluse for bringing that matter to the attention of the House.

SYDNEY AIRPORT

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.49 p.m.]: Sydney Airport is located in the heart of the Heffron community and it impacts upon the life of almost every constituent I represent. My family made a decision to live in Eastlakes, just near the east-west flight path, at the time propeller aircraft flew over The Lakes Golf Course. In my electorate the most significant issue faced by my constituents is that of aircraft noise. However, my constituents also face lesser publicly known problems due to their proximity to the airport. I will name but a few. The first is parking. The cost of parking at Sydney Airport is exorbitantly priced so many people drive to the surrounding suburbs, park their cars in a residential street and catch a taxi to the airport.

This leaves little to no available parking for my constituents or customer parking for commercial premises. Every day my constituents face increasing traffic congestion as they leave from and return to their

homes. The traffic around the airport is forever providing a headache for residents, who resort to navigating their way around the main roads in order to avoid the heavy traffic. One of the bigger conflicts that we as a community face constantly is the battle to retain the curfew and not lift the cap on aircraft movements. Hopefully, with the announcement that a second airport will finally be built at Badgerys Creek, Heffron residents may find some relief with respect to these issues.

As their local member I am regularly approached by constituents with complaints about how they are adversely affected by the airport. As a member and former president of the Australian Mayoral Aviation Council and as a member of the Sydney Airport Community Forum [SACF], I have the opportunity to express the views of my constituents either directly or through my representatives, the mayors of Randwick—from any political party. I have worked that way in order to alleviate adverse impacts. This is why I was so astounded to receive a letter from Mr John Alexander, Federal member for Bennelong, advising that the member for Marrickville and I will be removed as members of the SACF and replaced at the upcoming meeting on 14 November 2014 with one single member from the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Mr Alexander states that this decision was made following a review of the membership and the terms of reference of the SACF, as duplication in constituent representation of matters occurs and issues relating to aircraft noise were related to the Federal Government, not State. This demonstrates the ignorance of the Federal member for Bennelong. The Australian standards for noise and the planning surrounding them are State matters under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. As the member for Marrickville has pointed out, residents often do not differentiate the responsibilities that elected officials have. In any day I can be approached about local, State and Federal issues. There is a distinct lack of transparency as to who the appropriate representative is. Constituents have little knowledge of the issues they face.

Mr Alexander states that his department's representative will provide a "whole-of-government perspective on State issues". However, this representative will not know or understand the issues that specific electorates under the flight path face. SACF is a consultative forum that has existed since 1996. It has provided the setting for healthy debate, discussion and decision-making with all the relevant bodies since that time. It is very disappointing that the Federal Government has decided to silence two of the voices in the forum. If this is a political strategy in order to remove two Labor Party representatives it is even more unacceptable. It is not the first time that I have been removed from SACF.

The Howard Government removed me as the mayor of the City of Botany, directly affected by the flight path, and replaced me with a North Shore representative. The constituents of Heffron and Marrickville deserve to have their elected officials representing them, as they have come to expect, in all matters that affect them. I urge the Federal Government to reconsider its short-sighted decision to remove the elected State representatives from the SACF. The SACF should be not political but an organisation of merit, which it has been for the past seven or eight years.

SPIRIT OF THE LAND FESTIVAL

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.54 p.m.]: Tonight I bring to the attention of the House the efforts of the Lockhart community and an event called the Spirit of the Land Festival. Former Mayor Col Wiese, who was involved with the Spirit of the Land from its inception, came to me with a proposal to make Lockhart the home of a National Farm Sculpture Competition. The proposal was to have the community come together and create sponsorship and prize money for artwork created by artists welding together farm junk. From those early days and initial sponsorship, the Spirit of the Land Festival has grown.

The festival was always designed to draw people to the town and to promote the "Verandah Town" at what was a difficult time during the peak of the drought. It did just that, and has continued to do so, with an estimated 5,000 visitors to the event just this year. More than 140 artworks were displayed from the iconic farm art sculptures, made from recycled material, to photography and fine art. The total prize pool for the weekend was \$20,000. Winners of the sculpture awards included Stuart Taylor for the national farm art sculpture. The small sculpture award went to Glenn Burnside, the creative cocky award went to Luke Trevaskis and David St Leon won the Spirit of the Anzac award, which was a one-off category in honour of 100 years of Anzac.

Visitors were treated to live music by the lagoon, where the sculptures were displayed and shopaholics were catered for, with 70 stores selling high-quality products in the main street of Lockhart, Green Street, which was closed to traffic. The event was much bigger than last year, with more entrants in the sculpture competition

and 30 more stalls. The president of the committee, Elizabeth Pertz, attributed this to the event's growing reputation. She stated, "All entries were up on previous years and we had a bigger Saturday than previous years."

Saturday night saw hundreds of people gather at the lagoon for dinner, music and fireworks. I was there on that day. There was an enormous crowd—more people than I have ever seen in the community of Lockhart. They gathered from all over the region at the Verandah Town to support Lockhart. I have stated previously that Lockhart has recently been in media. The community did come together. His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley, AC, DSC (Retd) and his wife were welcomed by the Mayor, Peter Yates, and community members. The Governor and his wife then walked up the street over some unique pavers that are embossed to recognise families and early settlers to the area. They then went to the new museum, which has been built through contributions from Bendigo Bank, the State Government and the council, to judge the sculpture awards.

The Governor selected a sculpture which will be placed in Lockhart as a commemorative piece for his visit. The Governor attended the Lockhart picnic races. He and his delightful wife engaged with the community, took part in the judging of fashions on the field and had a thoroughly wonderful time. The Lockhart community's spirit was lifted in many ways, especially by the visit from the Governor and his wife. I thank the committee for its tireless work in organising the Spirit of the Land, which took place on Saturday and Sunday. The locals appreciated their support. We had a wonderful day, as did the Governor and his wife. It was a memorable occasion. The creativity of artists such as Stuart Taylor is to be admired. I thank them for participating in an iconic event. It is supported by the New South Wales Coalition Government as a flagship event. I thank them for their support.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! I thank the member for Wagga Wagga and congratulate the community of Lockhart on its memorable and outstanding day.

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [7.00 p.m.]: New South Wales is a multicultural State, and one that I am proud of. I am proud that this State has welcomed people from different parts of the world, who all contribute to this magnificent country. I am also proud of our Indigenous culture, which has existed for more than 40,000—an Indigenous culture that was and still is multicultural to this day. Our history in New South Wales, although proud, has seen troubled times. I do not want to highlight the negative but we simply cannot forget the injustices done to our Indigenous community and our migrant communities in the 1940s and 1950s. Earlier today in the Chamber we saw the Leader of the House, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, hit an all-time low. We saw a senior Minister doing an impersonation of an Italian migrant in the parliamentary Chamber as the punchline to a bad joke. Selling your policy and slogan is one thing, but completely undermining a community through the use of racial gestures, words and voices—

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order—

Mr GUY ZANGARI: —is quite simply unacceptable and should never occur in this House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! The member for Fairfield will resume his seat.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: It is unconventional to take a point of order during a private member's statement, but it is also unconventional to make an attack on a member of this House in a private member's statement. If the member for Fairfield wishes to do that I suggest that he do so by way of substantive motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: And that is on the record. Racial discrimination is not tolerated in today's society.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! The member for Fairfield will come to order. I ask the member for Fairfield, in his remaining 2½ minutes, to return to the substance of his speech and adhere to the spirit of private members' statements. If he does not do so, I will direct him to resume his seat.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The Chamber should not tolerate any form of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. For a Government that claims to be promoting social harmony, social inclusion

and the betterment of a multicultural New South Wales, it is surely taking a giant leap in the wrong direction. Allowing the Minister to use offensive gestures and tone and to have him stand by his implication that Italian families—

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! The member for Fairfield will resume his seat. If the member for Fairfield continues in this manner he will be removed from the Chamber under Standing Order 249 (1). What is the member's point of order?

Mr Mark Speakman: The member for Fairfield is flouting the ruling of the Chair. He is contravening Standing Order 73, which states:

Imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on Members of either House are disorderly other than by substantive motion.

What the member for Fairfield is doing constitutes an imputation of improper motive.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! I thank the Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr Mark Speakman: I have another point of order—

Mr GUY ZANGARI: To the point of order—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! I have not called the member for Fairfield. I call the Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr Mark Speakman: Notwithstanding that the member for Fairfield had been called to order, he continued to speak over you. You should direct that whatever he said be struck from the *Hansard*.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! I ask the member for Fairfield to return to the substance of his private member's statement. He has 30 seconds remaining. I warn the member not to breach any further standing orders.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: But the real icing on the cake, which followed shortly after I raised my concerns, was the Minister's behaviour. I was confronted by him smiling and making a peace sign—

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! I ask the member for Fairfield for a third time to return to the substance of his private member's statement in the 10 seconds that remain. The member for Davidson takes a point of order.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: The member for Fairfield is flouting your ruling. Not only that, Standing Order 73 is being severely breached. I ask that you direct the member for Fairfield either to behave appropriately or to leave the Chamber.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! I have directed him to do so on three separate occasions. The member's time has expired.

RAISE FOUNDATION

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [7.05 p.m.]: Many young Australians are in crisis and their self-esteem is suffering. The fact that suicide is the leading cause of death amongst 14- to 25-year-olds in Australia emphasises just how vulnerable young lives can be. I have spoken previously about the importance of services such as KYDS, based in Lindfield, and StreetWork, based in Chatswood, in meeting the needs of our youth. Today I wish to speak of another organisation called the Raise Foundation, which is based on Sydney's lower north side, following this issue being raised with me by a local resident, Lindsey Walker. Lindsey works with Raise as a program counsellor. I make this speech to promote greater awareness of its work, essentially drawing on information from the website www.raise.org.au.

The Raise Foundation is a charity that provides mentoring programs to make a tangible difference for young people facing profound challenges and threats in their lives. These include mental health, substance misuse and sexual health issues. The Raise Foundation provides school- and community-based mentoring programs and personal development workshops, putting into practice the concept that it takes a village to raise a child. Its mentoring programs provide communities of support around young people. Mentoring from a positive role model provides a nurturing pathway for teenagers to feel supported through tough times, particularly when they feel they cannot talk to other significant adults in their lives, for whatever reason. Experience shows the enormous power of having someone who really listens.

Mentoring from a positive role model provides a nurturing pathway for teenagers to feel supported through tough times. Mentors can change thinking and save lives. With this in mind, the Raise Foundation conducts three main mentoring programs and a series of workshops for young people. It runs an In School Mentoring Opportunity [ISMO] program for guys and girls in high school, mainly in years 7 to 10. The Bump program is for young mums under the age of 23 and includes weekly mentoring and monthly workshops, with the girls achieving a TAFE certificate I. Bump Up is a further program for Bump graduates. It is an advanced course towards achieving a TAFE Certificate II in Skills for Work and Training.

Connections is a program that supports youth in the lower North Shore area of Sydney who have disengaged from education and employment. The Raise Foundation mentors young people to raise their voices, improve relationships, improve their wellbeing and coping strategies, increase their self-confidence, identify and achieve their goals, and engage in further education and employment. The Raise Foundation has provided accredited mentors for more than 1,000 struggling young Australians, and I thank all those who have made a positive contribution under the leadership of its founder and Chief Executive Officer, Vicki Condon. Like the Raise Foundation, we can all raise our hands to make a difference for our youth and our communities. I commend the Raise Foundation for doing that.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.10 p.m.]: I commend the member for Davidson for bringing to the attention of the House the inspiring work of the Raise Foundation. It is great to hear that that organisation has helped 1,000 young Australians since its inception. I understand that in 2014 the organisation is mentoring about 300 young people in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. It is an inspiring story. I commend the member for Davidson for bringing this organisation to the attention of the House, and I commend the great work of the Raise Foundation and hope that it will continue.

CAMPBELLTOWN ELECTORATE RUGBY LEAGUE

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [7.11 p.m.]: It is my great pleasure to update the House on some of the latest news from Campbelltown—that great opal of the south-west and the best part of the Macarthur. On Sunday 19 October, I had the privilege of attending and presenting awards at the Campbelltown City Kangaroos Junior Rugby League Football Club 2014 presentation ceremony held at the mighty Western Suburbs Leagues Club at Leumeah. President Narelle Cullen and the committee conducted a very professional awards ceremony and it was my pleasure to present awards to the boys.

For the 12 competing teams that the Kangaroos fielded, the day's celebrations were the culmination of hard-won battles waged up and down the footy fields of Campbelltown. Of the 12 teams, the Kangaroos had two premiership winning teams, the first division under 12s and the first division under 14s, two semifinals teams and one preliminary final team. All of them conducted themselves with integrity and displayed sportsmanship. I extend my heartiest congratulations to all those who received awards for their sportsmanship and athletic achievements throughout the year. There were many proud young players and parents in attendance. It goes without saying that without the parents and other volunteers these clubs would not be able to function and provide such an important team- and character-building activity for our next generation of young men.

As Laurie Daley from the New South Wales Blues said, rugby league is about turning young boys into men. It is the job of junior rugby league football clubs to make them the best men that they can be. I pay tribute to two men who have done that day in and day out. Ben Rogers worked on junior development at Wests Tigers. I had the privilege of working with him for a number of years as he helped to develop rugby league and our young players. John Skandalis is an outstanding member of the local community and has been a great role model for many young men. I have had the pleasure of rubbing shoulders with him on many occasions.

While I walked alongside Steve Noyce, the outgoing Chief Executive Officer of the Cronulla Sharks, at the Walk Against Cancer at Leumeah on the weekend we talked about all things rugby league. One thing that

has always struck me about him is the care and attention he has given to the young men in his charge and the fact that they leave him as the best men they can be. I also hold Mick Potter, the former coach of the Wests Tigers, in very high esteem. He always looked after his players and made the best decisions he could on their behalf. Rugby league is intrinsic to the community of Campbelltown. On any weekend during the season one can see the dedicated volunteers and parents setting up the fields in readiness for young players to play the game.

I was honoured to be with the Macarthur Saints under 16 team when it was nominated for the prestigious National Rugby League One Community Grassroots Club of the Year Award. Rugby league helps to grow the very best in our young men and our community. I commend the Campbelltown City Kangaroos Junior Rugby League Club and wish it the very best for the next season. We have just celebrated the Rabbitohs' grand final win. I know that the member for Mount Druitt would well remember the team's victories over the years.

Mr Richard Amery: I remember when they were robbed of a victory against Balmain in 1969.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: I was too young to attend that game. I know that the Rabbitohs have many supporters in this place and in the community. I have been told that when the Rabbitohs are strong, rugby league in New South Wales is strong. I commend all the teams to the House.

MEDICINAL CANNABIS

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [7.16 p.m.]: Tonight I speak of an issue important to my constituents: the decriminalisation and regulation of cannabis use for medical purposes. I welcome the Premier's announcement of a clinical trial to investigate the use of cannabis for medical conditions. However, I believe the legislation proposed by the member for Tamworth and Dr John Kaye could be safely passed without a trial. Medical use of cannabis is permitted in States and countries across the world, including Canada, Israel, the Czech Republic, Finland, The Netherlands, Portugal, Uruguay, Spain and 23 States in the United States.

Cannabis has been widely used in the treatment of terminal illnesses such as cancer to relieve pain and the symptoms of chemotherapy, including loss of appetite, neuropathy and nausea; it is also used to treat debilitating illnesses. Evidence shows that cannabis can reduce the number of fits suffered by children with epilepsy. HIV sufferers use cannabis to alleviate symptoms related to their chronic condition and their medication. Cannabis can reduce painful chronic muscle stiffness in multiple sclerosis, and there is evidence that it can slow the progression of early onset Alzheimer's. In fact, it is widely used in the United States, France and the Czech Republic to halt the progression of Alzheimer's. It is also used in the management of osteoporosis and Parkinson's disease.

I note that the Premier and the member for Tamworth have referred only to terminal illnesses. However, the trial and future legislation should also include other conditions that cause chronic and significant suffering regardless of the long-term prognosis. I understand there are concerns that medicinal cannabis could increase use of the drug in the wider community because of the additional supply. Although opium is highly potent and highly addictive, it is grown under controlled circumstances and processed into pharmaceuticals like codeine. Morphine and amphetamines are all administered in some form medicinally and remain illegal for recreational use. It is difficult to see why cannabis, which was demoted to a class C drug in the United Kingdom in 2004, cannot be treated in the same way.

TasCann is working in Tasmania and on Norfolk Island towards a licence to cultivate quality-assured cannabis plants for overseas export for medical use using seeds supplied by Australian universities and seed banks in Canada and Europe. Linking with this organisation in the future could help to ensure a certified standard of medical cannabis. Without legislation to support the use of cannabis in the treatment of terminal and debilitating conditions, patients will continue to use the drug to manage their conditions at the risk of prosecution. Families and carers are breaking the law every time they try to help relieve the pain and suffering of their loved ones. This is a cruel burden to impose on those caring for loved ones.

Another benefit of regulation is that cannabis use to control suffering would be more likely to be monitored by a medical practitioner. While Positive Life supports medicinal cannabis laws for the many HIV positive people using it to manage their condition, the organisation raises concerns that cannabis could interact with HIV medications and have negative impacts on mental health. It prefers a model that would see medical practitioners prescribe cannabis to identify side effects or changes in mood. The existing Cannabis Cautioning Scheme, which gives police the discretion to merely caution an adult for minor cannabis offences, is

too flexible. It provides no guarantee that someone will not be charged. The Premier has promised to formalise guidelines in relation to charging terminally ill adults while the trial is in place, and I hope that this is extended to other debilitating conditions. A register of medicinal cannabis users would provide greater guarantee to users and their carers against prosecution.

Lucy Haslam, mother of the 24-year-old cancer sufferer Daniel Haslam, who met with the Premier and the member for Tamworth to discuss her son's use of cannabis to relieve the side effects of chemotherapy, has a petition requesting the decriminalisation of medical cannabis for cancer sufferers. More than 195,000 people have signed the petition. This reflects the strong support for reform in my electorate and, I believe, the wider community. As long as the medical use of cannabis is banned in Australia, people will suffer or risk prosecution and fail to have professional medical oversight of their treatment. The trial is a step towards relieving pain and suffering and embracing a more progressive position in pharmaceutical advancement. I hope that the trial will lead to legislation soon. I call on all members of Parliament to support those who are terminally ill and who experience chronic and severe pain by giving them the right to use lawfully a medicine that can alleviate their distress.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.21 p.m.]: I thank the member for Sydney for his perspective on the medicinal use of cannabis and, in particular, his reference to some of the empirical evidence. I draw the attention of the House to what the Australian Medical Association said on 30 September. Its preference is for a coordinated national approach to the medicinal use of cannabis. The president of the association, Associate Professor Owler, said that moves towards legalising medicinal use should be conducted as a national strategy rather than being undertaken on an ad hoc State-by-State basis. New South Wales is proud to take the lead on a national strategy, but the Government thinks it is important that there be a national strategy. The Government also thinks it is important that we have a thorough clinical understanding of the possible effects of medicinal use before we go further.

THE HONOURABLE EDWARD GOUGH WHITLAM, AC, QC, A FORMER PRIME MINISTER

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [7.22 p.m.]: I will use this brief private member's statement to say a few words on the passing of former Prime Minister Edward Gough Whitlam and talk about his impact on my electorate now and in the past. I do not hope to come near the standard of tributes that have been made nationally and internationally this week following his passing, but I will put on record how the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 impacted not only my electorate but also the broader western suburbs. Surprisingly, this week I have received many calls and visits to my office expressing sorrow at the passing of Mr Whitlam. It is not surprising that people are sorry, but it is surprising that they are ringing my office and contacting people in my circle of friends to make their comments. As a result, I issued a press statement setting out how Prime Minister Whitlam and his Government affected the residents of my electorate.

Long before we had a Mount Druitt hospital the Whitlam Government funded what was called a polyclinic, which was a community health centre designed to bring several health services under one roof. It still stands at Mount Druitt and the locals still call it the polyclinic, although that is no longer its official name. Later the hospital came, but the clinic continues to provide a full community health service in the area. I now turn to Westmead Hospital. Most people consider that hospitals are funded by State governments, which we have spoken about in this House, and in the main they are. But we should recognise that the establishment of a large specialist hospital in the heart of Western Sydney was a Whitlam Government pledge for many years. Westmead Hospital, though constructed under the auspices of a State government, was funded by the Whitlam Government.

The Whitlam Government then introduced the Medibank National Health Service, which affected many people in the area. Moving to Rooty Hill in 1974, my tight home budget needed all the help it could get. Initiatives such as the Medibank National Health Service, which cut health insurance fees, and other policies made the home budget easier to manage. This week I have heard people who came to the area at about the same time I did make the same comment. I now turn to kerb and guttering in places such as Mount Druitt, Rooty Hill, Plumpton and Eastern Creek. We think of kerb and guttering as a responsibility of the council, and in the main it is. However, as a person living in Cabramatta and representing a western suburbs electorate Whitlam saw the effect that the lack of sewerage and kerb and guttering was having on our suburbs. So he introduced the Regional Employment Development Scheme, known as the RED scheme.

One day I came home from my shift at Parramatta police station and saw council workers and other work gangs constructing guttering and footpaths in my street and around the corner. I checked with the council.

I was quite alarmed, thinking, in accordance with the rule at the time, that I would have to pay for half. I said, "How much is this going to cost me since I didn't ask for it?" The council said, "It will cost you nothing." The council told me that through the RED scheme the Federal Government had picked up the ticket that was allocated to Blacktown council to take on unemployed workers to assist council with its projects. As a result the streets of Rooty Hill, Eastern Creek and parts of Plumpton and Old Mount Druitt were given kerb and guttering, footpaths and other local council-type projects funded directly by the Whitlam Government.

My electorate probably has the largest Aboriginal population of all electorates in the State. Blacktown local government area, which is much larger than my electorate, certainly has the largest number of Aboriginal people living in an urban environment. Whitlam was one of the first leaders to substantially recognise our Indigenous communities. Elders in my community still remember the recognition he gave them and have spoken about it this week. I have issued a local press release on the loss of our former Prime Minister but, having mentioned household budgets, I will close by saying that household budgets come down to the last dollar and cent. A wage indexation policy of the Whitlam Government was to give workers an increase in line with the consumer price index every three months. It might have amounted to only a few dollars or cents but it certainly helped household budgets. With those comments, I will say how sad it was when we heard of the loss of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. He deserves to be recognised for the things he did for many electorates, including mine.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): I add my condolences on the passing of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. One of his greatest achievements was the opening up of Australia's foreign policy to include China.

PLASTIC POLLUTION

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.27 p.m.]: On 25 September the member for Heathcote and I joined other community representatives on a cruise in the tall boat *Yukon* on the Port Hacking and out to sea. It was organised by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation [ANSTO]. Professor Banati had chartered the *Yukon* from Hobart to Sydney to trawl for plastics. The plastics collected will be used to research the impact of the pollutants on marine life and the food chain. On our cruise we trawled what I consider to be a surprising amount and variety of plastic in and around Port Hacking, despite the relatively clean nature of that waterway. On board, ANSTO scientists Professor Richard Banati and Professor John Dodson addressed us on plastic waste in the marine environment.

We were addressed in particular on collaborative research between Professor Banati, a biomedical scientist at ANSTO Life-Sciences, and Monash University conservation biologist Dr Jennifer Lavers. This research suggests that plastic pollution is having a greater impact on seabirds than previously thought. The many environmental risks of plastics have been long known, such as marine life choking on plastics, but the research to which I referred shows that plastic pollution is finding its way into the tissues of marine wildlife. Toxins absorbed by plastic are transferred to the animal that ingests it. The researchers compared the elemental composition of plastic items collected from the stomachs of flesh-footed shearwater seabirds with the atomic elements in the feathers from birds of the same species—some that had eaten plastics and some that had not.

The plastic and feather samples were subjected to neutron activation in which atoms were bombarded with neutrons to make them slightly radioactive. Each element was then identified by its distinctive gamma-ray spectrum, which I am told gives measurements of composition so accurate that they can be compared with determining the vintage of a single glass of red wine that has been spilled into Sydney Harbour. The tests confirmed that trace elements from plastic were found in the feathers of birds that had eaten it. It is suggested that, contrary to expectations, plastics that degrade in the environment are not necessarily safer for wildlife because the increased surface area as they break down can worsen the release of toxins such as cadmium and mercury.

Professor Banati observes that the traditional approach in environmental management has been "the solution to pollution is dilution" but said that we are now finding that mass plastic consumption together with increased degradability of plastics can actually lead to a steady increase of hazardous contaminants in the environment that would be difficult to reverse. Professor Banati said his data suggests that birds that have eaten a lot of plastic show signs of impaired health, biological mutations and fertility problems. For example, there has been a drop in the population of the shearwater seabird, which is believed to be a result of plastic pollution. He said plastics were highly absorbent of heavy metals such as lead, mercury and arsenic, which render the plastic highly toxic. The research suggests that when a bird eats the plastic, rather than sitting in the bird's stomach it degrades.

These heavy metals are then released into the bird's biological system. Professor Banati concludes that if they are in seabirds they are most likely in humans as well because of the food chain. Research of the kind I have described highlights the need to consider further action to curb the wasteful use of plastic. The researchers made it clear that they are not out to demonise plastic. Indeed, Professor Banati says that plastics will always have a place in our world. What they have sought to do is better understand plastic at an atomic level. I think this research reinforces the need to avoid the wasteful use of plastic and, in particular, the prevalence of single-use throwaway items that can change form many times and stay in the system of living creatures for eternity at the atomic level.

We know that in Australia we are using more than four billion plastic check-out bags every year and throwing out more than 7,000 plastic bags every minute. We also know that they can take up to a thousand years to break down. Each year in Australia approximately 50 million plastic bags do not make it to landfills but instead enter the environment and never leave, potentially killing tens of thousands of birds and other creatures.

From a philosophical viewpoint, conservatives often and rightly emphasise the importance of fiscal responsibility and the importance of avoiding wild spending and debt. The bases for that are said to include intergenerational equity. But intergenerational equity does not stop at the economic sphere—it extends to environmental health. That does not mean we can never ever do things that do, or might, have an environmental disadvantage, particularly when the alternative would increase poverty. What it does require is that we do not leave the next generation with long-lasting problems that appear to be easily avoidable. Plastic pollution falls into that category.

I therefore think that we in New South Wales need to examine banning the single-use plastic bag. It has been done in South Australia, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. It has been done in a number of countries around the world, including Ireland, Bangladesh, South Africa and China. California is the first State in the United States of America to introduce a statewide ban. Given the latest research undertaken by ANSTO, which shows the long-lasting effects of plastic and the potential for plastic to last when ingested by creatures, and given the need to ensure we are not leaving unnecessarily the world in a dirtier and more polluted condition than our generation inherited, it is now time for us in New South Wales to look at banning the single-use plastic bag.

Private members' statements noted.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.32 p.m. until
Tuesday 4 November 2014 at 12 noon.**
