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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 5 November 2014

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**The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock)** took the chair at 11.00 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.**

**Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.**

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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### SENIOR CITIZEN COMMUNITY CENTRES

**Mr JOHN FLOWERS** (Rockdale) [11.05 a.m.]: Senior citizen community centres are located throughout our electorates. Various community programs are available and they are an excellent resource for seniors interested in socialising with people who have similar interests. Recently I was talking to a group of seniors in my area who took pleasure in telling me of some activities they have undertaken in the Rockdale electorate. I am pleased to elaborate on what was said and recognise the Rockdale City Seniors Garden Club. This association celebrated 20 years of providing healthy and relaxing amenities to seniors in the local community. I acknowledge Mrs Mary Langdon, an original member, who worked as secretary for 17 years. Currently, members of the club meet monthly at the Rockdale Seniors Centre, located at 36 George Street, Rockdale. Senior citizens enjoy getting together here to discuss gardening tips and other topics of interest.

An enjoyable part of their regular meetings is the presentations by professional speakers who raise a vast range of interesting topics not related to plants and gardens but to health, travel and insurance. Apart from the monthly meetings, bus trips provide an opportunity for the seniors to socialise and visit places that are unfamiliar to them. I acknowledge Mrs Margaret Uiqereqere, who arranged many enjoyable excursions prior to her recent retirement. While enjoying each other's good company, seniors visit places of interest such as the famous Australian painted panorama, Aitken's masterpiece Australia in the Round, located at Glenbrook. Here they enjoy the amazingly life-like beauty and ruggedness of this great continent through a 213 square metre round wall work of art.

Staying active through passive recreation or leisure is a great way to achieve a healthy wellbeing. There are many opportunities to stay active, especially through the various walking trails and bike trails throughout the Rockdale area. There are other health-related organisations that run similar activities within the electorate to encourage mobility and health. The Heart Foundation walking groups encourage communities to get up and walk, which is an enjoyable way to appreciate the local area. This program is not only held in Rockdale so there is the opportunity to go outside the area and meet other people. Membership of the Rockdale City Seniors Garden Club has increased substantially from the earlier days of its formation. The meetings, speakers, tours and parades make being a member of the Rockdale City Seniors Garden Club special, and its monthly meetings are an event to look forward to. It is always good to see members of the community come together to enjoy one another's company. Many fears are born of loneliness. To see so many simple events bring so much happiness is what community is all about. I thank members of the Rockdale City Seniors Garden Club for chatting with me and for passing on all of this information.

### THE HONOURABLE EDWARD GOUGH WHITLAM, AC, QC, A FORMER PRIME MINISTER

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [11.10 a.m.]: As we speak, the city has stopped for Gough Whitlam. Like many members of Parliament and others in the community I would not be here if it

were not for Gough Whitlam enabling me to go to university at a time when my family could not afford it. The fact that many members of Parliament do not recognise the opportunities that Gough gave them through a university education, and fail to repay that in social justice, says much more about them than it does about Gough. Education is all about creating opportunities for people, and Gough recognised that as part of his desire to make the world a better place. He was a great reformer, not just of the country but also of the Labor Party.

The result of his determination to change the Australian Labor Party [ALP] was a long and drawn-out battle with the conservative forces within the Labor Party, meaning that he was actually threatened with expulsion from the party on two occasions over major issues of policy. The first was over federal funding of both public and private schools. He broke with the party and supported the provision of federal funds to Catholic and private schools. He was accused of gross disloyalty and was only saved from expulsion by two votes. The delegates from Queensland supported him because they recognised that his campaigning for the Dawson by-election had won them that election. The second came in 1967—this time over the Vietnam War. So two major policy debates of the 1960s were first held within the ALP before being held with the community and again Gough was threatened with expulsion. The old guard were unsuccessful in expelling him. The rest is history.

On a personal level, I only met Gough twice. Once was when my brother, cousin and I were walking along a street in Mooloolaba and we recognised him and stopped to talk to him. At that stage Gough was a very busy man under enormous pressure from inside and outside the party and he treated us as if we were the most important people in the world. That said it all about Gough. The second time was at the Casula Powerhouse about six years ago. I felt that was my opportunity to thank him for educating me and I did. Gough in his imperious way just smiled and nodded. While I stayed with him for 10 minutes three other people approached him and did exactly the same. His staffer told me that Gough's whole life was people coming to say "thank you for educating me" and the most prominent demographic was women professors because it was to that generation that Gough gave the opportunity to achieve their dreams.

My friend Aaron Rule, the former mayor of Campbelltown, worked for 10 years with Gough and until very recently Gough was coming into the office every day. He was a steadfast man who, at the age of 98, outlasted all of his detractors. No other politician could ever fill the Sydney central business district with mourners. The fact that thousands of people have turned out today is a testament to the impact that Gough had in reforming the country and the party he chose to serve. The fact that the Government has chosen that this House should still sit, albeit with private members' statements, while the rest of the city stops, would have brought out the wry smile for which Gough was famous. I agree with Gough that others in society deserve those seats in the Sydney Town Hall more than any member of this place. Being a progressive politician has never been easy. The reward for those steadfast like Gough is to stop the city for only one reason, because history has, and will, judge, his vision for a fairer Australia. He is the man who gave us universal health care, created so many opportunities for so many people and changed Australia for the better.

### **NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [11.15 a.m.]: It gives me a great deal of pleasure to take this opportunity to inform the House of a wonderful concert put on by the New England Conservatorium of Music [NECOM] called "2014 New England Sings" held last weekend at Lazenby Hall at the University of New England, Armidale. It was a great pleasure to attend the fourth annual New England Sings concert with more than 500 people crammed into Lazenby Hall. It is a showcase of the wonderful musical and singing talents in the New England and Northern Tablelands regions. This year more than 900 students from 26 regional primary and secondary schools participated in New England Sings.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the New England Conservatorium of Music and this auspicious occasion was marked with a program of only Australian works. The works were chosen from some of Australia's finest established composers, such as the remarkable Elena Kats-Chernin and Paul Jarman, as well as emerging composers who represent the future in the industry, such as Luke Byrne who fortunately for us attended that day. Two substantial works were commissioned for the primary choir and secondary choir and the orchestra, the Armidale Youth Orchestra, and they were absolutely brilliant.

For the primary choir, the composer-conductor Harley Mead and writer Sophie Masson combined for a fantastic piece. Harley was an enigmatic and charismatic figure in the Australian choral scene in recent years. He was passionate about empowering young musicians in their musical journey. Harley tragically passed away

only weeks before New England Sings, and the performances were dedicated to his memory. Sophie Masson is a well-known local writer and poet who has been shortlisted for a number of awards right around Australia for her books, short stories for children and poetry. It was great to have her there on the day as well.

For the secondary choir and orchestra, the composer Christopher Gordon was chosen. He has composed music for the opening ceremonies of the 2006 Commonwealth Games, the 2003 Rugby World Cup plus the 2001 Centenary of Federation. He put music to the words of Judith Wright, who was a famous poet born in 1915 near Armidale. The orchestra combined with the secondary choir to perform the world premiere of *Two Birds*, which was an absolutely magnificent piece. A project of this scale requires an enormous amount of community effort. In acknowledging the Conservatorium of Music, I also acknowledge those organisations that continue to support the conservatorium and New England Sings. The State Government is a big supporter through Arts NSW, as well as the Department of Education and Communities, the Armidale Music and Teachers Association, the Armidale Youth Orchestra, the Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society Armidale Inc., and John Hadfield Piano Tuning.

Those groups are integral to the success of the day but, more importantly, so are the individuals who are involved. I acknowledge all of the students from the 26 schools involved; chief conductor, Warwick Dunham, who also accompanied a number of the pieces throughout the day; NECOM conductor Rowena Tall; Leanne Roobol, who did a magnificent job; and guest conductor Lyn Williams, OAM. I also acknowledge the more than 900 students from 26 schools throughout the New England Northern Tablelands region who participated in the concert. They are: Armidale City Public School, Ben Venue Public School, Martin's Gully Public School, PLC Junior School Armidale, Sandon Public School, St John's Junior School, St Mary's Primary School Armidale, St Patrick's Primary School Walcha, The Armidale Junior School and The Armidale Waldorf School.

The secondary choir included students from Armidale High School, Bellingen High School, Duval High School, Inverell High School, McCarthy Catholic College Tamworth, New England Girls School Armidale, O'Connor Catholic College Armidale, Presbyterian Ladies' College Armidale and The Armidale School. The Armidale Youth Orchestra also performed magnificently on the day. I again pay tribute to both the NECOM management team: Susanne James, Corinne Arter, Deborah Jenner, Rachael Edmonds, Heather Pavel and Maria Stafford, and the NECOM board of directors: Chair Dr Arthur Rickards, Cathy Archer, John Brady, Lorraine Coffey, Brett Constable, Liz Egan, David Gee, Rosemary Leich, AM, Grey Moin and Bruce Myers. This magnificent concert was a fitting celebration of the tenth anniversary of the New England Conservatorium.

#### **ORANGE WINE FESTIVAL 2014**

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [11.20 a.m.]: From 17 October to 2 November Orange's best drops were on show during the Orange Wine Festival, formerly known as Orange Wine Week. The festival is now in its ninth year. It attracts visitors from across New South Wales and nationally who are keen to enjoy cool climate wines and fantastic food produced in the wonderful Central West region of New South Wales. Why are Orange wines so good? Why are Orange wines highly regarded for their quality? The Orange region starts at 600 metres above sea level and rises to 1,395 metres at its highest peak of Mount Canobolas, which makes it one of the highest altitude wine regions in Australia. This elevation creates a cool climate and the moderate daytime maximum temperatures during ripening make the climate ideal for producing premium quality wines—indeed, some of the best wines in Australia and internationally.

This year the festival was a stunning success. I note that the member for Macquarie Fields is shaking his head in agreement. He is always very excited about the Orange Wine Festival. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Orange Wine Festival Committee for doing such a wonderful job in organising this festival. But who are these community champions? The committee is made up as follows: chair Michelle Stivens; committee members Nick Garton, David Crawley, Phil Stivens, Larissa Stenson, Michelle Davies, Peter Mortimer—now that name might be familiar.

**Mr John Sidoti:** The Mortimer brothers.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** The footballing dynasty lives on in the Central West and Orange through Peter's family and his sons, including the famous Daniel Mortimer.

**Mr John Sidoti:** He played for the Roosters.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** As the member rightly points out, he did play for the Roosters. Peter Hedberg is also a committee member. The Taste Orange representatives were Sandra Taylor, Charlotte Gundry, Jane Arnott and the chief executive officer of Taste Orange, Rhonda Sear, who works tirelessly for our community. The signature events at the festival included the ever popular Orange Wine Festival night markets in Robertson Park. This year the markets attracted more than 6,000 local residents and visitors. These were the most successful markets in the history of the wine festival, with more than 50 stall holders. Wander, Wine and Dine was a new event this year. It comprised two new ways to experience Orange regional wines. Sips in the City saw guests taken on a trail throughout Orange, taking in a number of wine and food venues in town, and sharing the stories of Orange and the rich tapestry of history, homes and buildings.

Wine in the Vines saw guests meet winemakers through a progressive-style lunch. A number of winemakers and a local cidery threw their cellar doors open to mix and match wines with local food platters. This area is renowned as the food bowl of New South Wales and Australia so they enjoyed wonderful wine and produce. Perhaps the most anticipated event, and it kicked off the festival, was a black tie dinner held at the Ross Hill Winery where the 2014 Orange Wine Show results were announced. Toni Paterson, master of wines, once again returned to oversee the judging. Toni was joined by Gary Baldwin from Wine Network Consulting and Emma Bekkers.

The 2014 Orange Wine Show trophy winners from Orange were: Saint Martin Best Wine Of Show, 2013 Swinging Bridge "Mrs Payten" chardonnay, congratulations Tom and Georgie Ward; GK Craig Printers Best White Wine Of Show, 2013 Swinging Bridge "Mrs Payten" chardonnay, congratulations again Tom and Georgie Ward; D'aquino Group of Companies Best Wine in classes 1, 2, 5 and 6, 2014 Cook's Lot Wines Lot 333 riesling, congratulations Duncan Cook winemaker and proprietor; Madrez Wine Services Best Sauvignon Blanc, 2013 Swinging Bridge sauvignon blanc, congratulations again Tom and Georgie Ward; Define Wine Marketing And Communications Best Chardonnay, 2013 Swinging Bridge "Mrs Payten" chardonnay, Tom and Georgie Ward; Kelly's Rugby Hotel Best Wine classes 8, 10 and 13, 2014 Cook's Lot Wines Lot 365 rose, congratulations again Duncan Cook; Central Western Daily Best Cabernet/Cabernet Sauvignon Dominant Wine, 2012 Ross Hill, "Tom and Harry" cabernet sauvignon; Oils Plus Best Pinot Noir, 2013 Philip Shaw Wines No.8 pinot noir, congratulations to Philip and Diana Shaw. The Orange Region Vigneron of the Year Award went to Charlie Simmons from Philip Shaw Wines. I offer my congratulations to all the winners who make such a wonderful contribution to our community.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.25 a.m.]: I commend the member for Orange for his outstanding advocacy on behalf of his electorate. I congratulate the Orange Wine Festival Committee. The wonderful events we have heard about obviously helped to make this such a great festival. I also congratulate the winemakers who received awards in recognition of their fine workmanship in the production of wine not only for the Central West region but also Australia wide. An event that attracts 6,000 people is to be commended. I hope that the Orange Wine Festival continues to grow in the future.

#### **SAINT COLUMBKILLE'S SCHOOL MUSICAL *GUYS AND DOLLS***

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [11.26 a.m.]: Saint Columbkille's School is a great local Catholic primary school located in the heart of the Keira electorate. I recently had the great pleasure of attending a wonderful performance by students of that school in the musical *Guys and Dolls*. I congratulate the entire cast involved in that junior production. It was fantastic. I got there early and the young kids wanted to do a selfie with me. That was super fun, but it was even more fun to see the enjoyment and passion on their faces as they delivered a difficult and complex performance with the poise and talent of people well above their age.

Saint Columbkille's School is located at Corrimal. Principal Andrew Heffernan is doing a fantastic job in driving great educational outcomes for the young people attending that school. He has a committed and hardworking staff. I congratulate the staff and the parents who volunteered on the night to help the students get ready to perform. In particular I thank Ms Marianne Patton and the entire production team. This outstanding performance was conducted in the great Arcadians Theatre. I am proud of my involvement with the Arcadians Theatre in my local community, and I have also supported its enhancement.

This production underpins the enormous work that our teachers do to support students in extracurricular activities. Teachers do not get paid for any work they do out of hours; they do it because it brings joy to so many students. I sincerely thank the teachers for their efforts, as well as the parents and community members who also support this wonderful school. Opportunities such as this will become lifelong memories for those involved, but it required a great deal of commitment and dedication. That night I learnt that the performance had been the culmination of eight months hard work in rehearsing for the production.

For young people eight months is a long time. Each of those performers did their very best to represent proudly not only their school but also the entire community, themselves and their families. All of us know that for very young people performing is a challenge and that public speaking is something that many people find difficult. It was truly inspirational to see these very young students get up in front of hundreds of people, do their best and perform so well. I congratulate Andrew, Ms Marianne Patton and all the production team on a truly sensational performance from a wonderful local school.

### NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE 10/50 VEGETATION CLEARING CODE

**Mr GREG SMITH** (Epping) [11.30 a.m.]: Today I will talk about the 10/50 vegetation clearing code that has caused great controversy in my electorate, particularly in Beecroft, Cheltenham and Epping. I attended a meeting last Monday night at the Pennant Hills Bowling Club addressed by a gentleman named Corey from the Rural Fire Service. I do not know his full name as I arrived five minutes late. About 100 people attended the meeting but only one person appeared to support the clearing code. The audience was angry at the number of trees that have been cut down in Beecroft and Cheltenham by tree loppers who are going from house to house offering their services. The areas where the trees are being cut down pose no fire danger whatsoever.

This raises the question of whether a moratorium should be introduced. The problem with the current system is that if I want my neighbour to cut down a tree that is within 10 metres of my house I can force him to do so or I can cut the tree down myself. Conversely, if I choose to have a forest of trees that someone could put a match to and burn the whole street down, nobody could stop me. This suggestion that we are giving people a choice is a furphy. It allows selfish people to continue to cause fire hazards and helps those who want to cut down trees, many being developers who wish to subdivide the land for development and to remove blue gum forests that are in the way of houses.

I was heartened to read an article in today's *Northern District Times* entitled "Land and Environment Court rejects DA in Beecroft out of fears for blue gums under 10/50 legislation". That refers to the case of *Johnson v Hornsby Shire Council*, which was decided on 21 October 2014. Effectively, the court found that to grant the consent for the development application would allow removal of more than half of the remnant blue gum high forest in the restricted development area as approved by council and identified as critically endangered ecological community pursuant to the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1994. The commissioner refused to allow this because in this particular area trees represented a reasonable balance between the development of the newly created and approved allotment and preservation of the remnant blue gum high forest, so the proposal was refused.

I have written to the Minister, Stuart Ayres, with copies sent to the Premier and the Minister for the Environment, Rob Stokes, calling for a moratorium on the legislation. Currently a review is being conducted. It is unusual to do a review within two months of legislation coming into operation but obviously there are weaknesses in the legislation that allow abuses. These abuses are occurring. They are occurring in my electorate and in places like Lane Cove. People from Lane Cove who attended the meeting said that over 200 beautiful old trees had been cut down by tree loppers since the clearing code had been in operation. Those trees would never have been cut down if council had been given the final say.

Councils will now receive the message that they can refuse applications where there are a lot of trees that might be endangered by the 10/50 code, which will effectively destroy the 10/50 code in those instances. That is not a good thing either, in a sense, but it is a necessity. Hornsby Shire Council is being driven mad by residents who are furious—some may be happy that these trees are being cut down but most people live in the area because of the trees. They want to preserve them; the trees are part of the heritage of the area. Indeed, it is not only the trees; it is birds, possums and other animals. Unfortunately, I think we rushed into this legislation too quickly. I know I am being critical—and I am retiring—but whilst development is a good thing and Sydney has to go forward, it does not mean we have to destroy the heritage areas of the city. I am all for preserving Beecroft and Cheltenham. Indeed, one of the councillors lives in Epping and his house is affected. He is about half a mile away from any large trees, yet they would be able to cut down the trees in his backyard because of this ridiculous clearing code.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.35 a.m.]: I congratulate the member for Epping on talking so openly and being so frank. Often one does not agree with government policy but what good local members do then is stand up for their communities, for better or for worse. I commend him for that and for his advocacy. I wish him all the very best in his life after Parliament. He has made a substantial contribution to this place. I congratulate the member for Epping, Greg Smith.

## PETER SCHOUTEN AND MANNING VALLEY REGIONAL ART GALLERY

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [11.36 a.m.]: I inform the House about Peter Schouten from Manning Valley Regional Art Gallery. Peter Schouten is an outstanding Australian about whom the House should be aware. Peter Schouten is a wildlife artist, author, natural history illustrator, palaeontologist and paleontological illustrator who has been living and working in Bobbin in the Manning Valley for 12 years. Thousands of Manning Valley residents and their visitors have met Peter as the Manning Regional Art Gallery artist-in-residence where he has worked on his art in full view of the public for over three years. Whilst in the gallery he is painting a series of works about the animal species that are specifically from the Manning Valley. These are to be shown in a major exhibition in Manning Regional Art Gallery. Peter has shared his skills in art and his knowledge about wildlife with artists, students and visitors to the Manning.

Peter has an international reputation for his specialised area in paleontological reconstruction, which is the rebuilding of fossil species. He has recently released his new book entitled *Antipodean Ark*, which takes a look at the prehistory of Australasia. He is famous for his paleo recreation of the red deer cave hominid from China and also the hobbit from Flores. Now on his twelfth book, Peter has published some of Australia's most outstanding wildlife publications. His work features in books such as *Gliding Mammals of the World*, *Prehistoric Animals of Australia*, *A Gap in Nature*, *Astonishing Animals*, *Possums of the World*, *Tree Kangaroos—A Curious Natural History*, *Feathered Dinosaurs—The Origin of Birds* and strangely enough the *Encyclopedia of Asian Food*. He has co-written books with Dr Tim Flannery and Stephen Taylor as well as producing the book *Megafauna* in collaboration with Dr Ross MacPhee.

Peter's works are featured in the collections of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, the Natural History Museum in New York, the Naturalis Museum in Holland and in David Attenborough's private collection. It is wonderful that an artist and scientist of the calibre of Peter Schouten is working out of the gallery at Taree. Recently the Manning Regional Art Gallery received a \$26,000 grant for its Open Door project. The Open Door project comprises a series of well-structured events built around the exhibition "Black Art White Walls" curated by Don Mundine. I congratulate the curator of Manning Regional Art Gallery, Sue Mitchell, Ali Haigh of the Friends of the Manning Regional Art Gallery, and project coordinator Rachel Piercy, who put together the project and the application, which will be on exhibition in 2015.

This project is designed to appeal to young participants and includes filmmaking; performance, including Aboriginal comedy and the Bangarra Dance Theatre; and environmental art. Innovative ideas involving artist-designed Aboriginal art gardens, ceramic wares, film and music will expose the sophisticated new world of Aboriginal art. The exhibition draws on the extensive personal collection of Indigenous art accumulated by Adrian and Anne Newstead while working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, including works by many important Indigenous artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The project continues the Manning Regional Art Gallery's Developing Indigenous Audiences strategy begun in 2004.

The first stage of the project is the Black Art White Walls exhibition throughout the entire gallery. The second stage will coincide with the start of the exhibition. The local Worimi Aboriginal women designers, who formed Yili Design, will develop designs for an edible garden. This is a visual artwork which will be planted in the front yard of the gallery with the help of rangers from Taree Indigenous Development and Employment. The third stage of this project is titled "Eat Food Not Lawns". It is a joint program with artist Steve Williams of the Australian Ceramics Association. The fourth stage of the project will focus on Aboriginal film. The gallery studio will house an Aboriginal film festival including a program of films featuring Aboriginal themes, directors and actors selected by local Aboriginal filmmakers and actors. The studio will continue its development into a theatre for art films in 2015. I commend the Manning Regional Art Gallery, its staff and supporters, and artist Peter Schouten.

## CENTRAL COAST ACADEMY OF SPORT AWARDS

**Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN** (Gosford) [11.41 a.m.]: On Wednesday 29 October I was honoured and privileged to represent the Hon. Stuart Ayres, Minister for Sport and Recreation at the Central Coast Academy of Sport tenth annual awards night. It was an outstanding event, punctuated by athletes and coaches receiving awards for their efforts and success. The night was made even better by the master of ceremonies, Mr Mike Rabbitt, OAM. He is well known for his work with NBN Central Coast. It was a great night.

At the start of the evening Mark Holton, the Chairman of the Central Coast Academy of Sport, acknowledged the 10 years of operation of the academy and the great success that it has had, not only regionally

but also statewide, nationally and internationally. He acknowledged the athletes graduating in 2014, who continued that tradition with some outstanding results. He acknowledged the major business partners who support the academy, including the Greater Building Society; the University of Newcastle; the Mingara Recreation Club; webstuff.biz; the local radio stations of FM 101.3 Sea and FM 107.7 2GO, Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council; NBN Central Coast; and the New South Wales Government.

The sports program awards covered many different categories and sports, including Australian Rules football, athletics, basketball, future stars, golf, netball, netball umpires, rugby league, rugby union, surfing and swimming. The major awards were the highlight of the evening, and I draw the attention of the House to some of the winners. The Dedication to Sporting Excellence Award went to Paul Sinclair, from the rugby program. The Donnica Clarke Foundation Scholarship went to Ashley Sweetnam, from the future stars program. The Ray Sandell Award for Exceptional Service went to Larry Spencer, from the athletics program. The Board of Directors Inspirational Athlete Award went to Megan Burgess, from the swimming program. The Chairman's Award went to Bianca Khoury, from the basketball program.

The two main awards were the Male Athlete of the Year and the Female Athlete of the Year. The Male Athlete of the Year award went to Corey Jones, from the golf program. Corey has had an exceptional year both on and off the golf course. His major achievements this year include winning the 2014 Cromer Junior Classic, the Gosford Open Amateur, and the Sydney North Schoolboy Stroke and Match Play. A highlight of Corey's year was his selection in the 2014 State development squad. The Female Athlete of the Year award went to Macy Callaghan, from the surfing program. In 2014 Macy enjoyed huge success, winning a number of surfing competitions. Her achievements this year included becoming the Under 14 Australian Junior Surfing Champion, the Occy Grom Search Champion and the NSW Under 16 Surfing Champion. She is a young lady dedicated to surfing, and someone we will hear more about in the future. The night was a great success and highlighted the sporting talent on the Central Coast. I take this opportunity to wish the Central Coast Academy of Sport continued success.

#### **WAVERLEY COUNCIL BRIGHTEST AND BEST BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [11.44 a.m.]: I inform the House today of the winners of this year's Waverley Council Brightest and Best Business Awards. I recently attended the awards ceremony, which is a terrific initiative that honours the successes and achievements of business, both old and new. The awards also aim to promote businesses in the Waverley Local Government Area to greater Sydney and the wider community. This year 10 businesses in my electorate of Vaucluse received either a top prize or a highly commended award in a range of categories. This reflects the high calibre of entrepreneurship and business acumen in the local community.

I am pleased that Waverley Council values the contribution of local businesses to our community, which often forge strong and lasting relationships with residents, the council and other local stakeholders such as the Bondi and Districts Chamber of Commerce. Businesses in my area are actively involved in the community. One such example is the partnership between the council and the Bondi and Districts Chamber of Commerce earlier this year for the annual Bondi Winter Magic festival, which brings an ice rink to Bondi Beach.

The coordinator of the festival is Mary Anne Cronin, who is a local businesswoman and the President of the Bondi and Districts Chamber of Commerce. The festival aims to bring people down to Bondi Beach during the winter downturn of beachgoers and has been a great success over the years. Mary Anne has done a terrific job as president of the chamber of commerce over the last couple of years. I was pleased to recently attend the chamber's annual general meeting, where Mary Anne was re-elected to the position in recognition of her strong work in that role. I congratulate her on her strong advocacy for local businesses and her community leadership.

The NSW Government also strongly supports small businesses in their efforts to grow and establish themselves in their local communities. The Government created the office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner and established the Small Biz Connect program, which provides guidance to young, entrepreneurial businesses trying to get their ideas off the ground as well as to established businesses. The NSW Small Business Tool Kit, which is available online, is also a valuable resource for small businesses to learn or reinforce the principles of strong business practice.

I now inform the House of the award winners at the Waverley Council Brightest and Best Business Awards. The awards are split into two sections—firstly, business practice and, secondly, customer service and

business presentation. In the business practice section Bondi Beach business Let's Go Surfing won the Health and Fitness award. Let's Go Surfing is a surf school that caters to people of any ability level. It has run a program, in partnership with North Bondi RSL, called Vets Go Surfing. It offers free surf lessons to returned service men and women. This program is designed to help them to reintegrate into the local community. I congratulate the founder and owner of Let's Go Surfing, Brenda Miley, on this well-deserved recognition.

In the hospitality category The Bucket List, Bondi won the top award. The Bucket List is a restaurant at Bondi Beach which sits in a prized location at Bondi Pavilion, with a terrific view of the beach. The business has been built from scratch by Andy Ruwald, a member of the local community. Highly commended in this category was the Gertrude and Alice Cafe Bookstore, which is located in Hall Street, Bondi. This unique bookstore buys and sells second-hand books in a relaxed café environment. In the professional services category the winner was Waverley Action for Youth Services [WAYS]. WAYS is a not-for-profit organisation that does great work supporting local youth across the eastern suburbs. It offers a range of services to assist vulnerable youth, including counselling, health services and recreational activities. I congratulate the Chief Executive Officer, Russell King, and his team on all the work they do for the youth in my community and across the eastern suburbs.

Highly commended in the professional services category was Hart Estate Agents, which is located in Rose Bay. In the customer service and business presentation section, La Macelleria of Bondi Beach won the fresh food category. Highly commended was Bondi Surf Seafoods, also in Bondi Beach. Bondi Surf Seafoods is a longstanding and well-known institution on Campbell Parade, Bondi. In the Health and Fitness category, hair and beauty salon A Head of the Rest, which is located in Rose Bay, won a highly commended award. In the professional services category Bondi Beach Dental won a highly commended award. Finally, in the retail and fashion category Bondi clothing store Carousel won a highly commended award.

I was pleased to meet some of the business proprietors on the night and to congratulate them on their awards. Many of them live in the electorate I represent. The awards are a testament to the efforts of local people to create successful local businesses that serve their local communities. I thank the Deputy Mayor of Waverley Council, Tony Kay, who led proceedings on the night, and all the council staff who were involved in this event. I congratulate all award winners on their achievements and their contribution to our local and wider eastern suburbs community. Their efforts are highly valued by locals and by the State Government as well. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.49 a.m.]: I congratulate the member for Vaucluse, and Minister for Family and Community Services, and join with her in complimenting the Waverley Council Business Awards and highlighting their worth. Awards such as those mentioned by the Minister reflect the importance of small business across this great State. That is something this Government understands. The member for Vaucluse may not know this but I notice of a weekend how many of her constituents shop in my electorate, which has some of the best continental goods providers and unique butcheries in the State. I congratulate all businesses in the Vaucluse electorate on their contributions to their area and to the State. I also congratulate the New South Wales Government on the many initiatives the Minister outlined to promote, help and guide small business.

### **GALLIPOLI SCHOOL TOUR 2015**

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE** (The Entrance) [11.50 a.m.]: A few weeks ago I spoke about the unique and wonderful opportunity students from across Australia have been presented with to be part of the Centenary of Anzac commemorations by travelling to Gallipoli in 2015. Nine students from years 9 to 11 at Lisarow High School grasped the opportunity to apply to be one of the four students selected to attend. The nine students presented their submissions to the panel, of which I was honoured to be a part. They also had the opportunity to talk with us about the inspiration and motivation behind their application.

I found the process of seeing each student's work and hearing them speak about their applications and their reasons for applying to be very moving. Each student had their own reason, motivation and inspiration. Each student's submission was done in their own time by choice throughout the school holidays. Each student saw it as an opportunity to reflect on what Anzac means to them. They put a great deal of thoughtfulness and contemplation into their work, yet each of them shared a different story, perspective and motivation.

I will now reflect on each of the students and their projects. Kayla had a personal interest in the Australian armed forces and the roles they have played in wars over time. She saw this as an opportunity to

learn more about our rich military history and was inspired by historical accounts. She presented a well thought out research paper that drew on what the Anzacs went through, what conditions they fought in and the cause they were fighting for. She desired to return from the Gallipoli trip with more knowledge and understanding that she could pass on to others.

Luke presented a poem in digital media format that he wrote. He wanted to demonstrate what Anzac meant to him in his own words. He was passionate about the experience of travelling to Gallipoli and was enthusiastic about the opportunity to share the experience upon his return. Callum was inspired to apply by a strong family connection to World War I. He saw the application process as an opportunity to learn more about his family's involvement in the war. He showed a great deal of respect for those who fought, and presented a research paper that clearly illustrated what he had learnt about his family's heritage and its unique stories.

Samantha was a bubbly and enthusiastic year 9 student who presented a detailed essay. She saw the Anzac school tour as a great opportunity to learn and experience the Anzac legacy firsthand. She was excited to be involved and have the chance to share her experience with others when she returned. It was a huge task for someone of Samantha's age to undertake and she showed great maturity and compassion in her presentation. I think she will continue to be an outstanding student in the future. Xara saw writing a research paper as the best way to understand the Anzac legacy and the importance and significance of travelling to Gallipoli next year. A passionate and confident student, Xara is a great school ambassador and was inspired not only to learn more about the Anzac legacy but also to teach others about the things she learns.

Emma presented a poem that she had written while travelling through the Northern Territory during the school holidays. As she travelled with her family through remote townships and communities she observed that, while some things in many towns were worn and perhaps a bit run-down, they each had a memorial that was kept in immaculate condition. The memorials were pristine, which to her was an indication of the respect and acknowledgement each community had for the men and women who once lived among them but gave their lives in sacrifice for their country. Emma saw this opportunity as a way to continue the legacies of those who had fought and died and expressed a desire to represent and share her experiences with youth throughout her school, State and country.

Ben had a historical family connection to Australia's military past and dedicated his research paper to the Anzac legacy and his family history. He spoke of talking to his grandparents to learn more about his family history. He showed great passion for and a tremendous understanding of the significance of Gallipoli and what the trip would mean to him. Zayna found the opportunity for the school to apply to be a part of the ballot and approached a teacher for assistance in getting permission. Her submission was an artwork of an open book. On one side were the Turkish, Australian and New Zealand flags blended together and on the other side was the famous inscription at Anzac Cove of the words of Turkish Commander Kemal Atatürk, which reads:

After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.

This was significant to Zayna because she is half Turkish and half Australian. She had a unique connection to Gallipoli through her family heritage and wanted to demonstrate this relationship. Courtney had a great passion for the Anzac legacy that had been instilled in her by her father. Her grandmother passed on to him stories of what the Anzacs went through. While she did not have a family history of military service, she told us that each year her family travels to Canberra for the Anzac Day memorial service. They one by one go into the tomb of the unknown soldier and spend a few quiet minutes reflecting on the great significance of the sacrifice of our soldiers. She saw an artwork as the best way to express her reflections on the Anzac spirit.

I truly commend each student for their outstanding work, the maturity and passion they demonstrated and their desire to experience travelling to Gallipoli and to bring those experiences home to share with those around them. I found each of them to be inspiring and deserving of a place to go next year. Unfortunately, there are only four places. But each student should be incredibly proud of what they have done and the great respect they have shown for our Anzacs. I am sure that the four students who have the opportunity to attend will be great ambassadors for their school, State and country. I understand that Minister Victor Dominello will announce the four successful students in the coming weeks. I wish each of them a wonderful experience. The five students who are unfortunately not successful must still be congratulated on their wonderful submissions and desire to take part in the trip.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.55 a.m.]: I congratulate the member for The Entrance and Minister Dominello on this great initiative. The many initiatives the Government has put

in place to celebrate the Centenary of Anzac give us the opportunity to acknowledge the well-known and less well-known heroes in our electorates who gave us the freedom we enjoy today. Recently when Minister Dominello visited the Drummoyne electorate we together looked into the history of some relatively unknown members of our community who put their lives on the line to fight in the war. If we do not understand our history we will have no future and so I congratulate the member for The Entrance and Minister Dominello on their outstanding contributions and initiatives to acknowledge the Centenary of Anzac.

### WESTCONNEX

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [11.56 a.m.]: Yesterday in my electorate in the suburb of St Peters the Prime Minister and the Premier announced yet another version of WestConnex: a road interchange to be constructed at St Peters just south of Sydney Park. Simultaneously, 80 home owners in St Peters were approached and advised that their properties were to be acquired. It is lunacy to build a vast road interchange at that location but it is not the first time that the stupidity of placing a major road interchange at St Peters has been raised.

More than two decades ago the M5 East was to be constructed with a major interchange at St Peters that would exit on Canal Road. It exists where it is on General Holmes Drive because I, as president of the South Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, campaigned vigorously to ensure that common sense prevailed. The roads around St Peters, Tempe and Sydenham—Canal Road, Princes Highway, Unwins Bridge Road, Mary Street and adjoining streets—are in absolute gridlock. They carry significant volumes of traffic, large trucks and dangerous goods. This is a return to the stupidity that existed more than two decades ago.

Quite frankly, my constituents in St Peters, Tempe and Sydenham are sick to death of this incompetent Liberal Government careering around and coming up with a variety of locations to suit its political agenda with no concerns for the uncertainty and fear that is created in the community. Initially, the WestConnex through Tempe and St Peters was going to be above ground through Tempe Reserve and Tempe Wetlands but the New South Wales Government did not actually know where the route was and recently abandoned it. Remember the massive culvert where they were going to build a boulevard like those in Paris and Barcelona and which is now a tunnel? Two weeks ago people started drilling in the streets of Sydenham without any consultation with the community, which created consternation.

Residents thought that that might be the location of a tunnel. It would be underneath their homes and would have adjoining exhaust stacks. That was primarily to the west of the Princes Highway. An announcement has now been made by political leaders from Manly, and the closest they come to St Peters is when they get on their wide-bodied jets for their overseas jaunts. For the Premier to tell the residents of St Peters that this is "short-term pain for long-term gain" is insulting. The fact is that the Government has no idea of the precise route of the WestConnex or its environmental impact. In fact, no environmental impact statement will be published until next year—well after the election.

A road should be built only after planning the route, examining the details, conducting traffic analyses, and offering up solutions to address any problems. It is one thing for the Government to get cheap headlines in the media to be seen to be doing something; it is another to cause fear and consternation in residents of my electorate because of its inability, failure and incompetence. Every time an announcement is made by this Government regarding the WestConnex my entire community is left with not only more questions but also uncertainty and fear. The Government is playing with the lives of residents of St Peters, Tempe and Sydenham.

Many cannot sell their homes for fear of losing money; many cannot finish or start renovations for fear of wasting money; and many do not want to be forced to leave an area in which they have lived their entire life. The St Peters, Tempe and Sydenham communities will not accept these displays of contempt from the New South Wales Government, which continually leaves their livelihoods hanging in the balance. Enough is enough. The Premier should immediately announce to my constituents that their properties will not be acquired and that their lives will not be destroyed in the name of political deception.

### PORT MACQUARIE ART AND CRAFT CENTRE

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.01 p.m.]: On 24 October I attended the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Port Macquarie Art and Craft Centre. The centre provides enormous opportunities for local community members to learn new skills and to share their knowledge about arts and crafts. The centre was established in 1974 and was originally located at Thrumster Village Pottery

thanks to the initiative of Dorothy and Jack Hope. They and others acknowledged that many separate groups were meeting in each other's homes, coming together to spin, to weave, to screen print, to pot, to design and to create wonderful pieces from gemstones. The initial meeting formed the Hastings Community Craft Centre and the first committee was elected. I doubt that these pioneers ever imagined that the initial gatherings would be the beginning of a thriving organisation with more than 120 members and still growing strongly 40 years later.

It was wonderful to see one of the original members of the organisation at the anniversary celebrations. Brian Skeet made the 14-hour bus trip from Molong in the Central West of New South Wales to be present at the event. He took us all down memory lane as he recalled how the centre was first established. The initial committee members and many volunteers combined their artistic talents with intense fundraising efforts. In 1976 the construction of a one-room building was completed to house the 40 members from two groups—the spinners and weavers and those involved in lapidary. The momentum gathered and in 1977 they were joined by a pottery group. In 1978 the Hastings Community Centre was affiliated with the Craft Council of New South Wales and the opportunities for financial assistance and grant funding meant the organisation and membership was set to grow. As a result of this popularity a second room was built in 1983 to accommodate the 80-plus enthusiastic craftsmen and craftswomen and artists.

Today participants can choose from myriad arts and crafts, including life drawing and portrait painting, sculpture, beading, jewellery, leatherwork, woodwork, as well as the original pottery, lapidary and spinning. The unique aspect of the centre is the fact that there are no paid tutors. Members share their interests and their skills with those who wish to learn in a friendly and engaging environment. In addition, the members of the centre have dedicated many hours to the community and other charitable organisations over the past 40 years. Of most significance is the ceramic artwork that is now proudly displayed in the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council chambers. Members also contributed to the spun and woven piece titled "History of Port Macquarie", which hangs in the Senior Citizen's Building in Bridge Street.

The centre has also provided financial contributions to other community-focused groups such as the Salvation Army and the old Hastings Hospital. The knitters have made helmet liners for our troops overseas and jumpers for newborns in Africa. This is just some of the wonderful work that is facilitated by the members of the Port Macquarie Art and Craft Centre. I appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the fortieth anniversary celebrations, to hear of the beginnings and the history of the centre, to witness the cutting of the beautiful cake, and to hear the reminiscences of members of the original committee, newcomers and those interested in hearing more about the opportunities offered through this organisation. It was an exceptionally enjoyable day that left me in no doubt that any funding or support that I can offer is well deserved. With a committee of dedicated men and women led by immediate past President John Hodge and new President Mavourna Collits, Secretary Heather Chettle, and Treasurer Patrick Boulton, the future certainly looks bright for the Port Macquarie Art and Craft Centre. I am sure it will still be going in another 40 years.

#### CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [12.06 p.m.]: Tracking the history of Charles Sturt University [CSU] in Albury is like watching multiple small mountain creeks becoming streams that in turn blend to become a mighty river. The story begins in 1895 with the development of experimental farms in Bathurst and a year later in Wagga Wagga. By the mid-twentieth century there were teachers' colleges on those sites. Fast forward to 1972 and we have the establishment of the Riverina College of Advanced Education, which opened a study centre in Albury. By 1984 the study centre became known as the Murray campus of the Riverina College. A name change followed in 1985, and we now call our college the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education.

However, it was in 1989 that the title of Charles Sturt University came into being, with an Act of Parliament, blending two educational institutions and three regional campuses. Joining the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education Albury and Wagga Wagga campuses was the Mitchell College of Advanced Education, with a campus in Bathurst. At that point, CSU purchased an historic red-brick home known as The Cedars to be its Albury base. Then in 1993, the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation sold land at Thurgoona to CSU for \$6 million and construction commenced four years later. Most recently, commencing in 2010, the university sold its central Albury properties—a collection of historic homes and more modern lecture facilities—and began expanding the infrastructure on its 87-hectare Thurgoona campus.

Recognition has also been forthcoming. In 1997 Charles Sturt University was awarded the title of Australian University of the Year by the *Good Universities Guide* for its commitment to first generation university students. That role remains a focus today and no doubt will continue to be important. From its earliest

days, this young university embraced environmental thinking when planning its campus development. Living in regional New South Wales will do that. Albury has a fragile environment in many respects. It is haunted by the threat of drought and bushfires and by summer storms, but that is balanced by a strong desire to protect native fauna and flora.

Key buildings were constructed from rammed earth and included recycled materials, natural ventilation and passive cooling where possible. Energy efficiency has been a goal. These techniques sit within a complex of onsite waste management and water management systems. To a very real extent this campus is alive to its environment. Some aspects of this approach have been wildly successful, even winning awards, while others have necessitated adjustment to the original vision. In other words, the campus architecture is itself a laboratory of learning.

The fast-developing campus includes student accommodation, a modern dental and oral health clinic, the Community Engagement and Wellness Centre, incorporating clinics for podiatry, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, and of course those environmentally sustainable buildings and ecologically significant wetlands. In practical terms, we hope and indeed expect that university education will lead to job opportunities. It is great to see that more than 84 per cent of CSU graduates find employment within four months of completing their degree. In the 2014 edition of the *Good Universities Guide*, CSU enjoys the highest ratings category for success in getting a job, graduate starting salary, entry flexibility for undergraduates, and postgraduate cultural diversity of the student body. In addition, 70 per cent of CSU courses target skills shortage areas within the Australian workforce.

Charles Sturt University has made a considerable impact on Albury over the past 25 years. Although the campus has now been moved out of the city centre, large numbers of students work their way into community life. They are in our sports teams, they work in the cafés and in businesses of all sorts, and they join in the performing arts that express our culture. They come here from many countries. Their involvement has helped turn Albury into a much more cosmopolitan city than its geographic location might suggest. We are a rural city filled with young people.

We also enjoy the contribution made by the CSU staff, from academics to administrators. They are intelligent and engaged members of our community. We benefit from the flow of their research and travels, whether within Australia or across the globe. At day's end they are back in Albury, sharing their experiences. The vice-chancellor of CSU, Professor Andrew Vann, suggests that a good example of this engagement is the annual public lecture that recognises the work of Pastor Cec Grant, OAM, or Wiradjuri Elder Wongamar, "who promoted higher education for Indigenous people, increasing higher education opportunities and bringing about meaningful economic and social outcomes".

Having our own university means that local students can study near their family homes and jobs. "It is also", says Professor Vann, "about the impact of industry-targeted graduates, such as CSU's significant contribution in training a professional health sector workforce that addresses critical shortages in regions such as Albury, and the figures that demonstrate students who are educated in the regions are more likely to stay and work in the regions." The presence of CSU is like a vitamin injection into our regional lifestyle city. For 25 years it has been a connecting force, bringing the world to Albury while at the same time taking Albury's graduates to the world. It is a relationship we value highly. I wish all at CSU a happy and successful quarter-century anniversary.

#### MAITLAND ELECTORATE ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

**Ms ROBYN PARKER** (Maitland) [12.11 p.m.]: I inform the House of a couple of environmental initiatives in my electorate of Maitland, both of which I had carriage of as a Minister for the Environment and as the local member. The first is the Rutherford Air Quality Liaison Committee that I established soon after becoming the member for Maitland. We had made an election commitment to try to address what was called the Rutherford odour issue, or what was locally known as the Rutherford stink. We tried to get to the bottom of an issue that was affecting some people but not all in the Rutherford area and only some of the time. Odour is difficult to detect. It is not quite as simple as other environmental issues and it is necessary to understand exactly the nature of the odour. In some households, one person can be very adversely affected by the odour and another will not be able to smell it at all.

Rutherford's geographic location is in something of a basin. There is housing surrounding light industrial precincts. The committee was established and the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] assisted in

trying to identify the source of the problem. The EPA provided \$400,000 to undertake a number of studies that would pinpoint exactly what the odour was and where it was coming from. The committee members comprised people from the scientific world, including Professor Howard Bridgman from the University of Newcastle as well as industry representatives. They all worked with the EPA to try to identify the source of the odour from local industries. I can now report the success of this operation, which has meant that complaints of odours in Rutherford have decreased by half since the establishment of the Rutherford Air Quality Liaison Committee.

A number of industries are working with the EPA, having been identified as having some concerns, and they are working towards improving their practices and equipment so that that odour decreases. The meteorological environment is also significant. In April next year, which is the time each year when the odour is greater, we will see the total success of this approach. I think it has been a huge success. As a pilot program, other States are picking up the same initiative. I hear that Tasmania intends to model a program on the Rutherford pilot program's success.

Another success that came to me very early in my term as the member for Maitland was the issue of flying foxes or bats. Although my name is Robyn, I did not know I had to be Batman as well! Very quickly I became aware of what a grey-headed flying fox is and the implications of flying-fox colonies that existed in a suburb of my electorate, Lorn, as both the local member and later as the Minister for the Environment. Flying foxes play an important role in pollination and seed dispersal for many plants. Because various species cohabit and a large roost will comprise grey-headed flying foxes, black and little red flying foxes, numbers of bats can be ever-increasing, and because grey-headed flying foxes are listed as vulnerable to extinction, control mechanisms must be licensed.

The problem is complex when the bats roost in and around residential areas and there may be impacts upon the health of people in our communities. Certainly in Lorn, the impact of approximately 30,000 flying foxes roosting close to houses was terrible. It had gone on for a number of years. In conjunction with the council, we worked very hard to come up with a flying-fox management plan. There is only a small window of opportunity to deal with the problem of flying foxes, and that is between March and September. Tree-trimming was undertaken and the flying foxes in Lorn were dispersed to other areas.

We had the same success at the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens, which I also had carriage of, by using noise—and it was not Greg Smith's band. By using noise, we managed to disperse the grey-headed flying fox colony to other areas, and they went far and wide across New South Wales. I am delighted that the Minister for the Environment, Rob Stokes, is expanding the netting program that was started in Sydney and the Central Coast to other orchardists. He is coming up with some very sensible plans for dealing with flying foxes. Of course we now have a national count, which was at my instigation, so we will find out exactly how many flying foxes there are throughout Australia as well as how vulnerable they are.

### **OATLEY ELECTORATE ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [12.16 p.m.]: Yesterday, with my parliamentary colleagues the member for Menai and the member for Rockdale, I joined the Premier of New South Wales, Mike Baird, the Minister for Roads and Freight, Duncan Gay, the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, who is doing an outstanding job, and the Federal Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Jamie Briggs, for the announcement of the major part of WestConnex, the new M5 motorway that links south-western and western areas of Sydney to the city. For many reasons, the announcement represents a major milestone. First, the project will create 10,000 jobs. Secondly, it will provide better and more reliable trips for people, businesses and freight into the city and back out again. Thirdly, it will bring more than \$20 billion in economic benefits to New South Wales. Fourthly, for my electorate in particular, there will be jobs growth, which will result in a population increase over the next 20 years of 1.5 million.

This Government is acting now to deliver and build in the best possible way the missing motorway links. The widening of the M4, construction of the M4 East and the new M5, which will be in addition to the existing M5, will create those links. WestConnex, which is the new M5, will be stage two and it will benefit the St George area of my electorate in particular. The project has been accelerated as a result of a loan agreement with the Australian Government and is subject to planning approval.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Terrible traffic in that area.

**Mr MARK COURE:** Commencement of the project is scheduled for completion in 2019. The commencement of the project is estimated to be sometime next year. This is a major upgrade in road infrastructure and will result in the great deal of traffic on local roads being decreased. Much of the traffic congestion on the current M5 will be reduced.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** There is a lot of congestion.

**Mr MARK COURE:** That is a big win, and not just for my constituents. I note that the member for Bankstown is interjecting. I point out to her that she is interjecting during a private member's statement and that she is opposing the Government's action. The new M5 comprises three components, not just one. The first one is the upgrade to the King Georges Road interchange. The second one is the M5 tunnels. The third one, which is great news for constituents of my electorate in particular, will be the creation of the St Peters interchange. At the end of the day this Government is getting on with the job of building much needed infrastructure.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** You are selling e-tags.

**Mr MARK COURE:** While the member for Bankstown seems to be opposing WestConnex by interjecting, this Government is getting on with the job of fixing traffic congestion that was created by the Labor Government. There is more to be done and today I will launch a petition, which will be uploaded to my website, *markcoure.com.au*. The petition is to lobby the Government for planning money for costings and a full environmental impact statement [EIS] for on and off ramps for the M5 interchange site at Belmore Road, Riverwood. This is a major issue for the people of my electorate. At the moment there is traffic gridlock on major roads and local streets in this area such as King Georges Road, Forest Road and Henry Lawson Drive.

Clearly, something needs to be done. The interchange at Riverwood is very limited. The community needs on and off ramps into the city from Belmore Road. Drivers from Lugarno, Peakhurst, Mortdale, Oatley, Riverwood and Hurstville Grove need choice when accessing the M5. They need access to the M5 not to be limited to the on ramp at King Georges Road. They need access from Belmore Road to prevent traffic from backing up. Last week I was on Forest Road and Henry Lawson Drive and this morning I was at Narwee railway station speaking to commuters, as I often am. People think I am campaigning but I am not; I have been doing this since I was first elected. I am just doing my job by being at Narwee station, where I was talking to commuters about major issues. This is one major issue that we want to get fixed. I will be fighting to get it fixed if I am re-elected.

#### **WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [12.21 p.m.]: Today I place on record how pleased I am to support a number of deserving community organisations that applied for funding through the Community Building Partnership Program. However, while I am a staunch supporter of the Community Building Partnership Program it is disappointing that the funding for my electorate, which was \$700,000 under the former Labor Government, was reduced to \$400,000. The Government cut funding for every community.

Groups that benefited include the Girl Guides; the Free Serbian Orthodox Church St John the Baptist, thanks to Judith Matic; Cringila Children's House; ItSoWel, under the guidance of Giavanna Cardamone; Coniston Junior Soccer Club, under the guidance of president John Karayiannis and Lou Niceski; Illawarra Community Housing Trust; Wollongong Yacht Club; George Cross Falcons Club, with Louis Parnis; Wollongong Police Citizens Youth Club, introduced by Chris Agno; Greenacres Disability Trust; Surf Life Saving Illawarra; Illawarra Live Steamers, with Rob Patterson; Scouts Wollongong; Anglican Church Property Trust, under Renae Tenhave; Red Point Artist, with Wynne Gibson; Illawarra Area Child Care; Salt Church; Illawarra Sports Stadium; Tennis NSW; Big Fat Smile Group; The Shepherd Centre for Deaf Children; Wollongong City Council, for a range of improvements to community halls and facilities; Illawarra Multicultural Services, with Mohanne Gunneseka—

**Mr Mark Coure:** These are all our projects—you should say thank you.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** Government members should say thank you to the Labor Government for introducing the program. I would like to see that happen. You lot opposite are a disgrace; you take credit for everything that the Labor Government did and you have the cheek to ask us to thank you. What a joke.

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

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** Thank you, Mr Acting-Speaker. They are a disgrace. They are asking us to thank them for things that we introduced but that they have cut. Other groups include Cringila Lions Soccer Club; Warrigal Employment; and Kembla Joggers, with Neil Barnett. It is interesting that some members from the

Illawarra criticise groups that have put in submissions that have been supported by their local members. When some members are in their local area they are not quite so critical of community groups putting in submissions. I supported some groups that have put in submissions but I doubt whether they will be successful. They include Multicultural Aged Care Illawarra; Wollongong Ex Services Club; Phil Ryan Football South Coast, with Eddy DeGabrelle; Barnardos Australia; Vikings Rugby Club, with Terry Wetherall; Wollongong Full Gospel Church; Illawarra Disability Trust; and Wollongong Emergency Family Housing, with Julie Mitchell.

I have made it clear that I support all the submissions, but as my electorate encompasses a central business district it could do with extra funds for the head offices of charities and the multicultural groups that are based there. City electorates should get more money because they have bigger demands and make bigger submissions. The total of the submissions from my electorate was in excess of \$2 million, so it is difficult to get just \$400,000, leaving some people feeling let down when they fail to achieve their desired outcome. I acknowledge the member for Heathcote for being such a good Acting-Speaker.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure):** I thank the member for Wollongong for her kind comments.

### CHAFFEY DAM

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.26 p.m.]:** I update the House on a significant water infrastructure project in the Tamworth electorate, the upgrade and augmentation of Chaffey Dam. The dam is a relatively small water resource for a city that continues to grow. The resource services not only expanding industry but also the needs of the Peel Valley irrigators, an important and lucrative irrigation industry. Chaffey Dam currently has a 66,000 megalitre capacity and its augmentation will increase its capacity to 100,000 megalitres. That will provide water security to Tamworth city and meet the demands of regional growth, economic development and industry while providing the opportunity for irrigators to feel secure about the future of their agricultural interests.

Project funding of \$31.781 million is made up of \$18.145 million from the Australian Government National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns, \$9.668 million from the New South Wales Government and \$3.968 million from the Tamworth Regional Council. This is an excellent example of three tiers of government—Federal, State and local—working together to ensure regional infrastructure projects, especially water projects, can get underway to meet the growing demands of dynamic cities like Tamworth. We are committed to building the State's resilience against future droughts, and that commitment is being realised with the upgrade of Chaffey Dam.

In addition to improving water security for people in the Tamworth area, the project is expected to bring economic benefits to the region, with a workforce of between 20 and 50 being required over the two-year construction period. This project will use as many locals as it possibly can, and that will upskill our workforce. Dam safety work being done around Chaffey Dam, Lake Keepit, Split Rock and further north at Glenbawn is enabling people to gain skills that will benefit our region in years to come. Chaffey Dam is currently at about 35 per cent of capacity. This water resource is diminishing by the day. A very small resource, about 6,000 megalitres, is available from Dungowan Dam, which Tamworth also relies on for its water. In 2006 Chaffey Dam's hold was reduced to about 13 per cent of capacity, and the city of Tamworth was in danger of running out of water. Currently, the city's water consumption continues to drain Chaffey Dam, and the prospects of rain on the horizon are grim. As a consequence, Tamworth is facing severe water restrictions, with watering to be restricted to buckets only in the very near future.

The importance of upgrading and increasing the capacity of Chaffey Dam speaks volumes for the future. We have faith that ultimately it will rain and that the uplift in capacity will see Chaffey Dam carry us through dry times for much longer periods. The dry at the moment certainly has a quite severe impact on our growing city, so we need this upgrade. The upgrade was promised by Labor for so many of the years when it was in government. However, this was yet another project that those opposite did not deliver. This Coalition Government has come up with the funding. It is this Government that pushed for and found that bucket of money to upgrade Chaffey Dam in order to provide water security to the city of Tamworth, its people and the agricultural industry, which needs it most. We look to the skies and hope and pray for rain so that Chaffey Dam eventually will be filled to the capacity we need.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure):** Order! Before I call the member for Bankstown, I take this opportunity to remind members that it is Thank a Paramedic Day.

### **BANKSTOWN CITY AGED CARE**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [12.31 p.m.]: This morning I was delighted to attend the opening ceremony of Bankstown City Aged Care's new Donnington Gardens Aged Care Facility, which is situated at 111 Rex Road, Georges Hall. The gardens were opened by the deputy mayor, Councillor Allan Winterbottom; the chairperson of Bankstown City Aged Care, Kevin Hill; and its chief executive officer, Terry Madden. In attendance at the opening were a number of local residents and new residents of the facility, as well as club, community and media representatives. I take this opportunity to highlight to members of this House the excellent service and care that Bankstown City Aged Care offers to residents and clients in the Bankstown and East Hills electorates.

Bankstown City Aged Care is a not-for-profit organisation that has been providing quality aged care services to residents and clients within the Bankstown local government area for the past 40 years. Donnington Gardens in Georges Hall is the newest addition to Bankstown City Aged Care's network of premium aged care facilities. The first of the 21 apartment owners have already moved into the facility and I understand that every single one of them is more than satisfied with the state-of-the-art features offered at Donnington Gardens. In total, there are 41 apartments in the village with a focus on independent living for residents. I had the opportunity to inspect one of those units this morning. I must say that I was bowled over by how magnificent they look. I certainly hope to be booking one when I am over 55.

Georges Hall is a suburb of true historical significance with regard to the early post-European discovery and exploration of New South Wales. Sir Joseph Banks sailed down the Georges River and through Georges Hall in the late eighteenth century; Bankstown is of course named in his honour. Members may be fascinated to know that the Donnington Gardens facility is located on part of the original 300 acres of land granted to Matthew Flinders in 1800 in acknowledgement of his voyages of discovery in Australia. In 1795 Matthew Flinders and George Bass made two exploration journeys to Botany Bay and the Georges River in a boat named *Tom Thumb*. A replica of this very boat, previously held by a girl in Bankstown library, is now being proudly displayed in the Donnington Gardens facility to commemorate these original voyages and the historical significance of the Georges Hall area to post-European settlement of New South Wales.

Many landmarks are named in honour of these settlers in this part of the Bankstown electorate, including the recently opened George Bass School in Bass Hill, and Flinders Slopes in Georges Hall. Donnington Gardens is one of the newest additions to Bankstown City Aged Care's excellent aged care villages. In total, the organisation cares for approximately 300 residents across five facilities throughout the Bankstown local government area. Gillawarna Village is a 150-bed unit in Georges Hall. I have had the pleasure of attending this village on many occasions, and know firsthand that residents and clients are treated with the utmost respect and given the highest level of care by the staff and volunteers engaged by Bankstown City Aged Care.

I was delighted recently to join Bankstown City Aged Care chief executive officer Terry Madden in wishing a resident of Gillawarna Village, Mrs Ivy Ella Vince, a happy 101st birthday on behalf of the Bankstown community. The other facilities managed by Bankstown City Aged Care are the 50-bed Chester Hill Village in Chester Hill, the 45-bed Erin Vine Village in Yagoona, and the 105-bed Yallabee Village in Revesby. I take this opportunity once again to recognise the fantastic services provided by Bankstown City Aged Care. The number of highly satisfied residents is a true credit to all the staff at the facility and they should be commended for their work. I congratulate Terry Madden, chief executive officer of Bankstown City Aged Care, and its chairperson, Kevin Hill, on the opening of the new Donnington Gardens facility and thank them both for their kind invitation to attend.

I also acknowledge the entire board of directors of Bankstown City Aged Care, who have ensured the continued growth and success of the organisation. I note that chairperson Kevin Hill is a former mayor of Bankstown. Edward Camilleri is also the chief executive officer of Revesby Workers Club; John Mackay is former secretary manager of Bankstown Sports Club; Scott Dickson is chief executive officer of Bankstown RSL; and Jim Hanna, Helen Williamson and Andrew Bernard are current board directors. I wish their facilities continued success into the future.

### **FESTIVAL OF FISHER'S GHOST**

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE** (Campbelltown) [12.36 p.m.]: Today I share with the House the wonder that is the Festival of Fisher's Ghost at Campbelltown. It is based on the Fisher's Ghost legend. Way back in 1826,

almost four months after the mysterious disappearance of local farmer Fred Fisher, a strange occurrence took place in a local hotel. On that memorable night a wealthy and respectable farmer, John Farley, stumbled into a local hotel in a state of shock. John Farley claimed that he had seen the ghost of Fred Fisher sitting on the rail of a bridge over a creek. The ghost pointed to a paddock down the creek, then faded away. The body of Fred Fisher was later discovered in the paddock where the ghost had pointed. His brother buried him locally in St Peter's graveyard; however, no headstone was erected.

Who was Fred Fisher? Frederick George James Fisher was born in London on 28 August 1792. He worked as a shopkeeper until, either innocently or deliberately, he obtained forged banknotes through his business. On 26 July 1815 Fred was sentenced to 14 years transportation to Australia. In 1822 he applied for a ticket of leave, and eventually secured a property at Campbelltown—he obviously knew where the property market was going. In 1825 Fred had an argument with a local carpenter and received a light prison sentence. Worried about his farm, Fred gave his neighbour George Worrall power of attorney during his sentence. After his release, on 17 June 1826, Fred Fisher mysteriously disappeared, and George Worrall announced that Fred had sailed for England. Three weeks later, using that power of attorney, George sold Fred's horse and all his belongings. Needless to say, the good folk of Campbelltown were suspicious.

On 17 September 1826 George Worrall was arrested on suspicion of Fred's murder. During the trial George confessed, even though the tale of the ghostly sighting could not be told in court because stories of the supernatural were not permitted in a court of law. In a strange twist of fate, George Worrall is now buried at one of Australia's most popular locations overlooking Sydney Harbour at The Rocks. This story has formed the basis of one of the most amazing and well-attended community festivals in the country, Fisher's Ghost. Last Saturday there were ghosts, ghouls, Japanese drummers and plenty of kimonos as Campbelltown went all out to celebrate the Festival of Fisher's Ghost. It was a sweltering 34 degrees when floats began to make their way down Queen Street for the annual parade, led off by our wonderful State Emergency Service volunteers. The heat did not deter the participants from donning full-length ghost costumes and kimonos or the crowds from turning up.

This year's parade doubled as a celebration of Campbelltown's sister city relationship with the township of Koshigaya. Campbelltown Mayor Paul Lake was joined by Koshigaya Mayor Tsutomo Takahashi and Koshigaya City Office Chairman Toru Moriya to officially open the street parade. The Japanese delegation enjoyed themselves immensely. The delegation returned to Japan on Monday morning but they were present to officially open the Fisher's Ghost Art Award at Campbelltown Arts Centre last Friday night and unveil a new plaque at Campbelltown's Koshigaya Park, which describes the history of the sister city relationship. It is probably the longest-running sister city relationship between Australia and Japan, and there are reciprocal visits by students and sports programs and cultural exchanges.

The fun continues at the Fisher's Ghost festival and there is still a chance for people to participate. This Saturday the Fisher's Ghost street fair will be held in Queen Street, Campbelltown, where there will be lots for everyone to do. Rides are continuing at Bradbury Oval and skateboarding enthusiasts like you, Mr Acting-Speaker, can attend the Fisher's Extreme Showcase, which will run from 3.30 p.m. on Saturday at Campbelltown Skate Park, Leumeah. The Fisher's Ghost carnival continues. It is one of the greatest community festivals in the country and I commend it to the House.

### SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDING

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [12.41 p.m.]: The CSIRO Energy Research Centre in Mayfield has recently been forced to cut up to 20 jobs and jettison altogether some research units in response to a budget cut of \$115 million to the parent organisation. This is the same centre that recently broke the world record for the hottest supercritical steam ever achieved outside of fossil fuel sources, using solar power—a significant global breakthrough. Job losses across the whole of the CSIRO are expected to total more than 500. This is just one instance of the budget cuts being felt by Australia's peak science research bodies, with the CSIRO, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation [ANSTO], the Australian Research Council, the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, the cooperative research centres and other agencies losing a total of \$420 million.

While the recent Federal budget provided a boost to some types of medical research, there are serious concerns in the scientific community that the importance of "pure" science research is currently being ignored by State and Federal governments. This concern is being felt in political circles as well, with unease about the

future of basic science research in Australia being voiced across party lines. Liberal member of Parliament Dennis Jensen recently broke ranks to criticise the Federal budget, highlighting the importance of this sort of research for the future of the nation. He said:

There appears to be a lack of understanding of how science works. Many advances, including in the medical field, are not the result of directed research, but [come] as a matter of more fundamental research that was not directed.

These cuts are especially worrying in the Hunter. Research-led innovation is increasingly crucial to underpin new industries in the evolving landscape of our region, post-minerals boom. The problems that the Hunter, and indeed New South Wales and the nation, is facing currently in regard to science research are not just about funding, but also about vision. Australia is one of only three Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] countries that does not have a science and innovation strategy, the other two being Portugal and Luxembourg.

A science and innovation strategy would outline the national and State-level plans for the country's long-term vision, and how science research and the application of this research would help achieve this vision. While long-term vision is required to build major infrastructure such as highways, hospitals and airports, we also need this vision to make the most of the research talent and resources we have in Australia. Australia's Chief Scientist, Ian Chubb—whom I met with in April this year—is a strong proponent of our need for a comprehensive science plan and he has written about the importance of having a vision for our future. He said:

Being an innovative country is about more than just addressing the pathways and potential barriers between research and industry, as significant as they are. It requires a strategic, long-term vision for how we manage the transition of the next 20 years.

While it is true that Australia has produced wonderful scientists and that research undertaken here has changed the world, we are not in a position to be complacent. We are ahead of the United States of America and the top 11 European Union nations in only 16 out of 91 scientific fields. International ranking aside, a more concrete issue is the lure of overseas science sectors to Australian researchers. Without a cohesive whole-of-government approach to science we cannot hope to encourage private investment in research and we cannot hope to establish long-term research projects. We need this long-term vision to continue to contribute important work to the international stage. Without this work we will lose our talent to better-organised and better-funded science sectors in other countries.

#### **DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF POLICE NICK KALDAS**

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI** (Strathfield) [12.46 p.m.]: Today I pay a small tribute to a very special man—a man of character and courage, a man of sensitivity and compassion, a man who understands and is an intrinsic part of our multicultural community, a man who is a leader in bearing and in thought and, most of all, a servant of the people, demonstrated through his outstanding public service. I bring to the attention of the House Deputy Commissioner of Police Nick Kaldas. Those descriptions originated not from me but from people with the most diverse backgrounds.

Deputy Commissioner Kaldas enjoys a personal and professional reputation that transcends community, State and national borders. I am often reminded of Deputy Commissioner Kaldas' extraordinary commitment to and engagement with the communities he is sworn to protect and to serve. This is brought home to me whether I am speaking to a Chinese representative of international students in Sydney, a consul general representing a community with a non-English speaking background, a military officer involved in counterterrorism activities in New South Wales, a commissioner of the Community Relations Commission or a police local area commander.

Since joining the NSW Police Force in 1981, Commissioner Kaldas' curriculum vitae [CV] details experiences and achievements that suggest he is one of Australia's top cops. His CV requires no embellishment to impress—and impress mightily it does. His greatest strengths are not what are clearly evident in his CV but rather his approaches to dealing with many of the State's law and order issues. Cool, reassuring and confident, he exemplifies those qualities most needed by communities suffering stress and by governments under pressure to provide answers. I remember most clearly Deputy Commissioner Kaldas standing beside our Ministers and Premiers during the most challenging times—the drive-by shootings, the gang violence, international student safety and race-related violence.

I believe Deputy Commissioner Kaldas' most notable contribution, amongst many, has been, and continues to be, his engagement with our fabulous multicultural community. He is well known and much

admired by leaders from many different cultural backgrounds not because of his uniform or his rank but because he has a reputation for listening and is driven by a genuine desire to achieve understanding between people. We are indeed fortunate in this State that there has never been a more senior police officer who just "gets it". A senior police officer who is equally at ease discussing pressing issues with Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists or atheists is indeed a rare and valuable asset. It is no secret that conflicts overseas already have extended their tentacles of hate and violence into our multicultural community. It is reassuring to the people of New South Wales that we have a deputy commissioner with the experience, standing and skills to deal with it.

The member for Parramatta, Dr Geoff Lee, described Deputy Commissioner Kaldas as an exemplary officer who demonstrates the finest skills and qualities of a leader most admired in our community. The member for Hornsby, Mr Matt Kean, said that Deputy Commissioner Kaldas has served our community with distinction and has the respect of all communities across our great State. I am sure these sentiments would be repeated time and again if I were to ask every member of this House. Mr Felice Montrone, Deputy Chair of the Community Relations Commission, said that Deputy Commissioner Kaldas is a gentleman in every sense of the word and an officer with impeccable standing within and across multicultural communities. Not just our Government recognises Deputy Commissioner Kaldas' achievements. Former Premier Nathan Rees previously paid tribute to the skills of the deputy commissioner when he was chosen by the United Nations to lead an investigation into the death of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Premier Rees said:

Mr Kaldas is a highly respected and skilled officer. He is recognised by his peers across Australia as an absolutely outstanding policeman.

Deputy Commissioner Kaldas has won praise for his management style since rising to the most senior ranks in the NSW Police Force. Often I meet police officers of all ranks, especially those who have reported to him directly, and they describe him as approachable and a senior officer with integrity who has the respect of rank-and-file police. In my part-time military role as an Australian Defence Force Liaison Officer, I and other military officers come into frequent contact with Deputy Commissioner Kaldas and his team. Within the military community to which I belong he is considered the consummate professional whose reputation as a counterterrorism expert is acknowledged not only nationally, but also internationally by the United Nations and the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI].

Deputy Commissioner Kaldas has been awarded Commissioners' Commendations, the Australian Police Medal, the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal, the National Medal and clasp, and the New South Wales Police Medal. How should a community recognise a man of such qualities and commitment? I do not believe for even a split second that a medal is needed nor expected. I believe Deputy Commissioner Kaldas would appreciate just a thank you for doing his job with honour and compassion. This afternoon I say, "Thank you, Nick, for your service extraordinaire."

### **NORTHERN TABLELANDS DROUGHT ASSISTANCE**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [12.51 p.m.]: Today I remind the House about the ongoing dire situation faced by primary producers in the north of the State, and specifically those in my electorate of Northern Tablelands. As the third consecutive spring stumbles towards another parched dive into a summer that threatens to break more heatwave records, farmers and graziers are left to wonder when the rain tap might finally turn on again. With long-range forecasters predicting another bleak outlook, the many calls to my office inquiring about drought assistance are taking on a tone that transcends the desperation felt earlier this year. My regional counterparts may recall the struggle and the fight that our communities—first in the Far West and then the north-west—fought to secure assistance from the New South Wales Government to ease the impact of the drought. The member for Tamworth and I fought hard to secure assistance for farmers in our electorates.

The Government listened, and an interim package of support was delivered earlier this year—subsidies for transport to move livestock to better pastures or the processor, and to bring in vital fodder to keep the animals alive until the anticipated spring flush of feed arrived. Unfortunately, that spring flush of feed from good rain never arrived and our farmers are feeling the vice grip of drought yet again. I am hearing from constituents who are desperate for rain, desperate for feed for the livestock they have managed to hold onto and desperate for a lifeline. In recent days I heard from a grazier in Tenterfield with a 10,000-acre property that has 40 dams—only five have water. That grazier's family have been carting water for livestock and personal requirements for the past eight months.

Crops that should have been up and growing across the region simply are not there; instead, I see bare paddocks across my electorate for miles around. There are a few pockets of green in the Northern Tablelands

where the storms have been kind, but generally the New England and Northern Tablelands regions look more like the Simpson Desert. When I travel around the electorate and speak to many constituents on and off the land, as I do every weekend and most weeks, the opening gambit generally is about the drought. The second question from a primary producer is always whether there will be any government drought relief like before. The Federal Government announced this week that it expects to reallocate \$100 million in low-interest loans to farmers in the most drought-affected parts of the country. This comes from allocated funds not used by other States that are not in the grip of drought.

The Federal Government estimates that the additional \$100 million could help up to 200 farmers to buy stock and plant crops when—if—the drought finally breaks. That may suit some producers, and I am sure they will take advantage of the low-interest loans; however, I hear almost daily from my constituents that they do not want to commit to further debt. They want to be able to hang on to their remaining livestock and tell me that a return to transport rebates for fodder, livestock and water is needed most at the moment. The current assistance package offered by the Federal Government certainly is generous and better than nothing. However, I question whether loans and more debt are the answer for the majority. In my opinion, they definitely are not. More practical help, such as transport rebates, would have a greater, more positive impact and allow landholders to better manage the stock they have without having to take on added debt.

My constituents tell me that more debt is not the answer. When they are struggling to meet their current debt load due to seasonal conditions, why offer the chance to take on an even bigger burden and sink further into debt? I am telling the House this today because the drought has not gone away. Drought in the north-west of the State has become the unwanted guest that simply refuses to leave. People are leaving the land and others are struggling with depression and an overwhelming sense of failure. My constituents are calling out for help yet again and all I can do is refer them to the agencies that administer the Federal drought relief. It is a frustrating situation. I call on our Federal counterparts to reconsider the direction in which that reallocated \$100 million will be channelled. Real assistance is required right now to help our primary producers—not more debt. I call on the House to support this call for drought assistance in the form of transport subsidies to be made available as part of the current package. Maybe then it will rain and, with any luck, this speech will be totally redundant.

### **SHALOM GAINARADA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [12.56 p.m.]: Recently I visited Shalom College at the University of New South Wales and met with a number of brilliant students who are beneficiaries of the Shalom Gainarada scholarship. Shalom College is a student residence at the University of New South Wales founded in 1973 by members of the Jewish community as an independent and inclusive college. Shalom College is non-denominational and accepts applicants from all races, religions and sexual orientations. This welcoming environment nourishes and opens the minds of the students who live there. Shalom Institute offers scholarships to Indigenous students, providing them with the opportunity to attend university, live on campus and have additional tuition during their studies. The Shalom Gainarada Scholarship Program aims to close the gap that, unfortunately, exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and to eliminate the barriers that can prevent Indigenous students from attending university.

For a variety of reasons, the sad reality is that Indigenous students can be disadvantaged when attending university. However, under the watchful eye of the Shalom College staff, students excel in their chosen courses, which can range from law to medicine to exercise physiology. During my discussion with the students who are part of the Shalom Gainarada scholarship program, it became apparent how the program had changed their lives and even influenced members of their extended families and communities. The students told me how they retain strong ties with their home towns and plan to use their degrees to advance Indigenous communities like theirs. One student, Khyarne Biles, is in the final year of her medical degree and is returning to Dubbo soon to undertake a residency at Dubbo hospital.

A very mature and insightful young lady, Khyarne acknowledged that real change for Indigenous people cannot happen only through Indigenous people returning to their communities. She stated that, in her view, there must be a collaborative approach and that Indigenous professionals are responsible for educating non-Indigenous people on the specific cultural needs of the Indigenous community. Another student, Murrie Kemp, studies exercise physiology. He explained how with his degree he hopes ultimately to connect with a number of health practitioners and travel the country teaching remote Indigenous communities about health. In Murrie's experience, he has seen an ankle sprain turn into a break because basic first aid was not applied simply because of inadequate knowledge.

People like Khyarne and Murrie and their peers see the social inequalities in their communities—inequalities that we all acknowledge exist—and come up with solutions to overcome them. This would have been a very different story if the students had had to travel long hours every day to attend class or to work two jobs to be able to afford to rent in the city. The support of the Shalom Gamarada scholarship gives students the opportunity to focus wholly on their studies and to think about ways in which they can use their skills to improve the welfare of their communities. It is inspiring listening to the students talk about their goals and ambitions. They will finish their degrees as Indigenous professionals and highly respected members of their community—in fact, the entire community—with a special level of cultural knowledge that cannot be taught. Their obvious passion for their chosen field and keen interest in bringing their skills home are inspirational and they all should be commended for their vision.

The work that the Shalom Institute undertakes in the program, under the leadership of Master Dr Hilton Immerman, OAM, and scholarship founder Ilona Lee, is truly remarkable. Every scholarship that is awarded trickles down into the community that the students come from and makes a lasting impression on an immeasurable number of people. It is changing a culture one person at a time. The students told me how the concept of tertiary education is foreign to many in their community and that they were the first in their families to attend university. The example they are setting for their siblings, relatives and the wider community is invaluable. It is clear that the students are all passionate about their heritage and want to effect positive change in our society. The Shalom Institute should be proud of its magnificent contribution to Indigenous Australians. It is creating a cohort of very bright and capable young adults.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.**

## COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

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### MAVIS VAUGHAN 100TH BIRTHDAY

**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) [1.01 p.m.]: Today I recognise Mavis Vaughan, who celebrated her 100th birthday on 7 September. Every day Mavis Vaughan still hits about 30 golf balls over the fence to practise her technique. Mrs Vaughan started playing golf more than 50 years ago and even though her eyesight has since deteriorated her love of golf has not. The centenarian has five children, Janelle, Greg, Anne, Colin and Ray; 15 grandchildren; and 20 great-grandchildren, with another two on the way.

Born west of Coonamble, Mrs Vaughan was married in 1939 and moved to a property outside Dubbo in 1963. Her son Ray said that whenever the family are in Sydney she often fondly talks about her memories of the Sydney Harbour Bridge being built and, when she was at school, being able to walk across the bridge before the structure was opened to the public. Mrs Vaughan also recalls when she bought her first car and that it would take her a full day to travel on the dirt road from Coonamble to Dubbo through 17 gates. Mavis is a strong matriarch and is infamous for her saying, "There's no such thing as the good old days. They were tough." She is an active member of the church and attends services.

### ST THERESE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, NEW LAMBTON

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [1.02 p.m.]: One of the only sure-fire cures for poverty in the developing world is the empowerment of women and girls through education. It is in this light that I wholeheartedly applaud the students of St Theresa's Primary School who are on track to raise \$7,000 for the Lotus Educational Fund. This fund is six years old and supports 84 impoverished female students in Laos. Congratulations to the students and to teacher Cath Crawford, a long-time supporter of the initiative, on all their hard work and dedication to this important issue.

### WORLD TEACHERS DAY

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [1.03 p.m.]: I congratulate teachers from the New South Wales mid North Coast who were recipients of awards on World Teachers Day. World Teachers Day celebrates teachers across the globe on the first day of October each year. On 30 October

2014 more than 100 people gathered at the Little Fish Café in Port Macquarie to recognise 31 teachers from Old Bar in the south to Coffs Harbour in the north. The event was organised by the Australian College of Educators Mid North Coast Region. The group secretary, Mick Eller, said the celebration recognised teachers from early childhood to tertiary level who displayed dedication to the vocation of teaching. The University of Newcastle Port Macquarie campus recipients Warren Burke, Allan Cowieson and Julie McLeod were recognised for excellence in the delivery of their special education specialisation program. Mr Burke noted that they have a large percentage of students who are the first in their families to attend university. Congratulations again to all the teachers on the New South Wales mid North Coast and teachers across the globe on their most valuable contribution to our society.

#### **TAREE-WINGHAM RACE CLUB FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [1.04 p.m.]: With the Melbourne Cup being held yesterday, I inform the House that Taree-Wingham Race Club Ltd celebrated its fortieth anniversary with a celebratory dinner in October. It was a well-supported evening at the club's Winning Post Function Centre. The dinner celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the Bushland Drive Racecourse in Taree. This marks a big step forward by the club as it now offers first-class facilities in its beautiful regional setting. The first-class racecourse is one of six regional training centres in New South Wales and is the result of hard work of the committee of Taree-Wingham Race Club Ltd, its chairman Greg Coleman and chief executive officer Brian Leggett and the former committees over the past 40 years.

#### **ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, ERSKINEVILLE**

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [1.05 p.m.]: Recently I visited St Mary's Primary School in Erskineville to undertake a tour of the school and to learn about the programs that it is currently providing the students. When I visit schools in my electorate I am always pleased to see that the principals are so visionary in their leadership. The principal of St Mary's, Mr Frank Wassef, is no different. Mr Wassef has embraced a new form of technology which has completely revolutionised the education of his students. Through Chromebook, students are able to learn interactively at school, with the teacher being able to observe what each student is doing on their own notebook. What is so fantastic about these Chromebooks is that everything is hosted on Google. This provides students with the opportunity to continue their work from home without the need for complex and slow networks—probably like our network. On the day I visited St Mary's the school was celebrating World Teachers Day. The school has a dedicated and passionate group of teachers under the leadership of their principal, Mr Wassef, and certainly deserves the recognition from parents, students and the community that it receives.

#### **GUYRA PIGGY PICNIC RACES**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [1.06 p.m.]: I recognise Anita Hunter and the hardworking team of the Guyra Central School parents and citizens association, which recently held the successful 2014 Guyra Piggy Picnic races. This fundraiser for Guyra Central School was a great community event, and it was a pleasure to attend. I acknowledge all the volunteers on the day who raised almost \$12,000 for the school. I also recognise Guyra Lions Club and president David Mills, who sold more than 70 kilograms of chips on the day and donated the profit of \$800 to the school. I recognise also Robin Godlonton and her team who put a large amount of time and effort into the little tailor-made piglet jackets with the sponsors' name imprinted and sewn on. I thought they made the day; they added to the experience and the flavour of the day. It was a fantastic occasion and a pleasure to be there. Congratulations to Anita Hunter and the hardworking parents and citizens association.

#### **SOS WOMEN'S SERVICES**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [1.07 p.m.]: I commend the strong campaign by SOS Women's Services to reinstate funding for inner-city women's refuges. This group has achieved restoration of funding and buildings to Detour House, the Young People's Refuge, the B Miles Women's Foundation, Stepping Out and the CRC Women's Program. These organisations help vulnerable women and girls through difficult circumstances. The SOS campaign drew attention to the negative impacts of de-funding specialist services in the inner city and activated the wider community, resulting in a strong parliamentary petition with nearly 15,000 signatures being lodged.

I was proud to work closely with the campaign, and I thank the Minister for Family and Community Services for listening and acting to keep these services. Women without a home who have experienced serious

disability, mental illness, addiction, abuse and violence will continue to get a temporary home and practical help to get back on their feet and back into stable housing. This inspiring group has made a real difference to the lives of women in need. I hope that their success will encourage other campaigns and members of Parliament to continue to fight for services still at risk.

#### **PARKS COMMUNITY NETWORK INC.**

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [1.08 p.m.]: On 26 September I attended the twentieth annual general meeting of the Parks Community Network Inc. held at the Wetherill Park Community Service Centre in Prairiewood. This milestone event marked the retirement of president Janet Thorny after nine consecutive years of sterling leadership and dedication to this fine organisation. I congratulate the manager of the Parks Community Network, Tyrene Vergara, on her invaluable contribution over the past 10 years. The support of sponsors, staff and volunteers has been outstanding and will ensure the continual development and success of this organisation in delivering excellent services to the community, such as no-interest loans and expanding the Men's Shed program. I also thank the outgoing board members for their hard work over the past 12 months. I congratulate the new board under the leadership of Jack Ding and wish them all the best over the next year.

#### **CAMPBELLTOWN SES CHALLENGE 2014**

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE** (Campbelltown) [1.09 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to inform members of the House about the Campbelltown SES Challenge 2014. I am wearing an orange tie in honour of its third year of operation. The ingenuity of this event is to present members with a skill-based series of tasks that tests their skill and retention and challenges their initiative and creativity in handling complex and simple situations. The most resourceful team takes home the ugliest trophy ever presented to a victor. But the challenge is not about the glory; it is about working and communicating as a team and having fun along the way. Usually six teams from Campbelltown and a team from the Liverpool and Fairfield units compete. I am sad to say that this year the team from Liverpool again took out the honours; it has won for the past two years. Congratulations go to the committee organisers, stand operators, logistics team and volunteers of our mighty State Emergency Service for making the day worthwhile.

#### **JOEL CLARK, COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.10 p.m.]: I congratulate Joel Clark of Caringbah on his selection to represent Australia at the sixth Commonwealth Youth Parliament, which is being held in Mmabatho, South Africa, from 2 to 8 November 2014. More than 50 representatives from eight of the nine regions of the Commonwealth are participating in this year's youth Parliament, which focuses on deepening the Commonwealth's commitment to democracy and youth development. The program, which is run by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, will provide Joel with a platform to voice the concerns of young Australians. In particular, he hopes to have the opportunity to talk about issues affecting Indigenous Australians.

Joel has been actively engaged in youth politics since high school and his commitment has seen him involved with the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament for more than 10 years. Currently he is vice-president of my local Young Liberals branch. Joel believes young people must have a voice in the decision-making processes that affect them now and in the future. This program will be a great opportunity for Joel to experience the political process and to learn about issues affecting young people across the Commonwealth. I thank the member for Oatley for nominating Joel Clark.

#### **HEATHCOTE ELECTORATE EVENTS**

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [1.10 p.m.]: It gives me pleasure to recognise the Sri Venkateswara Temple in the suburb of Helensburgh in the Heathcote electorate. The Hindu temple is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere and hosts some of the largest events in the Indian calendar. Recently I was honoured to attend the Deepavali celebration, representing the Minister for Citizenship and Communities. I also recognise the Engadine Men's Shed. I had the honour of opening its covered open work area [COWA], which was funded by the Community Builders Funding program. The area provides for a large open work space for the gentlemen to do their work. I also acknowledge the addition of a new demountable classroom for Waterfall Public School, which is one of my favourites. The school was opened in 1901 and now has 59 students. The latest classroom is the first addition in 60 years. I congratulate principal Penni Passmore and the entire Waterfall community.

### MILTON LIBRARY

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast—The Speaker) [1.11 p.m.]: On Saturday 4 October I joined more than 350 southern Shoalhaven residents to advocate for maintaining services provided by Shoalhaven City Council at Milton Library. More than 3,000 individuals have signed a petition lobbying the council not to proceed with the closure of the library following a review into library services undertaken by council. The Baird Government is committed to maintaining community infrastructure and has committed \$15 million of funding towards libraries in the State under the Public Library Infrastructure Grant Program. Further, the Government will provide council with \$261,765 in annual funding in 2014-15 to provide library services, which means Shoalhaven City Council will receive the twenty-fourth highest funding out of the State's 152 local government areas. I urge the council to maintain or increase services at Milton Library due to the incredibly high level of community support and its small operating cost.

I extend my congratulations to Alison Pakes, who organised the Save Milton Library Committee. Alison has dedicated herself tirelessly to raising awareness of the importance of this facility. Her work has ensured no voice is unheard and that the community is involved in the council's decision-making process. I encourage the community to continue to pressure council and local councillors to retain this important facility for the community.

### PEAKHURST SOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [1.12 p.m.]: I inform members of the House of the recent annual general meeting of the parents and citizens association at Peakhurst South Public School. I thank the outgoing executive committee members, in particular Jodie, for their work this year. Jodie and the parents and citizens association proudly raised \$40,000 throughout the year. Ten new computers, six iPads and new sporting equipment were purchased for the school. The funds also went towards purchasing playground equipment. Members on both sides of the House will remember that this parents and citizens association and I led a grassroots campaign for the installation of a fence around the school, which was erected in term two. I welcome the new executive committee members of the parents and citizens association, Rachel, Tina, Martin, the secretary, and the other four executive members. I look forward to working with them throughout the rest of this year and next year.

### ST FRANCIS XAVIER PRIMARY SCHOOL, ARNCLIFFE

**Mr JOHN FLOWERS** (Rockdale) [1.13 p.m.]: I congratulate the students from St Francis Xavier Primary School who filled more than 80 shoeboxes with basic necessities, from soaps and creams to towels and hand-knitted scarves, to be wrapped in fleece blankets to help the homeless during winter. Pupils and their families bundled the boxes, which were donated to the St Vincent de Paul night patrol's Love in a Box Appeal to help people living in poverty and suffering hardship. Each gift was personalised with a message on behalf of the school. Congratulations to all those involved in this act of kindness.

### KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson) [1.14 p.m.]: I recognise the Ku-ring-gai Council on being the 2014 joint recipient of the A. R. Bluett Memorial Award in the city council category. The honour was announced recently by Local Government NSW, following the judge's choice of the most progressive councils in the State. The award particularly recognises the council's delivery of major projects for the local community such as the emergency services headquarters, the new council depot, the Gordon Library refit and the new fitness and aquatic centre to be opened officially this Saturday. In commenting on the award, Mayor Jennifer Anderson referred to the council's "strong financial performance and ability to plan for our expanding population through a comprehensive program of land acquisition for public open space". Congratulations to Ku-ring-gai Council, its councillors, staff and all others concerned with achieving the prestigious A. R. Bluett award.

### CLUB MAITLAND CITY

#### CLAUDIA JACKSON, MAITLAND HIGH SCHOOL PREFECT

**Ms ROBYN PARKER** (Maitland) [1.15 p.m.]: Last week Club Maitland City, formerly known as the Maitland City Bowls Sport and Recreation Club, celebrated the opening of stage two of its major

redevelopment. The opening was the culmination of a 10-year master plan for the development of the club. I congratulate President Ken Guy and the board members, Chief Executive Officer Ian Martin, the builders and everyone involved with the development. I wish them all the best for the future.

I also congratulate Maitland schoolgirl Claudia Jackson, who is the first special education student to be elected as a prefect of the Maitland High School in its 100 year history. Claudia was one of 20 prefects elected by her peers last term. She is leading the way for special education students, showing them that they can do anything they put their mind to. School principal Tim Weston commented that Claudia's election speech was magnificent and that she achieved the position with no favours given. During her election speech in front of 1,000 students and staff, Claudia drew attention to the need for special education students to have representation. As a prefect, Claudia has vowed to represent special education and to look after year 7 students. I congratulate her.

#### **NSW WINE AWARDS 2014**

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [1.16 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that one of Orange's newest wine producers has taken out gold at the New South Wales Wine Awards in the best young sauvignon blanc category. Sauvignon blanc is one of Orange's flagship varieties. Bill and Jane Shrapnel of Colmar Estate took out the trophy for their 2014 sauvignon blanc. Other gold medal winners from Orange included Angullong's 2013 Shiraz, which is available at Parliament House. The Crossing family are world-class winemakers. Carillion's 2012 "The Volcanics" Orange Cabernet Sauvignon also took gold, as did the Charles Sturt Reserve's 2010 Sparkling Pinot Noir Chardonnay, and Cooks Lot's 2014 Lot 33 Riesling. Congratulations to all of the region's gold medal winners at the New South Wales Wine Awards.

#### **ITALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.17 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to deliver this community recognition statement to recognise the valuable contribution made by the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry since 1922 towards furthering trade and fostering a healthy business relationship between Australia and Italy. On 16 October I had the pleasure of attending the chamber for its recent business awards gala dinner. The dinner was a celebration of the achievements of the Italian-Australian business community and its integration into the business life of this State. The dinner was attended by the Premier the Hon. Mike Baird, the Minister for Transport the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian and many other members of Parliament. I congratulate the chairman, Mr Joseph Carrozzi, the chief executive officer and the secretary-general of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Sydney, Nicholas Carè, on their many business activities and business luncheons and the many seminars held by the Aperitivo Club.

#### **GEORGE BLACKWOOD, UNDER 19 SOCCEROOS SQUAD**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.18 p.m.]: I congratulate Mr George Blackwood, a Berowra resident, who has been selected recently for the under-19 Socceroos squad. He was selected after scoring 25 goals for his under-19 APIA Leichhardt side this season. He is playing for the Socceroos at the ASEAN Football Federation Youth Championships in Vietnam. He is a phenomenal player. He received the Big Brother Movement [BBM] Youth Support Young Soccer Player Award in 2013 and will play for the Sydney Football Club in the National Youth League later this month. His coach at APIA, Rod Williams, recognises that George is a rare talent. Not only is he playing for Australia but also he juggles his rigorous training schedule around his studies at Asquith Boys High School. I congratulate George on his inspiring achievements and look forward to following his career as he continues to represent Australia.

#### **BURRUMBUTTOCK PUBLIC SCHOOL 125TH ANNIVERSARY**

##### **WALLA WALLA "WALK BACK IN TIME"**

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [1.19 p.m.]: On 31 October 2014 Burrumbuttock Public School celebrated 125 years of education. At least nine families in Burrumbuttock have three generations associated with the school. One of those family members is Ash Lindner, who was a most competent master of ceremonies for the great occasion. The celebrations included several guest speakers and entertainment by the students. Former student Brian Patterson told us stories from when he attended the school from 1940 to 1946. Previous principals Susan Allen and Owen Dunlop were present for the historic day. Congratulations to the current principal, Michelle Andrews, staff and students on a wonderful afternoon of celebration and memorabilia.

Congratulations to the members of the Walla Walla Historical Society and the Community Development Committee who organised a "Walk Back in Time" on Sunday 2 November when eight plaques recording the history of buildings from the 1880s through to the early 1900s were unveiled in the main street. The plaques were unveiled by local identities such as Cecil Lieschke, Jeff Grosse, Andrew Kotzur and Mrs Gloria Feuerherdt who, at 91 years old, was surrounded by her extensive family.

#### **BOER WAR DAY COMMEMORATION SERVICE**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [1.20 p.m.]: On Sunday 1 June I was very pleased to attend and lay a wreath at the Boer War Day Commemoration Service at Rauch Park in Junction Street, Nowra. I acknowledge and thank the President of the Nowra-Greenwell Point RSL Sub-Branch, Fred Dawson, for inviting me, and Chaplain Andrew Watters, RAN, who gave the opening prayer of thanksgiving, the prayer of commemoration and the benediction. I acknowledge also Captain Simon Bateman, RAN, Commanding Officer of HMAS *Albatross*, who gave the commemoration address, the Secretary of the Nowra-Greenwell Point RSL Sub-Branch, Rick Meehan, and bugler Peter Williams, who did a terrific job performing the "Last Post" on the day.

#### **NORTHERN RIVERS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2014**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence) [1.21 p.m.]: I offer my congratulations to the worthy recipients from my electorate who received awards in the 2014 Northern Rivers Volunteer of the Year Awards. Ruby Sherrin was awarded the Student Volunteer of the Year and Youth Volunteer of the Year for her work with the Northside Netball Association, where she mentors young teams and helps them to develop their skills within the sport. The New School of Arts Neighbourhood House won the Volunteer Team of the Year for its Community Visitors Scheme. This group visits aged care residents in isolated areas, enriching the quality of life of these elderly people. During the past 12 months the volunteers have made a total of 2,386 visits.

The Senior Volunteer of the Year was awarded to David Abrahams, who volunteers at the Grafton U3A Men's Shed. David has been volunteering since the age of 17. Even when he was involved in business he still found time to volunteer. David usually ends up taking on a leadership role in any group in which he becomes involved. The Clarence Valley is blessed to have so many wonderful people who are prepared to give up their time to assist others.

#### **SCULPTURE BY THE SEA**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [1.22 p.m.], by leave: On Thursday 23 October 2014 I joined Premier Mike Baird at the launch of Sculpture by the Sea, together with founding director David Hanley, at Marks Park, Tamarama. At the launch the Premier announced that, due to my vigorous lobbying, the Government will continue its commitment to provide \$1.2 million for the outdoor exhibition for the next four years, ensuring its ongoing success. The exhibition along Sydney's iconic Bondi to Tamarama coastal walk is going from strength to strength and is considered to be one of the largest and best-attended annual sculpture exhibitions in the world. I thank Waverley Council and its mayor for their support of Sculpture by the Sea, as well as the organising committee and wish them the very best for the exhibition, which attracts about 500,000 people to my electorate each year.

#### **TRIBUTE TO ANDY**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [1.23 p.m.], by leave: I acknowledge the passing in August of the Pymont resident who was known as Andy. Constituents contacted me about Andy and his experience of rough sleeping and living scared, alone and in poor health, followed by an early death at age 36—an all too common occurrence for homeless people. Andy lived in Pymont for more than 10 years. His public life and quiet death reminds us that there is much to be done to address disadvantage and isolation. I thank the Pymont residents who welcomed Andy into the community and who offered him support, whether it was meals, drinks, clothing, bedding, a locker for his belongings, kind words and friendly smiles. All these acts of kindness show what it means to be a community. It was a privilege to join the wonderfully caring Pymont community at Andy's memorial service. He will be remembered.

#### **MANNING VALLEY CRUZERS**

##### **TAREE LIONS CLUB**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [1.24 p.m.], by leave: I inform the House that the committee and members of Manning Valley Cruzers, the Taree Rod and Custom Club, recently held its

Show 'n Shine Day to raise funds for Manning Great Lakes Riding for the Disabled. Many owners of historic and restored hot rods and custom cars in the Manning Valley display their cars at the event, which is very popular with the general public and car enthusiasts alike. Congratulations are due to the club president Peter Green, secretary Cherie Holden and committee members on organising this memorable event, which drew a large crowd who admired the variety of cars on display.

I also inform the House that the Lions Club of Taree celebrated its sixtieth anniversary of community service to the Manning Valley in 2014. To mark the occasion the club organised a special celebratory dinner function at the Club Taree, which was attended by many distinguished visitors. The work of the Lions Club of Taree is undertaken by an energetic group of people who come together in the spirit of giving back to the community. The work of this year's committee is led by president Paul Murray, secretary Peter McKellar, treasurer Christopher Warren and an enthusiastic committee.

#### **HIS EMINENCE BEATITUDE PATRIARCH CARDINAL MAR BECHARA BOUTROS RAI**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [1.25 p.m.], by leave: On Sunday 2 November I had the pleasure of joining hundreds of parishioners at the divine liturgy on the occasion of a visit by His Eminence and Beatitude Patriarch Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East at St Charbel's Church, Punchbowl. I welcome His Eminence during his short yet memorable stay in Sydney between 24 October and 7 November. I bring to the attention of members of this House that His Eminence's visit to Australia is a highly significant one to Australia's Maronite community and the Middle Eastern community at large across New South Wales due to his revered status as the spiritual shepherd of the Maronite Church. I congratulate His Grace Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Maronite Eparchy of Australia, Father Joseph Sleiman and the Australian Lebanese and Maronite Community on hosting His Eminence and Beatitude Patriarch Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Rai in Australia. I wish him an enjoyable stay for the remainder of his trip.

#### **PENELOPE LITTLE, ST JOHN'S AMBULANCE SERVICE**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [1.26 p.m.], by leave: I recognise and congratulate Glen Innes resident Penelope Little, who was presented with a long service medal by the new Governor of New South Wales, His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley, for 12 years' service to the St John's Ambulance Service. The awards ceremony was held at the Great Hall of the University of Sydney on Saturday 25 October 2014. I acknowledge Penelope's commitment to the Glen Innes community and the St John's Ambulance Service, providing life-saving first aid and always being on hand when the community needs her. I congratulate Penelope and wish her all the very best in her volunteer role with the St John's Ambulance Service.

#### **TIUETI HOLLAND, HUNTER NETBALLER**

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [1.27 p.m.], by leave: Tiueti Holland is only 16 years old but she is already shaping up to be one of the Hunter's great netballers. The Whitebridge High School student is truly one of the region's emerging young talents. Her sporting prowess was acknowledged this year when she was named the Hunter Academy of Sport's most outstanding female athlete. The year 11 student has captained every netball team she has played in since she took up the sport at age nine. On top of school, she trains and plays with the Charlestown Netball Association's under17s representative side, plays on Saturday afternoons for club Bilbie Dan and is involved in the Hunter Academy of Sport netball program. I congratulate Tiueti on her achievements and wish her all the best for the future.

#### **MINGYUE LAY BUDDHIST TEMPLE**

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [1.28 p.m.], by leave: I was delighted to attend the thirty-third anniversary of Mingyue Lay Temple on 21 September 2014 in Cabramatta. The temple had humble beginnings from its inception in 1982, starting out as a small fibro shack. Since then, it has flourished into the biggest Chinese Buddhist temple in the Southern Hemisphere. Drawing inspiration from twelfth century Chinese architecture, the temple houses 37 bronze Buddha statues and a main shrine and provides a spiritual refuge for those who seek tranquillity, peace and introspection. I commend the Chinese Buddhist Society, in particular, its chairman James Chan, OAM, as well as its board for their leadership in managing the temple. I also thank staff and volunteers of the temple for their commitment to maintaining the grounds and ensuring a beautiful monument for Buddhists and non-Buddhists to enjoy for decades to come.

### **BANKSTOWN WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE MULTICULTURAL OPEN DAY**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [1.29 p.m.], by leave: On Friday 31 October 2014 I had the pleasure to attend the Bankstown Women's Health Centre Multicultural Open Day. The event was a fun-filled day for all, with many local families and children taking part in the various activities, games and stalls. The centre showcased several activities such as belly dancing, cultural performances, the traditional Lebanese drum, a MasterChef demonstration, a karate self-defence seminar and a performance by Wiley Park Girls High School. A variety of activities, such as face painting and a reptile farm, entertained the children. Complementing these activities, various stalls provided information for families on a broad range of social and health services.

I had the pleasure of representing the Hon. Linda Burney, Deputy Leader of the New South Wales Opposition. I congratulate and thank the staff and centre manager Mariam Mourad of Bankstown Women's Health Centre on organising an enjoyable day. I acknowledge her hardworking executive and volunteers. It is wonderful to see the Bankstown Women's Health Centre continue to grow from strength to strength in Bankstown.

### **TAKE THE PLEDGE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.30 p.m.], by leave: Take the Pledge is an initiative of Keep NSW Beautiful to keep litter off our beaches and out of our oceans. It involves members of the public taking a simple written pledge not to litter. On 1 November volunteers at Cronulla Beach and along the New South Wales coast helped to raise awareness and gathered signatures from beachgoers to take the pledge. I attended the Cronulla Beach event, joined by Sutherland Shire Mayor, Councillor Kent Johns, and Councillors Tracy Cook and Scott Williams. Mark Ferguson, Channel 7 news presenter, attended as ambassador for Take the Pledge. I encourage all members and the public to take the pledge online at [www.takethepledge.com.au](http://www.takethepledge.com.au).

### **DOLLY CUMERSKEY 100TH BIRTHDAY**

**Mr JOHN FLOWERS** (Rockdale) [1.30 p.m.], by leave: It is with great pleasure that I extend my congratulations to Mrs Dolly Cumerskey of Brighton-le-Sands on the occasion of her 100th birthday. Dolly will be well known and fondly remembered in this House for her contribution to Hansard whilst working for a former Editor of Debates, Bob Davey. As a continuation of her life experiences, Dolly Cumerskey celebrated this special occasion on 23 September 2014. I wish her every happiness and good health, as I am sure do those working in Hansard.

### **FRENCHS FOREST AGRICULTURAL AND HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson) [1.31 p.m.], by leave: Last Saturday I was delighted to share a milestone for the French's Forest Agricultural and Horticultural Society. The show, held on 1 and 2 November, marked the society's eightieth annual show. The special lunchtime gathering I attended as part of this event at the Frenchs Forest Showground included local Warringah Mayor Michael Regan and a number of life members of the society such as Alex Armour, who was accompanied by his lovely wife, Frances. Alex Armour was the show's champion boy horserider at eight years old in 1939—75 years ago. He was also president of the society for more than 20 years; current president Wendy Taplin having now served in that role for more than 15 years. I acknowledge the contribution of all those involved in the show over the past 80 years. While it is becoming harder to maintain the same momentum and community interest of times past, the tradition and hard work certainly continues. I thank Wendy and her team for that, and for their hospitality.

### **MORPETH HOUSE**

**Ms ROBYN PARKER** (Maitland) [1.32 p.m.], by leave: Morpeth's days as a river port were effectively over by about 1890, but the town's comparative isolation meant that its historic shopfronts, wharves and even the hitching posts along the main street have survived. It is a living museum of Australia's past; a history lesson that is easy to digest. Lend Lease has recently developed Closebourne Village, a Lend Lease retirement village at Morpeth. Last week I was pleased to open heritage-listed Morpeth House, which will now be used by Closebourne Village residents as a community centre. The restoration is fantastic. It is an adaptive reuse of the original 150-year-old building. As the former Minister for Heritage I was proud to take the Heritage Council to see some of the restoration work. The residents who live in the village will really enjoy a wonderful facility and a great restoration. I congratulate the architects, builders and Lend Lease on this wonderful restoration.

### CANOBOLAS PUBLIC SCHOOL 150TH BIRTHDAY

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [1.33 p.m.], by leave: Last Friday afternoon and over the weekend former and current students, teachers and parents gathered at Canobolas Public School to celebrate 150 years of education. Established in 1864, the school is steeped in history, with many ex-students going on to play a major role in the community, including former State member for Orange Garry West. School captains Emily Gould and Gabe Colta did an excellent job of emceeing the proceedings, with visitors entertained by the Canobolas Public School band. Special mention must be made of Principal Shaun Dixon for his excellent work, and Parents and Citizens Association President Melissa Caulfield, who compiled *The Incomplete Story*, a book celebrating the history of the school.

The staff, parents and school community who have supported the school for so long and with such passion also should be acknowledged. On display at the school for the celebrations was the *Punishment Book*, which records which child received the cane in the 1920s and for what offence. It was tough justice back in those days. Finally, well done to the current 101 students currently enrolled at Canobolas Public School. Without them there would be no school. I have said it before and I will say it again: The future of Orange and our State is certainly in good hands.

### ALBURY SHOW

#### BROOKE KING, ATHLETICS CHAMPION

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [1.34 p.m.], by leave: Congratulations to Julie Walsh and the Albury Show Committee on a great Albury Show, which was held over three days last weekend. I have been a frequent visitor, along with my family, to the Albury Show over the years and I always love it. It is full of colour, excitement, big rides and the most spectacular fireworks. This year an international tent-pegging competition against South Africa was a feature event in the arena, and a large screen and loudspeakers kept showgoers informed of all activities from a specially constructed studio. Congratulations to the Punjabi Heritage Association, and particularly Harneet Gill, on organising the first annual Raunak Mela event, which was held in Albury on 2 November. "Raunak" means "joyous" and "Mela" means "a fair"; it certainly was a joyous occasion. There was freestyle wrestling, tug of war, Gatka—Sikh martial arts—Bhangra and Giddha dancers who wore the most wonderful colourful costumes, and the Kabaddi tournament with teams coming from as far as New Zealand to take part.

Well done to Brooke King, a student at Lavington Public School, who took part in the New South Wales Primary Schools Sports Association [PSSA] Athletics Carnival held at Olympic Stadium, Homebush. Brooke is an athlete with a disability [AWD] and she excelled by winning gold in the junior girls shot put, gold in the discus, silver in the 200 metres and bronze in the 100 metres. Brooke is now eligible to compete in the national championships to be held in Tasmania. Good luck in Tasmania, Brooke.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure):** I welcome the students from the Mulyan Public School at Cowra who are seated in the gallery. I hope you enjoy your time here at New South Wales Parliament House.

#### KIAMA ELECTORATE GREEN THUMBS

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [1.35 p.m.], by leave: Today I acknowledge two great green thumbs in my electorate. First, I congratulate Mr Greg Vale of Kiama and his wife, Nicki, on winning the best garden category in the Australian House and Garden Awards. I acknowledge the hard work, dedication and time that Mr Vale and his wife have invested in this project. I congratulate him on receiving this worthy recognition for his efforts. So many gardens across Kiama are loved by their residents. One can see the time and effort that they invest. Secondly, I acknowledge Ron and Elaine Bower of Kangaroo Valley, two other constituents in a beautiful part of my electorate. They recently took part in the Kangaroo Valley Open Garden Competition. They were raising funds for youth projects in Kangaroo Valley. I encourage others to come to my electorate and view the beautiful gardens, particularly the display put on by many garden clubs, including those in Kangaroo Valley, Kiama and Berry.

#### CLARENCE ELECTORATE HIDDEN TREASURES

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence) [1.36 p.m.], by leave: I offer my congratulations to the five women from my electorate who were named on the 2014 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll. Alba Linklater of

Tucabia has worked tirelessly for the United Hospital Auxiliary since 2004, and is continually looking for new ways to raise funds for the auxiliary to provide equipment for the local hospital. Janine Ball of Grafton has worked in child care for more than 35 years, having cared for the children of three generations, often going above and beyond the call of duty to support families. Robyne Bancroft of Copmanhurst is an elder of the Gumbaynggirr-Bundjalung nation. She volunteers on the Catholic Elders Council, Marist Brothers Education Committee, Catholic Education Committee and many others, including educating students and teachers about Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Joyce Bell of Yamba has been volunteering in the local area for more than 16 years, assisting the Maclean Hospital Auxiliary, Wellspring Community Care Op-Shop, Port of Yamba Historical Society and Meals on Wheels. Doreen Cuppitt of Iluka has held positions on the Iluka Bush Fire Brigade since 1980 and, as if that is not enough, she is involved with Iluka Meals on Wheels, Iluka Residents Committee, Iluka Country Women's Association, Catholic Women's League, the Iluka Seniors Group and the History Group of Iluka.

#### **COOGEE BOYS' PREPARATORY SCHOOL 100TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [1.37 p.m.], by leave: On 25 October I attended a gala dinner in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Coogee Boys' Preparatory School, Randwick. This is a boys' private school from kindergarten to year 6. The esteem in which the school is held is evidenced by the number of pupils who are second, third or even fourth generation attendees. I congratulate Head Master John Dicks on his outstanding leadership of the tremendous staff and school community. He is a relative newcomer to the school, having arrived around 20 years ago. I can say that he is a "relative newcomer" because he is only the third head master in 100 years at the school. The school's motto affirms the school's purpose: to make young men into gentlemen, scholars and sportsmen. It has certainly scored top marks in each of those areas for 100 years. I congratulate the Coogee Boys' Preparatory School.

#### **PINK RIBBON MORNING TEA**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [1.38 p.m.], by leave: Last Monday I had the pleasure of hosting a Pink Ribbon morning tea in my office. The special guest speaker was the Deputy Leader of the New South Wales Opposition, Ms Linda Burney, and member for Canterbury. A large number of women from a range of different organisations attended the morning, including representatives from the Bankstown Women's Health Centre, the Greek Older Women's Network, representatives from a range of community organisations and clubs including the Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre, Bass Hill Plaza, Bankstown Women's Support Cancer Network, South Western Sydney Women's Domestic Service, representatives from a number of schools, including St Euphemia College, Bass High School, Georges Hall Public School, St Mary's Catholic parish, as well as representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee. I thank them all for coming along and for their generous donations. It is important that we do all we can to support women, particularly those suffering from cancer.

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Mark Coure) left the chair at 1.39 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I welcome to the public gallery today from Mulyan Public School in Cowra 80 year 5 and year 6 students and their teachers. They are guests of the Minister for Primary Industries and member for Burrinjuck. I also welcome to the public gallery today members and supporters of Hawkesbury Legacy. They are guests of the member for Londonderry. I welcome all the visitors here this afternoon.

#### **QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.19 p.m.]*

#### **FUEL EXCISE TARIFF**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. So far the Premier has failed to stand up against Tony Abbott's \$25 billion of budget cuts to this State's health and education and his \$7 GP tax, which will see our hospital emergency departments swamped. Will the Premier stand up against Tony Abbott's increased tax on fuel, which will hit the hip pocket of every motorist in New South Wales?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question—kind of. I wonder if he understands that this is State Parliament and that there is a Federal Parliament down in Canberra. There is a difference. I am very proud—

*[Interruption]*

Do those opposite want an answer to the question? We have students listening in the gallery today. I am very proud of what this Government has done for the people of New South Wales. I can give this assurance: when we need to stand up for the people of New South Wales, that is exactly what we will do. We have said on multiple occasions that, in relation to the budget, the long-term impact on health funding needs to be addressed. It is not sustainable to stand alone—with the States left to deal with it. I have said that time and time again.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I know those opposite do not want to hear it, but that is actually what happened— if those opposite want the facts of the matter. The reason for this, and there is a connection—

**Mr John Robertson:** You need people to hold you up.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** No, that is not it. It is that maintaining the triple-A rating is actually important to this side of the House.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Maintaining that rating is important to this side of the House.

**Mr Ryan Park:** We did it.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** You did not do it. You are happy to blow it.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The big question for those on the opposite side of the House is: how on earth are they going to pay for anything?

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** How are those on that side of the House going to pay for anything? What they do in government—

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: Standing Order 129 on relevance. We ask the questions here, and one day we hope to get an answer. Will the Premier stand up to Tony Abbott on his fuel tax?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I have answered the question. We have stood up on these issues and we will continue to stand up.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Members opposite may have missed it but the reason it is important is that policy announcements need funding to go along with them. Members opposite do not understand that basic fiscal responsibility. They go to Newcastle promising sky-bridges and convention centres without having a dollar to put towards them. It is beyond comprehension for them to talk about how they will fund any services in this State. They cannot fund anything. They do not even have a costing committee. If Labor had a costing committee

it would go like this: The shadow Treasurer would get a policy on his desk and say, "Yes, that looks good. Off you go." Then Noreen Hay would come in and say, "Hello. I'd like a convention centre. How about it?" The shadow Treasurer would say, "Okay, off you go."

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wollongong and the member for Ku-ring-gai will come to order. I call the member for Wollongong to order for the second time. She will cease arguing, interjecting and shouting. What is the member's point of order?

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** The question was about the fuel tax. I ask you to bring the Premier back to the leave of the question.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** For the benefit of Labor members, there is a thing called a budget. If they read it they could ask questions on it. I cannot remember the Treasurer or me receiving too many questions on the budget because none of them—except the member for Cessnock, who has a go on occasion—have read it. In order to pay for things the money must be coming in. That is a simple rule that members on this side of the House have followed. We make sure that revenue growth and expense growth line up, which means we have the capacity to pay for the services and build the infrastructure that the community deserves.

An example is health. We are proud of the health services that the Minister for Health is delivering, including record improved performances in our emergency departments and a reduction in elective surgery waiting times. Our health system is a first-class service offered by a first-class staff and delivered by a first-class Government. We are proud of what we have delivered. We are able to deliver a record infrastructure spend because we have the fiscal discipline that members on the other side of the House lack. We are happy to stand up to Canberra on whatever issue members opposite put forward. We are also happy to stand up to members opposite, quite frankly, because they are the biggest risk to the State. Members opposite being on this side of the House come March next year is the biggest risk this State faces. We will not let that happen because we think too highly of New South Wales.

## DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Ms ROBYN PARKER:** My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government protecting the vulnerable in our society?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. There should be no interjections during a question of this nature.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I note that the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] is being rolled out in Maitland. I thank the member for Maitland for her hard work in delivering on that for her community. When I had the privilege to serve as Treasurer—as the current Treasurer does—we delivered three budgets built on important principles that define who we are and what is important to us. In simple terms, the principles include improving services by putting more staff on the front line. We are delivering smaller head offices and more front-line staff. We are also delivering more infrastructure across the State. Not only did the folder that came in say that we were going to lose our triple-A rating; it also said there was about a \$30 billion deficit in infrastructure. We had to get on with the job of catching up on infrastructure and start future-proofing our city. We have done that.

At the same time, an important pillar that members opposite like to forget is our strong emphasis on needing to look after the vulnerable. A fact that is often missed in this debate is that good economic and financial management is deeply correlated with our capacity to look after the vulnerable. That means the better we do economically the greater our capacity to look after those people. Government members strongly believe in the hand-up principle and we are implementing it not only in words but also through action. It is worth reminding members what we have done in that regard.

Under the former Premier and Minister we were the first State to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. That landmark reform was done on the basis that as a Cabinet we wanted to provide critical funds to the community sector to make a difference to the workers, carers and families involved. We understood

that we needed to find savings to match the spending profile. We did it proudly as we delivered and signed that historic reform. In our last budget we were also proud to give \$500 million in additional funding to our caseworkers. We understand the amazing job caseworkers do.

Each day and night as we go about our business they do an incredible job dealing with some of the most vulnerable families and children in this State. We want to help them to do their jobs better. Yes, we have more to do but the increased funding was a strong indication of our commitment to look after those who look after the most vulnerable. We understand the positive impact of the Going Home Staying Home reforms on homelessness. We are providing more services and funding to the people who need it most through a holistic reform that goes from the beginning to the end.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The reforms affect intervention opportunities all the way through to crisis management so we can manage the process holistically and provide more services. We have also established the Social Benefit Bond trial. I acknowledge the genesis of the idea was under the former Government and I pay credit to it for that, but we have executed it. That is an important point.

The bonds bring new capital and additional resources that allow us to increase the focus on outcomes for families that are about to have children taken away from them and provide an opportunity to bring those families back together. It has been proven that bringing families back together gives them greater long-term employment opportunities, increased health outcomes and less contact with the justice system. We are doing that through the Social Benefit Bond. Incredible results were achieved in the first year that show it has been successful. The normal group rated a 20 per cent return but they are hoping to be able to achieve a 60 per cent return rate. This is a fantastic opportunity and a good innovation. This is something that the Government is very proud to deliver and we want to do more.

I also note that our community sector workers, who work across a range of services, are aware of the impacts and services available to people who are the most vulnerable, such as victims of homelessness, mental ill health and domestic violence. This Government has been very proud to sign up for long overdue pay increases for community sector workers in recognition of the contribution they make to assisting some of the most vulnerable people in our State. While this Government is determined to drive the economy and be fiscally responsible, we are very proud to strongly connect that not only to improved services and building infrastructure that is so desperately needed but also to looking after those who are most vulnerable. It is in our DNA. It is something that we will do day in and day out because that is what the community deserves.

#### DOMESTIC GAS RESERVATION POLICY

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** My question is directed to the Premier. With gas prices set to double or even triple—

[*Interruption*]

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** —in the next two or three years due to the huge demand for gas export, will he join the Opposition in pushing for a national gas reservation policy to ease gas prices and protect manufacturing jobs?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will cease interjecting when a member is asking a question. I call the Deputy Premier to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I thank the shadow Treasurer for his question. For the benefit of the member for Newcastle and the member for Charlestown, I will fill them in on what happens. Each morning Labor members will have a tactics meeting to come up with a strategy, but we are yet to see one. They generally get together to bring an issue forward, and that is what they get—a gas strategy. I love the fact that they talk gas.

**Mr Michael Daley:** How did you go in Lismore?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It was very good. It was very positive.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time. He will cease arguing and interjecting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It was very positive and I will tell the House why. Where do I start? I begin with Labor policy. In one breath they say they want to have no gas and in the next breath they say they want to reserve gas, so they want to reserve nothing. That fantastic policy was thought up by the Labor brains trust. They put that together and said, "Hang on, we can reserve nothing." They talk about coal seam gas. Are they kidding? When Labor was in government, what did we see? They issued licences one after the other—out they went to everywhere and anywhere. "Who wants one?" Oh, yes, out they went!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier does not need the assistance of Government members.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Labor members were very happy to send out licences. Were there any protections?

**Government members:** No.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Was there anything that protected the environment?

**Government members:** No.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Or the water?

**Government members:** No.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Could absolutely anyone do it? Of course they could. Labor did not care who it was or what they were about; they were happy to issue licences. Basically that means there are coal seam gas licences from one end of the State to the other, and Labor could not care less. But suddenly they want to come back and say, "Oh, by the way, we don't like coal seam gas", and that is the height of hypocrisy. In Lismore I said that John Robertson talking about coal seam gas was like Lance Armstrong saying he is against drugs in sport. We only need to look at Labor's track record to know that Labor stands for nothing.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members who continue to interject will be placed on calls to order.

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

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** On your bike.

**Mr John Robertson:** Hey, "Hollywood", I have a spine, mate. When I am going to run, I run. I do not hide in a corner like you.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition either has a point of order or he does not.

**Mr John Robertson:** I do, Madam Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** And it is relevance?

**Mr John Robertson:** It is relevance under Standing Order 129.

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

**Mr John Robertson:** The question is about a national gas reservation policy—a national policy—and whether he will support one.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier referred to gas so the answer is relevant. The Premier has the call.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Leader of the Opposition talks about spine. We have seven million spines across New South Wales, and they do not like him; nor does his caucus. The reason they do not like him is that

he stands for nothing. He cannot run across this State with one populist policy or another because ultimately what happens—like the Wizard of Oz and as happened in Newcastle—is the curtain is drawn back and we see what is actually there. Guess what? There is absolutely nothing there. There is no substance and no credibility.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Labor's track record on coal seam gas is absolutely appalling. The Leader of the Opposition should come out to New South Wales and say, "I'm sorry for what we did." The moment he does that, he would have some credibility, but he does not. This Government will respond sensibly to the mess that Labor left behind. It does not matter which portfolio I refer to—the economy, energy or whatever—Labor left behind a mess.

**Mr John Robertson:** The member for Port Stephens—he left behind a mess.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The protestations of the Leader of the Opposition are rank hypocrisy.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition he is already on three calls to order. I call the member for Bankstown to order. She will cease interjecting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The good news for the people of New South Wales is that this Government will fix it, which is exactly what we need to do. We will ensure that we protect our farmers and the environment. We are happy for coal seam gas and coalmining to go ahead, but it must be done not at the cost of the environment, not at the cost of our water and not at the cost of our farmers. The Government is adopting a balanced position. We are proud to put that balanced position forward. It provides a stark contrast to what the previous Labor Government did.

## GAMBLING

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What is the Government doing to assist problem gamblers and vulnerable communities?

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I thank the member for Myall Lakes for his question because he is a member who clearly understands the wonderful services and counselling facilities that exist across his great electorate to support vulnerable people in his community. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is protecting vulnerable people in our community right across the State in many and varied ways. We do that by adopting a range of initiatives in government service delivery areas. In my portfolio of Gaming we are working to decrease the impact of problem gambling in New South Wales, which impacts particularly on vulnerable people. Recently the Premier and I were privileged to sign off on a memorandum of understanding with the clubs movement. One of the key initiatives designed to help vulnerable people is lowering the cash insertion limit for gaming machines from \$10,000 back to \$7,500 to ensure that our policy better targets those at the acute end of the problem gambling spectrum.

This Government also is delivering better front-line services for communities to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our communities have a better level of access to the services they need to help them put an end to their heartbreaking problem gambling. Approximately seven years ago I lost a very good friend in Gilgandra to problem gambling. He took his own life. He was found by his teenage son. That incident is still very raw and very real. It is a story that focuses attention on the heart of this Government's response to assisting the most vulnerable people in our community. Approximately 0.8 per cent of people in New South Wales have a problem with gambling. My mate, Gwayne, was in the area of highest incidence, which is approximately 1.8 per cent, as he was a male aged approximately 40 years. His mum and dad, Pat and Gwayne, his friends like me and his family constantly question ourselves about what we could have done, not knowing what was available, and how we could have helped our mate once we understood he had a problem.

Since that time we have questioned ourselves repeatedly. Since I became a member of Parliament and a member of this Government, I understand that Gwayne's story is exactly the reason that this Government has funded a range of measures from the Responsible Gambling Fund and recently made commitments that include an investment of \$1.5 million in the campaign, You're Stronger Than You Think, to encourage people like Gwayne to access services and ensure they understand that they are stronger than they think. This is a program designed specifically to target people like Gwayne who have a gambling problem, to make them feel confident

that there are services available right across New South Wales that can help them beat this problem. As I have learned, problem gamblers often feel helpless; the damage that starts to mount on their individual and family circumstances compounds and compounds, and they cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel. But there is a light at the end of the tunnel. This campaign, which will result in people being made more aware that there are 54 free and confidential gambling help services across 200 locations in New South Wales, speaks to that.

Some of those services are provided through the Peninsular Community Centre in Wyong and Gosford; the Uniting Care Counselling Service, which does a wonderful job, in Nowra; Anglicare Northern Inland, which is providing wonderful services, in the electorate of the member for Tamworth; and The Samaritans Foundation in Taree, in the Myall Lakes electorate. But there are many more areas in which these services are being made available by the Government so that vulnerable people can access the help they need. The services are specialist, specific and very supportive. Often, problem gamblers fear that when they disclose their problem with gambling they will be isolated and stigmatised, and that is when they really hit rock bottom.

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I am pleased to announce that the campaign has drawn an excellent response so far. Calls to the helpline have risen. The member for Macquarie Fields obviously is not interested in this issue, and that is a shame. In just two weeks after the commencement of the campaign, calls to the helpline increased by 32 per cent, which indicates that the system is working. Visitors to the Gambling Help website, which contains a broad range of self-help tools as well as a portal to counselling services, is up 317 per cent on the same period last year. The number of page views is up by 117 per cent, indicating that visitors are accessing this help and that the campaign is hitting the mark, and we are very happy about that. This Government is committed to targeting problem gambling, and supporting those with gambling problems. We will continue to provide help in a variety of ways. I remind all members, all families and friends who have someone close to them who is struggling with this problem, that services are available through the Gambling Helpline—1800 858858—and through the gambling online service, at [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au).

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the gallery this afternoon Mr Steven Chaytor, a former member for Macquarie Fields.

**SYDNEY WATER**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that his Government has committed to privatise our poles and wires, will he rule out the sale, lease or privatisation of Sydney Water?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Yes.

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

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

**Mr JOHN FLOWERS:** My question is addressed to the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice. What is the Government's interim response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse?

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I thank the member for Rockdale for his question. I note that in my dealing with the member for Rockdale he has shown a great deal of care and compassion for his electorate and for people who are struggling, as many of us do, from time to time. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has been an eye-opener for each and every one of us. We have all heard some of the absolutely horrific stories about young people who had been abused over many years in various institutions. Nobody in this place could fail to be moved by the ways in which such abuse has impacted the lives of those young people. The Government has listened to those stories and has expressed its concern, care and compassion for those people. Having listened, we have tried to establish what we could do to respond—carefully, of course, at this stage, as we listen to the evolving stories.

Last week, I had the pleasure to announce, with the Minister for Family and Community Services, the results of a great deal of work that has been done by government agencies, but also by the non-government sector, on an interim response to some of the horrific stories that have come from that royal commission. We

have worked on this response, listening carefully to advocacy groups. For example, we spoke with the Care Leavers Australia Network's Leonie Sheedy, who for many years has been doing very good work with people in this situation. We spoke also with Bonney Djuric, who is involved in the Parragirls organisation. They stood shoulder to shoulder with us and spoke on behalf of people who had been hurt over many years. They also indicated their strong support for the Government's interim measures. Those measures include making records readily available to the people who have suffered.

It is concerning that for many years governments kept their records in boxes in various parts of the State, and that when it came to accessing those records—at a time when people are starting to open up, possibly after decades of keeping it inside—many of the records were unavailable. Minister Upton has effectively managed to double the resources by working with other agencies to try to get those records into a place where people can access them as quickly as possible. I think that will make a big difference in the sense of not adding to the problems that these people have suffered already.

We are also establishing an active place of recognition at the Parramatta Girls Home in consultation with advocacy groups and those who have suffered at the hands of those institutions. We are also looking at a much broader place of recognition, to recognise suffering right across the State. Again, Minister Upton is doing an excellent job working with those who have suffered, to ensure that whatever the response and whatever the recognition it is given in the most sensitive and caring way. We are also considering an improvement in the availability of counselling. Currently, counselling is available through the Victims Support Scheme. We are ensuring that the counselling now available will be unlimited, so that when people finally are able to release pent-up anger and hurt and are able to seek help, help is there through the counselling services.

There has been, and still is, a model litigant policy. However, we found through discussions with people who have been hurt through this process that the model litigant policy may work for various government agencies but not for agencies dealing with this sort of abuse. The Government has made very clear, through the 18 guiding principles, that from here on in government agencies right across the board, from the Crown Solicitor through every other agency dealing with people who are hurt and grieving, will know that this Government requires them to approach every litigious matter—if it is to be litigated, but we hope it will not be and that it can be resolved in other ways—with a driving motto of care and compassion, not the denial and ducking that went on for many years under various governments of various political persuasions. This Government is undertaking these measures to make sure that people understand we are interested in them, and that we want to make sure their lives are better. It is about care and compassion—no more denial, no more ducking.

### COASTAL CROWN LAND

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water. Given that the Minister was forced yesterday to withdraw legislation that would have removed the legitimate right of Aboriginal people to claim coastal lands, will he commit emphatically that this divisive, odious piece of legislation will never again see the light of day in Parliament? Just a simple yes will do.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** I thank the member for Canterbury for her question. Raising an issue that is divisive and odious is synonymous with the Labor Party. When a party or entity seeks to walk away from a long-held standard within New South Wales of maintaining beaches in public ownership, that tells me that it is bereft of policies and is reverting to name-calling and divisive behaviour.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury asked the question. She will cease interjecting.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** It is interesting that the member for Wallsend raised privatisation, because the amendment put up is about ownership and access. The Labor Party needs to answer the people of New South Wales on whether it supports privatisation of beaches.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** You need to answer why you withdrew support.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! This is not an opportunity for the member for Liverpool to debate the matter.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** Do you support the privatisation of beaches?

**Mr John Robertson:** Well, you do.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** Yes or no?

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order—

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** We can ask the audience, thumbs up or thumbs down.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** Do you think beaches should remain in public hands?

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

**Ms Linda Burney:** My point of order is under Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is being absolutely relevant to the question he was asked.

**Ms Linda Burney:** I asked the Minister to give a commitment not to bring this legislation back to the House. He has not answered that question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question he was asked. The member for Canterbury might want a yes or no answer to her question, but the Minister is entitled to answer it in the manner he sees fit. The Minister has the call.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** The amendment put up was clearly about ownership following a court case involving Red Rock Beach in the area of the good member for Coffs Harbour.

**Ms Linda Burney:** There was public access.

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

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** That case has issues involving access, but the Land and Environment Court was used to override a long-held public policy that beaches stay in public hands—no more and no less. It had nothing to do with access; it was all about ownership. If the Labor Party wants to revert to privatisation raised by the member for Wallsend, the amendment clearly prevented the Minister or a government from transferring ownership of public beaches to third parties. That is clearly what it was about. Discussions earlier this week—not with the member for Canterbury—were with members of the Aboriginal community who had some concerns around the definition of coastal lands.

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

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** The definition of "coastal lands" is being revisited. The Government still maintains its principle that beaches should remain in public hands. I suspect the member for Canterbury also will support it. If not, please clarify that. We will go back and consult—we have already started—with those parties who wanted to revisit the definition of "coastal land". We are happy to do that because, unlike divisive members of the Opposition, we are about bringing people together and getting a good result for everybody. Divisive opposite; bringing people together this side. Let us be very clear: The Labor Party either supports the privatisation of beaches or it does not.

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** Get your own copy of Noel Pearson's speech.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** You have a claim under Maroubra Beach.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Get a copy of Noel Pearson's speech.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** Do you support the transfer of Maroubra Beach to a third party?

**Mr Michael Daley:** It's not under threat.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** It is under claim.

**Mr Michael Daley:** It's not under threat.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** It is—1,800 claims, 600 kilometres of coast. Divisive opposite; bringing people together this side.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Some comments by Opposition members were entirely inappropriate. Members will come to order.

### SOCIAL HOUSING

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. How is the Government reforming social housing so that it better meets the requirements of the community?

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** I thank the member for Campbelltown for his question. He is a passionate and committed advocate for better social housing in his electorate. It is common sense that a house can only be as strong as its foundations. However, for 16 years Labor took a jackhammer to the foundations of social housing in New South Wales. Labor was the landlord from hell. We inherited a social housing system that was not fit for purpose. It did not deliver for tenants; it did not deliver for the New South Wales taxpayers. Who paid the price? The tenants in social housing and the people who could not get tenancy in social housing paid the price. I will put some facts before the House. When we came to government we inherited a spiralling social housing waiting list and maintenance backlog. We inherited an unfair social housing system. Labor's legacy to social housing can be summarised in two words: unfair and unsustainable. Worse than that is that Labor is a policy-free zone on social housing: no vision, no plans and no policies. Social housing under this Government will be better.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber. The Minister has the call and will be heard in silence.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** We have the vision to make social housing better. Labor's only concern with social housing goes as far as the ballot box. That is as far as it goes. In contrast, the Baird Government is getting on with the job of cleaning up that mess and rebuilding social housing in New South Wales. We are working hard to make it fair and sustainable. Fairness and sustainability go hand in hand. The community expects a social housing system that protects its most vulnerable members.

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

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** A social housing system cannot be provided if the assets are allowed to run down, which is what occurred under Labor for 16 years. We know Labor had no financial acumen or discipline; it racked up a deficit in the social housing system over many years. That is powerful because those opposite forfeited the ability to help the most vulnerable members of our community. Our social housing system must help those most in need, but it also has to give families, young people and children the best chance for the future. Part of ensuring a fair system is that we provide pathways for tenants to become independent where possible. Public and social housing should not be a destination for life.

Our actions speak louder than words. What have we done? We have made waiting lists more transparent. What does that mean? That means that tenants and those who do not have tenancy can make good decisions with good knowledge. We provided amnesties to crack down on those roting the social housing system. We introduced a vacant bedroom charge so that more people can access housing and we made the tough, strong and smart decision to sell Millers Point. Why? Because by doing that we will put our social housing system on better financial footing. We can help more people through selling Millers Point. Only on this side of the House do we have the vision, the plans and the policies to make social housing better, more sustainable and fairer. Why is that important? Because by doing that we can help the most vulnerable in our community in a way that Labor never did.

### MARINE ESTATE MANAGEMENT

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. What is the status of the Government's response to the Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel's advice on the impacts of the amnesty on recreational fishing in shoreline sanctuary zones? When will the advice from 12 months ago be published?

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** I thank the member for Sydney for his very important question and keen interest in how we are reforming the marine estate management after the failure in this space by those opposite for 16 years.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Myall Lakes will come to order. The Minister has the call.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** On this side of the House we are taking a very robust and rigorous approach to the future management of the marine estate. On that side of the House it was all about the preferences. This side: good policy; that side: policy vacuum, particularly regarding the marine estate. In March 2013 we announced a new framework for sustainable management of the marine estate in response to the report on the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks in New South Wales by Professor Bob Beeton from the University of Queensland, which delivered a key election commitment. Central to our new approach has been two new bodies, the Marine State Management Authority and the independent and scientific Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel, which is basically the brains trust for the Marine State Management Authority.

As we speak, the Marine Estate Management Bill 2014 is being debated in another place so that our reforms will be legislated. Our approach is to base decisions regarding management of the marine estate on the best available scientific evidence. That stands in stark contrast to the approach taken by those opposite. They based decisions on political science and voter preferences rather than on scientific evidence and proper consideration of a triple bottom line approach. This approach looks not only at the ecological factors but also, most importantly, at the impacts on the economy of the community, which will result from the policy introduced by the Government.

This side of the House takes a triple bottom line approach when it comes to the marine environment. Our marine estate is precious. It contributes massively to the economies of coastal towns and communities. It is absolutely crucial that we take a triple bottom line approach to future management. The New South Wales Government introduced an amnesty on recreational line fishing for motion beaches and headlands within sanctuary zones, while the independent Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel undertook a comprehensive risk assessment process.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Wollongong that she is on three calls to order.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** The expertise of panel members spans fields of ecological and social sciences. It takes time to work through the expert advice because it is a complex issue and needs to go through due process. We want to ensure that the final decision is as balanced as possible, which is why the Minister for the Environment and I have given the expert advice thorough consideration, as well as taken into account feedback from community groups and community representatives. This balanced approach is underpinned with scientific information, based on an assessment of key threats and risks; it is in line with our new approach to managing the New South Wales marine estate. I look forward to releasing the Government's response by the end of this month in time for the summer coastal season.

## ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. What is the Government doing to improve education and employment opportunities for the Aboriginal communities of New South Wales?

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** I thank my friend the member for Upper Hunter for his question and note his genuine commitment to improving education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in his electorate. When this Government came to office it received a report from the Auditor-General, which stated that the former Government's Aboriginal affairs policy *Two Ways Together* "has not delivered the improvement in overall outcomes for Aboriginal people that was intended". Shortly thereafter the Ombudsman delivered a similar damning report, which found:

... wasted opportunities stemming from a large amount of funds being spent on a disparate "grab-bag" of programs without adequate accountability.

In essence, the previous administration was criticised heavily for a lack of partnership, a lack of planning and a lack of accountability. These reports show that we not only need to change what we do but also the way we do it. In contrast, our Liberal-Nationals Government is not about spending more money; it is focused on better outcomes for Aboriginal people. As part of the ministerial task force, senior Ministers and Aboriginal leaders sat

at the table and made decisions together, which was a bold move for any government representing a genuine partnership with the Aboriginal community. With strong accountability at the heart of its reform, the New South Wales Government has delivered landmark changes centred on accountability. That means no more new programs without proper evaluation.

This Government has bravely established an Australian first in appointing Aboriginal Deputy Ombudsman Danny Lester, who is responsible for monitoring and assessing OCHRE programs. This Government has committed \$700,000 per annum toward this important accountability measure. The Ombudsman will provide regular reports to Parliament. We must acknowledge there are no quick fixes. It is likely that the Ombudsman's reports will uncover shortcomings, and I welcome the reports and the level of transparency that the Government expects. That is the difference between our OCHRE plan and the previous programs in Aboriginal Affairs. Under OCHRE, this Government is delivering four Opportunity Hubs and five Language and Culture Nests, as well as establishing Local Decision Making in five Aboriginal communities across New South Wales.

Opportunity Hubs seek to broker partnerships between local schools, universities, TAFEs, employers and training providers to match the aspirations of Aboriginal students to real local jobs. Our Government is investing \$6.4 million to deliver Opportunity Hubs in Campbelltown, Dubbo, Tamworth and the Upper Hunter. Currently 600 Aboriginal students are engaged in mentoring, training and career development opportunities. The Opportunity Hubs have forged partnerships with more than 20 local employers, which mean more jobs for young Aboriginal people. Learning language is about building pride and identity. It is vital to doing well at school and it is vital to encouraging students to stay at school. This Government is investing \$4.4 million to deliver Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests in Dubbo, Wilcannia, Lightning Ridge, Coffs Harbour and Lismore, with 1,800 students engaged currently in lessons.

Under the Connected Communities program, I am proud to say that 75 per cent of primary students have now reached expected literacy and numeracy levels for their age and 85 per cent of students have met numeracy standards. On any view that is a remarkable achievement. I pay tribute to the hardworking Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, who has shown a definite commitment and passion to improving the lives of Aboriginal students. This Government has also committed \$3.1 million towards Local Decision Making in five Aboriginal communities across the State in the Illawarra and Wingecarribee, the Far West, the North Coast, the Central West and the Central Coast. This enables Aboriginal communities to work in partnership with Government to strengthen governance and decision-making.

As part of our commitment to healing, this Government has partnered with the Kinchela Boys Home [KBH] to provide \$38,000 for the KBH Survivor Recording Project. The funding has enabled 20 men who lived at the home to record and share their incredible stories through film. I was present at the recent commemoration, which was an extraordinarily powerful event. Through OCHRE, long-term accountability and genuine partnership, I believe we can change Aboriginal lives for the generations to come.

**Question time concluded at 3.07 p.m.**

#### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE VALUER-GENERAL**

##### **Report**

**Ms Melanie Gibbons**, on behalf of the Chair, tabled report No. 3/55, entitled "Report on the Ninth General Meeting with the Valuer-General", dated November 2014.

**Ordered to be printed on motion by Ms Melanie Gibbons.**

#### **PETITIONS**

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

##### **NorthConnex Tunnel**

Petition requesting that the proposed NorthConnex tunnel northern ventilation stack and portal be located in a non-residential area, received from **Mr Barry O'Farrell**.

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

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

**Edgecliff Interchange**

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

**Kiama Rail Service**

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

**Sydney Electorate Public High School**

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

**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**.

**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 petition signed by more than 500 persons was lodged for presentation:**

**Slaughterhouse Monitoring**

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

**CONSIDERATION OF MOTION TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**

**Family and Community Services**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [3.10 p.m.]: My motion deserves to be accorded priority because this House should note that the work this Government has done in fixing the State's economy

has delivered better outcomes for everyone in New South Wales, particularly those most vulnerable in our community. The decisions taken by this Government to build a bigger and stronger economy have enabled us to do things such as deliver a record increase of \$5.8 billion in funding—up 7 per cent on the previous year—in the Family and Community Services budget.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind Opposition members that there should be no interjections during the time allocated for members to set out why their motions should be accorded priority.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** This includes an additional \$500 million to help with important child protection work. Important things can be done for the betterment of all with a strong economy. A total budget of \$1.1 billion for social housing and homelessness is yet another example of the important work being done to help our most vulnerable. But most importantly, those strong financial decisions taken by this Government to improve our economy have resulted in New South Wales being the first State in the Commonwealth to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS]. What does that mean? It means a doubling of future investment from \$2.7 billion to \$6 billion for people with a disability. It means more people with a disability will be able to access critically important services. This important reform has been achieved as a result of the strong economy this Government has built.

But it is not all about money. How do we know that? We know that because Justice James Wood told us so when he handed down his report on the commission of inquiry held in 2007. The members for the electorates of Marrickville and Canterbury will remember that because they promised an additional \$1.2 billion for the Department of Community Services, as it was called then, to protect vulnerable children. What happened after that? Things got worse. Labor is very good at spending money and not delivering any outcomes. But what we do know is that Labor left the most vulnerable in our community at risk. Those opposite should never forget their shameful record. More babies known to the Department of Services died under Labor than under any other government. The member for Canterbury should hang her head in shame because she was the responsible Minister at that time. I commend my motion to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind members of the tradition during these presentations. There should be no interjections.

### Hospital Services

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [3.13 p.m.]: As the party that created Medicare, Labor's commitment to universal health care is non-negotiable. We recently watched in horror as Tony Abbott cut \$15 billion from New South Wales hospitals, and those opposite let him get away with it. We thought the \$15 billion in cuts and the \$7 general practitioner tax were bad, but the Liberals are now proposing a new model of hospital service delivery in this State: privatisation. This will start with the new Northern Beaches Hospital and be rolled out across New South Wales. The choice at the next election is clear: A vote for Labor will be a vote for greater investment in rural and regional health. A vote for the Liberals and The Nationals will open the door for Mike Baird to Americanise our health system.

Within days of becoming Premier, Mike Baird talked of public-private-partnerships to design, build and operate our hospitals. Last week he signed a contract with Healthscope, a private company, to run the new Northern Beaches Hospital. We on this side of the House well remember the disaster of Port Macquarie Base Hospital, which was sold off to the private sector by the Coalition and bought back by Labor in 2005. Today there are alarming signs that the Liberals and The Nationals are at it again. Staff at Kempsey Hospital and the Kempsey community fear the privatisation of the hospital's X-ray unit. The Government is testing the market for private providers to deliver facilities at the proposed Byron Central Hospital. It is also hiding its funding plans for the proposed Lower Hunter Hospital in Maitland.

Members on this side of the House have asked the Premier time and again to rule out the private delivery of services at both the Byron Central and Lower Hunter hospitals. The Premier will not do so. The Government's refusal to rule this out simply confirms that it has plans to privatise healthcare services at the Lower Hunter Hospital. As things stand, the Liberals are leaving the door open to hand this hospital over to a private operator such as Healthscope, which will run essential services for profit. This new Liberals model is being applied in the new Northern Beaches Hospital. If the Baird Government is re-elected privatised hospitals could be coming to an area near you. Labor is prepared to give this guarantee to the people of New South Wales: Under Labor the Byron Central and new Lower Hunter hospitals will be publicly run, staffed and administered. We will never tolerate the privatisation of any public hospital in New South Wales.

**Question—That the motion of the member for Hornsby be accorded priority—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 60**

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

**Noes, 22**

Mr Barr	Mr Hoenig	Mr Piper
Ms Burney	Ms Horner	Mr Robertson
Mr Collier	Mr Lynch	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Crakanthorp	Dr McDonald	Mr Zangari
Mr Daley	Ms Mihailuk	
Mr Furolo	Mr Park	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Greenwich	Mr Parker	Mr Amery
Ms Harrison	Mrs Perry	Ms Hay

**Pairs**

Mr Constance	Ms Burton
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Lalich
Mr Roberts	Mr Rees
Mrs Sage	Ms Watson

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Motion Accorded Priority**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [3.25 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that strong economic management allows us to better protect the vulnerable.
- (2) Acknowledges that New South Wales was the first Australian State to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS].
- (3) Supports the record \$5.8 billion investment in this year's Family and Community Services budget to better place individuals, families and local communities at the centre of everything we do.

As I said when seeking priority for this motion, a bigger and stronger economy means more prosperity for all of us—it is not an end in itself; it is the means by which we deliver better services and better infrastructure and protect those most in need in this State. That is what the Baird Government is doing—it is committed to helping those most in need. It is a government that puts people first. It is delivering real reforms, which better protect and deliver for the most vulnerable in our community. Reform is hard, and that is why it takes a Liberal-Nationals Government to do it. The Government has made some tough decisions—there is no secret about that—and they have not always been popular. But they have been the best decisions to build and strengthen the economy of this State, and to enable the Government to deliver the services, infrastructure and support to those most in need.

I know that the member for Cessnock agrees that we need to protect those who are vulnerable. I respect and appreciate his interest in supporting the vulnerable. This Government has taken measures to help those most in need. That is why this Government signed up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The National Disability Insurance Scheme will give unprecedented choice and control to people with disability. It will make a meaningful difference to the lives of people with disability, their families and their carers. It is a game changer. As I said earlier, the NDIS means that we will double the investment in disability services from \$2.7 billion to \$6.4 billion. That will enable us to deliver services to an additional 50,000 clients. So the New South Wales Government is leading the nation. New South Wales was the first State to sign up to this bipartisan reform and is operating a trial in the Hunter area. I am advised that more than 2,500 participants have signed up to the trial of this scheme, and we recently celebrated the first anniversary of the scheme.

The New South Wales Government has delivered a budget of \$5.8 billion for the Department of Family and Community Services—that is an increase of 7.1 per cent on the 2013-14 financial year. It is a budget which will help to break disadvantage and not just manage it. There are several highlights of the budget. In 2014-15 there is funding of \$2.9 billion for ageing and disability services, a 7.6 per cent increase on the 2013-14 financial year. There is funding to continue to deliver Ready Together, which continues the Government's Stronger Together 2 commitment to give more people greater choice and flexibility in how they live their lives. An amount of \$1.6 billion will be spent on the protection of children and young people and on support for their families. This includes: an increase in early prevention services, with funding of \$258 million, which is a 4.6 per cent increase; an increase in statutory child protection, with funding of \$451 million, which is a 1.6 per cent increase; and an increase in out-of-home care services, with funding of \$852 million, which is a 4.2 per cent increase.

There is \$612 million for social housing construction work and maintenance, which is a 23 per cent increase. In the area of capital expenditure the Department of Family and Community Services has been allocated \$260 million in 2014-15, which is an increase of \$110.5 million. This Government has been able to deliver \$1.1 billion for social housing assistance and homelessness services. The key funding is in the form of an increase in housing assistance and tenancy management of \$811 million, a 0.2 per cent increase, and an increase in support to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with funding of \$265 million, which is a 6.2 per cent increase. This Government has taken some tough decisions to get the budget into the black—to make it a strong budget and to build a strong economy.

**Ms Linda Burney:** It is always in the black.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** The member for Canterbury says that things have always been good in New South Wales. I remind her that under Labor we had record debt and deficit, an infrastructure backlog and an inability to deliver services to those most in need. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [3.30 p.m.]: Labor will move an amendment to the motion moved by the member for Hornsby to strike out paragraphs 1 and 3. Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting paragraph (1) and paragraph (3).

If the Government wants to have a genuine discussion about the National Disability Insurance Scheme we are happy to do that. The previous speaker asserted that the Government has spent a record amount in community services. I remind the member that when Labor was re-elected and Bob Carr became Premier we had to invest \$1.2 billion in community services because of the devastation the previous Government wrought on the sector. When I was Minister we injected \$757 million outside the budget session.

I will put on record what the Baird Government has done to community services and the vulnerable since coming to office. Through its first budget it slashed \$500 million from community services over four

years. For 13 months it failed to fill the 2,068 full-time caseworker positions it had budgeted for despite promising to do so. It left regions suffering chronic caseworker shortages including Western Sydney, south-west Sydney, Nepean Blue Mountains, northern Sydney, southern New South Wales and the Hunter. It cut post-adoption allowances from \$16,000 to \$1,500 a year.

As a result of vicious Baird Government cuts and chronic caseworker vacancies the number of children in care has increased by 5.1 per cent since June 2010. The number of children entering the Brighter Futures early intervention program has fallen by 3.9 per cent. Only 18 per cent of children reported to the Department of Family and Community Services [DOCS] in Western Sydney have received a visit from the department. At the same time demand for child safety and protection services continues to grow steadily. The number of reports to community services has increased by 14 per cent. The number of children at risk known to DOCS has increased by 6.4 per cent. The rate of children and young people reported per 1,000 of population in New South Wales across the three-year period has steadily increased.

The Cabramatta Street Team, the Kings Cross Adolescent Support Unit and the Inner City Youth at Risk Project have been abandoned. Countless women's homelessness services have closed their doors, including the Katakudu Women's Housing Inc. on the Central Coast on Friday and the Blue Gum women's housing program in Lismore. The change that most blows our mind is the home care program being devolved to the private for-profit sector instead of the community sector. In my and Labor's view this will cause home care to be only about profit and not about people. The nonsense that the Government is peddling today about protecting the vulnerable is based on the notion that the market will look after the vulnerable. We know from other States and across the world where this foolish experiment has been tried that the market does not protect the vulnerable. I am not the only one making this assertion; it is the view of many leading welfare advocates across Australia and the world.

The previous Minister for Family and Community Services being on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* for seven or eight days straight over misleading this Parliament about the number of caseworkers and the deliberate and wilful decision to keep caseworker positions vacant to save money demonstrate that this Government does not look after the vulnerable. No matter how Government members dress it up they cannot be believed and people do not believe them. It is not only the Opposition or me saying this; it is the sector's workers and recipients who know all too well that this Government is not looking after the vulnerable. It is a nonsense. Yesterday the Minister for Lands and Water tried to bring in one of the most racist and divisive pieces of legislation we have seen relating to Aboriginal people. That is not protecting the vulnerable. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence) [3.35 p.m.]: It is a privilege to support the motion moved by the member for Hornsby. He is a passionate advocate for the most vulnerable in our community and I have heard him speak on the topic many times in this House. I am proud to be part of a Government that has had two very strong Ministers for Family and Community Services in the Hon. Pru Goward and the Hon. Gabrielle Upton. It does not surprise me that the member for Canterbury wants to delete paragraphs (1) and (3) from this motion accorded priority because members opposite do not understand that we need a strong economy to run family and community services.

**Ms Linda Burney:** I think I do understand.

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS:** If the member understands the need for money to run the sector why does she want to strike that paragraph from the motion? Where does she think the money comes from to run Family and Community Services? It comes from a strong economy. This Government has been able to strengthen the economy to provide the funding to deliver services. Members opposite heard that there was a 7 per cent increase but they refuse to acknowledge that the increase in funding has been possible because the Government has prudently managed the finances of this State. Members opposite may want to fritter away taxpayers' money because it is not theirs but members on this side of the House are prudent about how we spend that money.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Surpluses this side; deficits that side.

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS:** I did not see too many surpluses in the 16 years that Labor was in government. This State was languishing at the bottom of the table and it is now number one because of this Government's policies. This Government puts people first. The strength of a government and society can be measured by the way it treats the most vulnerable people in the community. We are committed to looking after

the most vulnerable in our community. That is why we were one of the first States to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We acted in a bipartisan way to deliver one of the greatest social reforms this country has ever seen. The National Disability Insurance Scheme will give unprecedented choice and control to people with disabilities. This motion is about putting people with a disability and the most vulnerable in our community at the front and giving them choice. It is not about playing politics but about ensuring that they receive the benefits they need.

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn) [3.38 p.m.]: In a sense this motion accorded priority is quite breathtaking. The first paragraph of the motion notes that strong economic management allows the Government to protect the vulnerable. To some extent that is true, but that is the role of government. Members opposite do not form the only government that has protected the vulnerable and it is wrong of them to say so. The greatest concern with the Greiner Government and every previous Liberal government is that they depleted community services. Every time Labor returned to government it had to not only play catch-up but also provide additional services and money. For members opposite to forget that today is wrong.

In relation to the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS], I agree it is fantastic that this State signed up to it. However, let us remember that New South Wales Labor is fully supportive of the NDIS and the NDIS would never have come to fruition without the Australian Labor Party. It was first envisaged under Gough Whitlam, then resurfaced in Kevin Rudd's ideas summit, and finally it was brought to fruition by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard. The forerunner in this State, admittedly through bipartisanship, has been the Stronger Together 1 and Stronger Together 2 packages. Funding was put up and the budget that the current Government is running on for Stronger Together 2 is the budget that Labor established.

The point was raised that under the NDIS there will be a right of self-determination for people with disabilities, who should have choice and control over services they use and the providers they choose. Currently there are some concerns around how that is happening. First—and this is no secret—there are concerns around the transfer and home care services, in particular, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. People are concerned and anxious about that going to large for-profit organisations. There is plenty of evidence in overseas jurisdictions to justify those concerns. Secondly, people with disabilities are concerned that there will be no State Government role for people who may fall through the gaps. This State Government has not even begun to address that concern but says instead that that will be the problem of the National Disability Insurance Agency. That is not right. Thirdly, we have learned over the past few months the New South Wales Government's reaction to people with disabilities in TAFE: It is taking money away from them and their support. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [3.41 p.m.], in reply: I found the interesting work of fiction by the member for Canterbury nothing short of disgraceful. She talked a lot about numbers, so let us discuss those numbers. She is right in saying that in 2007 the Labor Party took to the election a proposal to invest \$1.2 billion in family and community services, but what did we get for it? The situation got worse. There is no better example of Labor's failure in this State than its performance in the area of the Department of Community Services. It was a mess that Labor created and it was a mess that put very vulnerable people, particularly children, in harm's way. They were badly let down. What happens when people are badly let down? People die. Let us remember what Justice James Wood said about that in his "Keep Them Safe" report:

From our oversight of the system, we believe that, in light of the very substantial weaknesses in the current system—

He was referring to the system in 2011—

it is inconceivable that a strong and integrated child protection system will be able to be delivered in the near future.

**Ms Linda Burney:** That is not true.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** It is not true? That is coming from Justice James Wood.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. She has made her contribution to the debate.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** That is a reflection on the system that Labor left us. Who was the Minister at that time? It was the member the Canterbury. More money is not always the solution; it is about how it is spent. We are spending it where it will have the biggest impact and on those who most need it—unlike Labor. Labor frittered away taxpayer dollars and that led not only to taxpayers being ripped off but also to people who most

needed it also being ripped off. It is disgraceful and Labor members should hang their heads in shame. The current New South Wales Government has a proud record when it comes to dealing with vulnerable people. That has been set up by the manner in which we have managed the economy as well as the State's finances. We have been able to deliver improvements like the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] and to double the amount that will be spent on people who are living with disability.

An additional 50,000 people will be able to access disability services as a result of the historic agreement that was signed by none other than a Coalition Government. This Government's action has been described by that hero of all the socialists in the Labor Opposition, Julia Gillard, as the benchmark. The deal done by Barry O'Farrell and the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government was the benchmark that was held up as the example to every other State. Who could be relied upon to deliver that agreement? Was it Labor? No, it was not. It was the Liberal-Nationals Government, which has been standing up for those who most need it—our vulnerable people. We believe in not just giving a hand out, but a hand up. That is what this Government will always do. This Government will empower people to make the most of opportunities afforded to them. [*Time expired.*]

**Question—That the words stand—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 51**

Mr Anderson	Mr Greenwich	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Rohan
Mr Ayres	Mr Hazzard	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bassett	Ms Hodgkinson	Mrs Skinner
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Souris
Mr Brookes	Mr Humphries	Mr Speakman
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Issa	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Mr Kean	Mr Stoner
Mr Constance	Dr Lee	Mr Toole
Mr Coure	Mr Maguire	Ms Upton
Mr Dominello	Mr Marshall	Mr Ward
Mr Doyle	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Evans	Mr O'Dea	Mrs Williams
Mr Flowers	Mr Page	
Mr Fraser	Ms Parker	
Mr Gee	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Gibbons	Mr Piccoli	Mr Patterson
Ms Goward	Mr Piper	Mr J. D. Williams

**Noes, 20**

Mr Barr	Mr Hoenig	Mrs Perry
Ms Burney	Ms Hornery	Mr Robertson
Mr Collier	Mr Lynch	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Crakanthorp	Dr McDonald	Mr Zangari
Mr Daley	Ms Mihailuk	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Mr Park	Mr Amery
Ms Harrison	Mr Parker	Ms Hay

**Pairs**

Mr Baird	Ms Burton
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Lalich
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Rees
Mr Roberts	Ms Watson

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment negatived.**

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 53**

Mr Anderson	Ms Goward	Mr Piper
Mr Aplin	Mr Greenwich	Mr Provest
Mr Ayres	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Rohan
Mr Barilaro	Mr Hazzard	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bassett	Ms Hodgkinson	Mrs Skinner
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Smith
Mr Brookes	Mr Humphries	Mr Souris
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Issa	Mr Speakman
Mr Conolly	Mr Kean	Mr Stokes
Mr Constance	Dr Lee	Mr Stoner
Mr Coure	Mr Maguire	Mr Toole
Mr Dominello	Mr Marshall	Ms Upton
Mr Doyle	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Ward
Mr Evans	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Flowers	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
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Mr Furolo	Mr Park	Mr Amery
Ms Harrison	Mr Parker	Ms Hay

**Pairs**

Mr Baird	Ms Burton
Ms Berejikian	Mr Lalich
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Rees
Mr Roberts	Ms Watson

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL (NO 2) 2014**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Brad Hazzard, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No 2) 2014 continues the statute law revision program, which has been in place for the past 30 years. Bills of this kind are an effective method for making minor policy changes, repealing redundant legislation and maintaining the quality of the New South Wales statute book. Schedule 1 to the bill contains policy changes of a minor and non-controversial nature that are too

inconsequential to warrant the introduction of a separate amending bill. It contains amendments to 29 Acts and related amendments to five regulations. I will describe some of the amendments to give members an indication of the kinds included in this schedule.

Schedule 1 amends the Conveyancers Licensing Act 2003 to extend the class of persons who may carry out the compulsory auditing of licensees' records under the Act. In particular, the class of persons is extended to include audit companies registered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission [ASIC] under the Corporations Act 2001 of the Commonwealth and members of professional accounting bodies who hold a Public Practice Certificate. The amendments to the Parents and Citizens Associations Incorporation Act 1976 make it clear that a parents and citizens association of a school may vote in an election under the Act for the councillors and delegates of the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations only if the association is admitted as a member of the federation. The amendments also make it clear that a person is eligible to be elected as a councillor or delegate of the federation only if the person is a member of a parents and citizens association that is admitted as a member of the federation.

The final schedule 1 matter is an amendment to the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1971. The amendment enables the existing trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund who are appointed by the Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly to continue in office despite ceasing to be members because of the dissolution or expiry of the Legislative Assembly before a State general election, until the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council appoints a successor after the State general election. The Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal has, under section 4 of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1971, issued a certificate approving this amendment. Such a certificate is required before Parliament can deal with a bill that amends that Act. I table the certificate.

#### **Document tabled.**

Schedule 2 deals with matters of pure statute law revision consisting of minor technical changes to legislation that the Parliamentary Counsel considers are appropriate for inclusion in the bill. Examples of amendments in schedule 2 are corrections of cross-references, typographical errors and terminology, and amendments arising out of the enactment of other legislation. Schedule 3 repeals various redundant and superfluous Acts and provisions of Acts. These include the Pacific Power (Dissolution) Act 2003, which is made redundant by the amendments to the Energy Services Corporations Act 1995, as I mentioned earlier. Schedule 4 contains general savings, transitional and other provisions. These include provisions dealing with the effect of amendments on amending provisions, and savings clauses for the repealed Acts and provisions.

The various amendments are explained in detail in explanatory notes set out beneath the amendments to each Act and statutory instrument concerned or at the end of the schedule concerned. I am sure that members will appreciate the straightforward and non-controversial nature of the provisions contained in the bill. However, if any amendment causes concern or requires clarification, it should be brought to my attention. If necessary, I will arrange for government staff to provide additional information on the matters raised. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Clayton Barr and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business for Thursday 6 November 2014**

##### **Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the following routine of business on Thursday 6 November 2014 from 1.00 p.m. until the Speaker resumes the chair at 2.15 p.m.:

- (1) At 1.00 p.m. the Order of the Day (Petitions) discussion (and not at 4.30 p.m.).
- (2) Committee reports (take-note debate).
- (3) At 1.45 p.m. the Speaker shall leave the chair until 2.15 p.m.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Notices of Motions

#### Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit consideration at this sitting of the notice of motion given this day by the Parliamentary Secretary on the CommSec State of the States 2014 Report.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Private Members' Statements

#### Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the taking of private members' statements on Thursday 6 November 2014 beyond the prescribed 47 for this sitting week.

## GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [4.07 p.m.]: I move:

That the following address in acknowledgement of His Excellency's message be adopted by this House and presented to His Excellency:

To His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley, Companion of the Order of Australia, upon whom has been conferred the decoration of the Distinguished Service Cross and Governor of the State of New South Wales in the Commonwealth of Australia.

May it please Your Excellency—

We, the Members of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, desire to express our thanks for Your Excellency's Message informing us of your assumption of the administration of the Government of the State by virtue of a commission from Her Most Gracious Majesty appointing you Governor.

We offer Your Excellency our sincere congratulations on your appointment by Her Majesty, confident that your administration will reflect the distinction and devotion to duty already displayed in your services to the nation in other fields.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [4.07 p.m.]: I second the motion.

**Motion agreed to.**

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE SALE OF THE CURRAWONG PROPERTY AT PITTTWATER

### Report: Sale of the Currawong Property at Pittwater

**Debate resumed from 14 August 2014.**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [4.08 p.m.]: I speak on a very important motion about a travesty that confronted the people of New South Wales concerning extraordinary corruption by members of the union movement and the disgraceful behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition in the sale and offering of a bribe regarding a property known as Currawong in Pittwater, which necessitated this Legislative Council select committee inquiry.

**Mr Matt Kean:** And cover it up.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Indeed, as the member for Hornsby said, a cover-up ensued. This man now seeks to be the alternative Premier of New South Wales. Someone needs to ask questions, as this committee has done, whether such behaviour— [*Quorum called for.*]

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.*]

**Mr GARETH WARD:** What an example of the protection racket that Labor is running in New South Wales. A quorum was called by the member for Cessnock because he knows about the issues relating to this matter and he knows that his party is wracked to the soul with corruption. In fact, his party has no soul.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Government members will show more respect in this debate. The member for Kiama does not need any assistance. He will be heard in silence.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Labor is running a protection racket, which is why a quorum was called. Its members do not want the truth to be known about the inherent corruption that exists in its party. Labor is the party of Eddie Obeid, Joe Tripodi, Ian Macdonald and every other wrongdoer who is spending time at the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Opposition members have talked about magnitude. Of course we know it extends to the Federal Parliament. We know about tap-and-go Craig Thomson. These people have perpetrated fraud after fraud on this State, yet they have the temerity and audacity to call a quorum to silence the debate because they do not want the truth to be heard.

The member for Cessnock has tried to cover it up. He and other members in the Hunter can run, but they cannot hide. This Government will have candidates coming after each of those members and it will ensure that their economic corruption is exposed. During its disreputable 16 years in office Labor destroyed this State and the soul of Government. Leader of the Opposition John Robertson wants to lead this State. He was at the centre of this corruption inquiry and was found to have acted inappropriately by a parliamentary committee. I will read the terms of reference of the committee:

1. That a select committee inquire into and report on matters surrounding the alleged offer of a bribe in relation to a sale of the property Currawong, Pittwater by Unions NSW including but not limited to the circumstances surrounding:
  - (a) the purchase by the Land and Property Management Authority of the property Currawong from Eco Villages Australia Pty Ltd,
  - (b) the ministerial propriety of the actions and statements of Mr John Robertson MP arising from the selling of the property Currawong, owned by Unions NSW, including but not limited to:
    - (i) any answers to questions whilst a Minister and member of the Legislative Council,
    - (ii) his obligations, whilst a Minister of the Crown in the Legislative Council, to report offences, or possible offences,
    - (iii) whether at any times he breached the Code of Ministerial responsibility in failing to advise Cabinet of matters associated with the sale of Currawong,
    - (iv) whether at any times he breached the Code of Ministerial responsibility in failing to advise Cabinet of matters associated with any offer of a bribe by Mr Michael McGurk,
    - (v) any conflicts of interests that Mr Robertson may have had,
  - (c) the ministerial propriety of the actions and statements of Ministers and Members of the Parliament of New South Wales and the Commonwealth Parliament relating to the sale of the property Currawong, owned by Unions NSW, and
  - (d) any other related matter.

The committee reported back on 28 June 2014. These terms of reference were referred to by the Legislative Council select committee and I note that the report has brought down a number of findings, which I will now read:

**Finding 1**

Mr Robertson displayed an error of judgement in failing to report to Unions NSW and the NSW Police that Mr McGurk had made an inappropriate offer to him in relation to the sale of Currawong. However there is no evidence to suggest that Mr Robertson received any financial gain or reward in relation to the offer.

He did not need to. The fact is that an offer was made. What did he do?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** He said no.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** He said nothing. The member for Cessnock said, "He said no". I did not know that the member for Cessnock was in the room. I am pleased to hear that because the evidence is opaque. The

member for Cessnock called a quorum to cover for his corrupt colleagues. I wonder whether voters in the Hunter would be pleased to know that the member for Cessnock is again covering up for corruption. The report continues:

**Finding 2**

The committee finds that it was inappropriate that Mr Robertson met with Mr McGurk on his own in March 2006.

Leader of the Opposition John Robertson said it was inappropriate to meet with him. Does the member for Cessnock deny that?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Yes.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I am glad *Hansard* can confirm that when the member for Cessnock was asked whether he denies it he said, "Yes." Further, the report found:

**Finding 3**

The committee concludes that Mr Robertson did not disclose the conversation with Mr McGurk to the Premier and his Cabinet colleagues.

That is extraordinary.

**Mr Matt Kean:** I reckon he ignored it like he did Eddie Obeid.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I say to the member for Hornsby, that if they were to produce their diaries we would know that there was a trodden path from the Leader of the Opposition's office to Eddie Obeid's office. The man who wants to be Premier of this State spent more time in Eddie's office on level 11 than he did in any other part of this State. The report also found:

**Finding 4**

Mr Robertson did not contravene either the Code of Conduct for Ministers, the Code of Conduct for Members or standing order 113(2) when, in relation to the passage of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and Ombudsman Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, he did not advise the Premier or the Parliament that Mr McGurk had made an inappropriate offer to him in 2006. Nevertheless, with the benefit of hindsight and in light of the high standards of integrity required by the preamble to the Code of Conduct for Ministers, it would have been both reasonable and prudent for Mr Robertson to have disclosed the offer to the Premier and the Parliament.

There it is, "it would have been both reasonable and prudent". Do we want a Premier of this State who is not reasonable and prudent, which is what this report says? The report went on to recommend:

**Recommendation 1**

That the respective Privileges Committee of each House inquire into and report on the merits of an amendment to the conflict of interest provision in the *Code of Conduct for Members* to include matters pertaining to current or previous financial or business dealings or arrangements, which have the potential to unduly influence a member's actions.

And that is fair enough. In March 2006 the now deceased property developer Michael McGurk made an inappropriate offer to the former Secretary of Unions NSW, John Robertson, in relation to the sale of Currawong, a union-owned property located in Pittwater on Sydney's northern beaches. Seven years later in October 2013 Mr Robertson, now a member of Parliament and Leader of the Opposition, revealed the alleged offer to a journalist, whose report of the conversation between Mr McGurk and Mr Robertson generated intense media interest.

Mr Robertson was criticised for not immediately reporting the alleged offer to police or to Unions NSW. Why would one not report such an offer during a procurement process? The member for Cessnock sits opposite and cackles about it, but that is the sort of leadership we can expect from those opposite. Questions were also raised as to whether Mr Robertson, who became a member of Parliament in 2008 and a Minister in 2009, breached his obligations as a member and a Minister by not advising the Parliament or the Premier of the offer. This inquiry has provided an important opportunity for a cross-party committee to conduct a fair but thorough investigation into the nature of the inappropriate offer made by Mr McGurk and the reasons for the delay in making the offer known to Mr Robertson's parliamentary colleagues and the authorities.

In his foreword the chair said that while Mr Robertson displayed an error of judgement by failing to immediately report the inappropriate offer to police and unions, the committee did not receive any evidence to suggest that Mr Robertson received any financial gain or reward in relation to the offer. I want to be fair to Mr Robertson. Those were the words of the committee chair and, to be clear, there is no suggestion that Mr Robertson received any financial gain. Whilst the committee has not determined that Mr Robertson contravened the Code of Conduct for Members or the Code of Ministerial Conduct, it did conclude that it would have been prudent for Mr Robertson to advise the Premier of the offer, especially at a time when Cabinet would have been considering the legislation, to allow the Independent Commission Against Corruption to use the McGurk tapes.

All local government councillors in this State have a Code of Conduct under which they are required to disclose matters of pecuniary interest. I am sure that councillors around this State, on whom the former Labor Government imposed this Code of Conduct, wish that the Leader of the Opposition also had to abide by the same standards this Parliament set for them. Indeed, I have no doubt that the Department of Local Government would have sacked him if he had done so. But Mr Robertson is not a councillor; he is a member of Parliament and different standards apply—the comparison is interesting. With this in mind, the committee has recommended that the privileges committee of each House inquire into and report on the merits of broadening the conflicts of interest provisions in the Code of Conduct for Members.

The Currawong site is located at the northern end of Pittwater on Sydney's northern beaches. The property was originally purchased in 1949 by the predecessor to Unions NSW: the Labor Council of New South Wales, with a view to providing affordable beachside holiday accommodation to its members—nice if you are a member of a union. This site occupies approximately 20 hectares of waterfront land. In evidence to the committee, Mr Mark Lennon, current Secretary of Unions NSW, explained that the Labor Council had intended that Currawong function as a holiday camp along the lines of the Butlin's holiday camps, which were popular in the United Kingdom in the 1940s. The motivation was that in the late 1940s the unions achieved the 40-hour week and two weeks annual leave for workers. Jim Kenny, the Assistant Secretary of the Labour Council of New South Wales at the time, was looking for opportunities for workers to utilise that time for a decent holiday.

For a range of reasons that I will not go into now, his vision never quite manifested itself in the 1950s. Members went to Trades Hall to see some of the plans on display at that time. It was intended to have recreation halls, ovals and so on. But like all plans that Labor comes up with they never came to fruition, even on union property. Thank goodness there was no plan for a metro project at the site because it never would have got off the ground. It never eventuated and we ended up with nine cabins, a house and a few other things on the site. Mr Lennon informed the committee that in the years since the purchase "the original reasons for purchasing the property had long since gone, the site was costing Unions NSW money every year and resources could be better utilised elsewhere on behalf of the union's members".

I turn now to the key individuals involved in the sale in order to better understand this issue. As I said earlier, during the period of the tender for the sale of the Currawong property Mr Robertson was the Secretary of Unions NSW. On his appointment to the Legislative Council in October 2008 Mr Robertson was succeeded by Mr Mark Lennon and to date Mr Lennon remains the secretary. Mr Lennon was Mr Robertson's deputy at the time of the sale to Eco Villages. The sale of Currawong to Eco Villages was brokered by Mr David Tanevski of KWC Capital Partners. The Independent Commission Against Corruption investigation was known as Operation Napier. In June 2011 the Independent Commission Against Corruption commenced a public inquiry into the actions of former Minister for Planning Tony Kelly and senior departmental officer Warwick Watkins over their roles in the purchase by the Land and Property Management Authority of Currawong in the months prior to the March 2011 election.

Members will recall the actions of Mr Watkins in backdating a letter in order to allow this process to go through. Nothing was off limits to the former Government. No rule was not worth breaking, no turn was not worth taking, no twist was not worth embracing in the former Government's thirst for money and power; this was yet another shocking and terrible example. In the course of that inquiry the Independent Commission Against Corruption reviewed certain aspects of the original sale of the property by Unions NSW to Eco Villages, the probity of which was referred to in the subsequent report on the investigation published in December 2011.

The report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption is referred to throughout the committee's report, but I will not go into that in great detail. The meetings between Mr Robertson and

Mr McGurk were fascinating. The committee uncovered much of this evidence during its discussions. Mr Robertson and Mr McGurk met on two occasions in the course of negotiations over the sale of Currawong. The first meeting occurred soon after September 2005, following the conclusion of the expression of interest process. In evidence to the committee, Mr Lennon explained that Unions NSW held meetings such as this with prospective bidders in order to discuss their applications—fair enough. Five or six tenderers were asked to come into what was known in the circles as a beauty parade, so on a particular day they were all asked to come and present. It was like show and tell: "Bring your tender in and we will go through it."

Those present at the first meeting, in addition to Mr Robertson and Mr McGurk, were solicitors from the firms TressCox and Maddocks and the financial controller of Unions NSW, Mr Jeff Priestly. The second meeting took place in or around March 2006 and involved only Mr McGurk and Mr Robertson. Mr Deputy-Speaker, if you were the head of an organisation involved in a procurement process, would you just have a fireside chat with someone without anyone else present? Would you discuss a multimillion property on your own when you are representing the interests of thousands of members? I find that to be extraordinarily lacking in judgement.

According to Mr Robertson it was at this meeting that Mr McGurk made an "inappropriate offer" regarding the sale of Currawong. Mr Robertson informed the committee that he had also met with other bidders but could not recollect whether or not he had met with the other bidders unaccompanied. He remembered this one, but could not remember the other ones—a bit of patterning is developing here. This inconsistent evidence does not hold the Leader of the Opposition in good stead. Mr Robertson also acknowledged that he had received a call from Mr Moses Obeid in relation to Mr McGurk's bid, to which he had replied by advising that Mr Obeid should tell Mr McGurk to go through the formal process—very reasonable, tick. It remains unclear what Moses Obeid's interest was in the transaction.

It is noted that the committee extended an invitation to Mr Obeid to make a submission to the inquiry; however, that invitation was declined. What a shock. He was obviously too busy at the Independent Commission Against Corruption or the City of Sydney council or Circular Quay. The Obeid's were like the *Master of the House* from *Les Miserables*: "Master of the House isn't worth me spit ..." I invite members to join me if they know the lines—on reflection, I am not Greg Smith so I will not try that on. I turn now to the conversation between Mr Robertson and Mr McGurk at the second meeting. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I seek an extension of time.

**Question—That the member's speaking time be extended—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 50**

Mr Anderson	Ms Gibbons	Mr Piper
Mr Aplin	Ms Goward	Mr Provest
Mr Ayres	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Roberts
Mr Barilaro	Mr Hazzard	Mr Rohan
Mr Bassett	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Sidoti
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mrs Skinner
Mr Bromhead	Mr Issa	Mr Smith
Mr Brookes	Mr Kean	Mr Souris
Mr Casuscelli	Dr Lee	Mr Speakman
Mr Conolly	Mr Maguire	Mr Stokes
Mr Constance	Mr Marshall	Mr Stoner
Mr Coure	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Ward
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Evans	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Flowers	Mr Parker	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Fraser	Ms Parker	Mr Patterson
Mr Gee	Mr Perrottet	Mr J. D. Williams

**Noes, 18**

Mr Barr	Mr Hoenig	Ms Tebbutt
Ms Burney	Ms Hornery	Mr Zangari
Mr Collier	Mr Lynch	
Mr Crakanthorp	Dr McDonald	
Mr Daley	Ms Mihailuk	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Mr Park	Mr Amery
Ms Harrison	Mr Robertson	Ms Hay

**Pairs**

Mr Baird	Ms Burton
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Lalich
Mr Piccoli	Mrs Perry
Mr Rowell	Mr Rees
Mr Toole	Ms Watson

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Extension of time agreed to.**

[*Business interrupted.*]

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Speaking Time**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [4.35 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the member for Kiama having a further extension of 30 minutes speaking time.

I should make it clear to those on this side of the House that this is not a conscience vote.

**Mr John Robertson:** The Government is wasting time.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I think that could be said about members on both sides of the House this afternoon.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [4.37 p.m.]: Earlier today a number of people from this place walked down to the Sydney Town Hall to attend a memorial service for one of the greatest men of Australian politics.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Members will come to order.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** The Premier was there, as was the Prime Minister. It was attended by luminaries, and current and former parliamentary colleagues from both sides of the House, from both State and Federal Parliament. This morning we heard lofty speeches about the ideals that make Australia a better place. Those opposite may mock, but no-one from that side of the House can match Gough Whitlam. We on this side are proud of that, and always will be.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Members will come to order.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** This morning Noel Pearson and other speakers enumerated a great list of achievements that Gough Whitlam achieved in three years. At the heart of his achievements was that he took seriously the Parliament of the nation of Australia. What we see here this afternoon is a disgraceful mockery of this place, with all of its rich history and tradition, with outstanding items of business on the *Business Paper* that the Government has yet to transact. There are eight sitting days left and all these important bills and important private members' bills remain on the *Business Paper* ready to be debated—this is the business that the members

who take the business of being a parliamentarian seriously, on behalf of the people who they represent, want to debate and want to bring into this place. And what do we have here? We have another weak personal attack on the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition does not need any help from me because he hit the Government's questions out of the ballpark during the upper House inquiry. He has done that on about five occasions now.

The Currawong inquiry has been discussed up hill and down dale three times in this place and in the other place. There have been more inquiries into this than into the death of Phar Lap. Nothing has come of it and nothing will come of it this afternoon. With all of the important business to transact the Leader of the House has made a mockery of himself and this place by extending for 30 minutes the piffling contribution from the member for Kiama. There is important business before this House to discuss. I cannot wait for the self-serving motion about the CommSec "State of the States" report to be discussed, but Government members want to delay that debate by 30 minutes to listen to the member drivel on again about the Leader of the Opposition with no effect other than to demean this place. If that is what Government members want to do they can but we will have none of it.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The comments by the member for Maroubra may have had some merit if this House had not already lost time this afternoon with the quorum and two divisions that were called by the Opposition.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: I did not know that the Deputy-Speaker was allowed to descend into debate in respect of these matters. We are allowed to call for divisions and quorums under the standing orders.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member will resume his seat. I made the comment that the member would be taken more seriously if the Opposition had been more responsible in other areas this afternoon.

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 53**

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

**Noes, 20**

Mr Barr	Mr Hoenig	Mr Piper
Ms Burney	Ms Hornery	Mr Robertson
Mr Collier	Mr Lynch	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Crakanthorp	Dr McDonald	Mr Zangari
Mr Daley	Ms Mihailuk	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Mr Park	Mr Amery
Ms Harrison	Mr Parker	Ms Hay

**Pairs**

Mr Baird	Ms Burton
Mr Grant	Mr Lalich
Ms Hodgkinson	Mrs Perry
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Rees
Mr Rowell	Ms Watson

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE SALE OF THE CURRAWONG  
PROPERTY AT PITTTWATER**

**Report: Sale of the Currawong Property at Pittwater**

*[Business resumed.]*

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [4.49 p.m.]: The member for Maroubra referred to Gough Whitlam in his speech. How disgusting was it of left-wing supporters to boo former Prime Minister John Howard as he attended today's memorial service? If members want an example of the type of behaviour from the Left to which I refer, they need only refer to what we have just seen—their attempts to shut down debate, free speech and criticism of a member of this place in relation to his actions. We saw not only a call for a quorum by the member for Cessnock but also a call for a division on an extension of time. That was followed by an attempt to deny me the right to speak.

What made matters worse is that The Greens member in this House chose to vote against free speech. The record will show that the member for Balmain, Jamie Parker, voted against transparency and accountability. I have often said that The Greens are like watermelons—green on the outside and pink on the inside—but what they proved today is that they are like avocados—green on the outside and nuts on the inside. What the member for Balmain did was a very silly thing, especially as he represents an electorate that I would have thought wanted transparency and accountability in relation to all matters. We know that there are leadership tensions in the Opposition. I would like my friend the member for Keira to be the Leader of the Opposition. I know that members of the shadow Cabinet are disappointed with the performance of the current Leader of the Opposition, not just in general but also in relation to this matter.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 76. The debate is about Currawong and the committee's report.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** No, the debate is about leadership, which he showed none of.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Mr Deputy-Speaker, I beg to differ. The debate is in fact about the sale of Currawong and the report of the committee.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I am talking about leadership, Mr Deputy-Speaker. I think it is entirely proper, when we are talking about the Leader of the Opposition, to discuss leadership.

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** No, it is not. It is irrelevant.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Because he has no leadership; that is why.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Gareth, I think you are meant to be seated while the point of order is considered.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I am the Whip. I can walk around.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I ask the member for Kiama to continue with his speech while I deliberate.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** No. I am happy to wait while you make your judgement, Mr Deputy-Speaker.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I think he just did. Resume your seat.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** No.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! This is a take-note debate on the sale of the Currawong property at Pittwater. The debate is wideranging.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Yes, but it has nothing to do with the current issue, which is about the sale of Currawong.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Once again, this is an attempt to curtail free speech. They are cutting off free speech.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The debate relates to the sale of Currawong, which includes the Hon. John Robertson, and the member for Kiama is commenting on the Hon. John Robertson.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** No, he is not. He is talking about The Greens.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! That is when the point of order should have been taken. The comment made by the member for Kiama when the point of order was taken did not relate to The Greens.

**Mr Michael Daley:** He took a point of order.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The point of order related to leadership.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** No. The point of order was taken under Standing Order 76, which is about relevance of comments to the debate.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. I will not tolerate the member for Maroubra standing outside the House. He should either come into the House and take a point of order properly, otherwise he should refrain from standing in the Chamber to argue. The member for Kiama will continue his speech.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** During this debate we have seen a quorum called and a call for two divisions. If you have done nothing wrong, what have you got to hide?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** I have not done anything.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** You called for the division.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Yes.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Why is your party so intent on shutting down debate on this particular topic?

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Kiama will direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I apologise, Mr Deputy-Speaker. You are absolutely right, and I will do so. Why would members opposite shut down so many opportunities for someone to speak on this matter? If you have done nothing wrong, what have you got to hide? Stop doing it.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** The Leader of the Opposition refused a bribe, and you are upset about that!

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Stop doing it. I will move on and discuss the conversations between Mr Robertson and Mr McGurk at the second meeting. Mr Robertson informed the committee that at the end of the second meeting between himself and Mr McGurk, Mr McGurk made what was considered to be "an inappropriate offer". Mr Robertson characterised the conversation as follows:

At the conclusion of the meeting [Mr McGurk] said that a percentage of the sale price could be put into a bank account of my choosing... At that point I made it clear that anything that was going to be offered for the purchase of Currawong had to go through the formal tender process. I concluded the meeting at that point. There was no further discussion with Mr McGurk. The reason I concluded the meeting was that I was not going to entertain it. I do not know how serious he was about it... What I know is that it was an inappropriate conversation which I terminated.

I acknowledge that. Mr Robertson's description of the conversation correlates with Mr Lennon's recollection of the terms in which the conversation was relayed to him by Mr Robertson in 2007:

John and I were in his office discussing Mr McGurk's response [to the reported sale of Currawong to Eco-Villages]. He related a story to me about the meeting he had with Mr McGurk where they were discussing the McGurk proposal. Mr McGurk said to Mr Robertson words to the effect of 'There is plenty of money for this deal. There is even some in it for you.' John said that he replied, 'Forget that, mate. If you have any extra money put in the bid.' That was the extent of the conversation and that is my recollection of it. I cannot say that they were the exact words used between the two individuals, but that is my recollection to the best of my knowledge about what Mr Robertson related to me.

Mr Robertson stated that, contrary to media reports, a precise monetary figure had never featured in the conversation and that the figure alluded to was expressed in the form of a percentage. Mr Lennon does not recall Mr Robertson making any mention of a figure in his representation of the conversation with Mr McGurk. In response to questions, Mr Robertson advised the committee that he had not taken any note or minute of the meeting between himself and Mr McGurk—so they were in the middle of a procurement process and there was no-one else in the room and the subject of the discussion was property worth millions of dollars; yet no notes are taken—nor did he make a diary entry or seek any advice on the matter. When asked why, Mr Robertson explained that "as far as I was concerned the way I had dealt with it was the end of the matter... It was never the subject of any further interactions with that consortium and I never gave it much thought after that point". Mr Robertson rejected suggestions that Mr McGurk had offered him a bribe, preferring to use the term "inappropriate offer" to describe Mr McGurk's actions at that meeting. Mr Robertson stated:

No, I have told you my description of it—that it was what I considered to be an inappropriate conversation and I terminated it. As far as I was concerned, that was the end of the matter. I do not know how serious he was. I do not know what you would describe it as. I am not going to get into a debate about what others will describe it as.

Mr Robertson went on to state:

... I did not know where it was going and, frankly, it was a conversation that I did not want to be having and that is why I terminated the conversation. I just think I should make clear that I have never found myself in a situation like that before or since. The way I dealt with it at the time was in a manner that I thought was appropriate. That was that I ended the conversation, I thought nothing more of it, it never came up again.

In evidence to the committee, Mr Robertson stressed that he at no stage received any payment or other gift from Mr McGurk. He also stated that throughout the process of the negotiations over the sale, he was conscious of making sure that the process was "squeaky clean in regard to how it was dealt with and progressed". The committee commented, in relation to this evidence:

While the terms of reference for the committee's inquiry refer to an 'alleged offer of a bribe', the committee is of the view that it is more likely than not that Mr McGurk did make an inappropriate offer to Mr Robertson in relation to the sale of Currawong, whether or not that offer constituted a bribe.

There is some opaque evidence here: Was it a bribe? Was it not? What was it? The reality is that it was not disclosed. No notes were taken and no people were there who could assist. The report goes on to state:

Therefore for the remainder of the report the committee does not use the term 'alleged' in relation to the inappropriate offer.

Only two people know precisely what transpired at the meeting between Mr Robertson and Mr McGurk in March 2006, one of whom is now deceased. Therefore the committee must rely on the evidence of Mr Robertson, and Mr Lennon's recollection of a conversation with Mr Robertson, to piece together the relevant facts.

The committee accepts that in March 2006, during the second of two meetings held between Mr Robertson and Mr McGurk in the course of negotiations over the sale of Currawong, Mr McGurk made what Mr Robertson considered to be 'an inappropriate offer' in relation to the sale of the property to his consortium.

That is not the Liberal Party saying that; that is an independent committee, comprising all parties, chaired by a crossbencher.

The committee accepts Mr Robertson's evidence that he: terminated the meeting with Mr McGurk in response to the inappropriate offer made, and informed Mr McGurk that any offer related to the purchase of Currawong must go through the formal tender process.

The committee also acknowledges that Mr McGurk's consortium was unsuccessful in its bid to purchase Currawong.

The House does not necessarily need to listen to my commentary on this process. Listen to what independent commentators had to say. Andrew Clennell said:

Consider Robbo's issues as leader: he was head of Unions NSW at a time when we've heard all sorts—

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 76. The subject of the debate is the sale of Currawong and the report. The member has now moved off the subject and onto media reports about the issue.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** To the point of order: I am reciting what has been published in the press about this matter. Surely that is relevant to this debate.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Further to the point of order: The debate is about the report, not about the matter, and the member has moved away from debating the report.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The report is about the sale of the Currawong property.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** The comments that the member is quoting are in relation to the sale of the Currawong property, are they not?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I will not rule those comments out of order.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I start again the quote of Andrew Clennell:

Consider Robbo's issues as leader: He was head of Unions NSW at a time when we've heard all sorts of accusations of skulduggery around union behaviour involving the Health Services Union.

He was in partnership with hated figures Eddie Obeid and Joe Tripodi; that's one of the reasons he ended up in parliament.

He admitted to receiving a \$3 million bribe offer from murdered standover man Michael McGurk and not reporting it to police or anyone for that matter.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is some confusion about the time allowed for the member's speech. Originally, he was allowed 10 minutes; then Minister Roberts successfully moved that the member be allowed a further 30 minutes. The member may proceed.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I continue:

He represents old Labor when new Labor is very much needed.

That was a quote from the *Daily Telegraph* of 3 June 2014. The *Sydney Morning Herald* sums up what it thought of John Robertson when the bribe emerged after six years. I quote:

The impact of all of this is that the credibility of the Opposition Leader is terminally degraded on matters of transparency and accountability. His judgment has been lamentable. His silence has been revealing. His rationalisations are implausible. His failure even to acknowledge the shortcomings of his actions, let alone express regret for them, leaves him as a toothless inquisitor in Parliament on matters of probity, leading a depleted opposition.

There you have it: a toothless tiger who has not even shown remorse for his actions in relation to this matter. I respect the fact that there were findings that were adverse, and I respect the fact that the Leader of the Opposition fronted to give evidence. I must commend him for that. But I say there are still questions to be answered in relation to this matter—as there is the need for broader debates about corruption matters. I strongly believe that this Parliament is the right place to do that. Of course, I recently made a private member's statement on the need for corruption reform, particularly the need for a statutory offence with respect to misuse of public office, with respect to bribery, and with respect to pecuniary interest concerns. All of these were outlined by Megan Latham in her submission to the Independent Commission Against Corruption oversight committee. Statutory law, in my view, needs to move from the common law to the statute books. I also find it extraordinary, as I have said previously, that individuals found to have been corrupt still manage to hold honours, such as a Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM].

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** They're all on your side.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I do not care which side of the House they are from: I still find it extraordinary that members who left this place some time ago still hold a title or honorific in spite of corruption findings. Again I say, I do not care what side of the House they are from. How can people be considered honourable, how can people be considered worthy of an OAM if they have been found to be corrupt and have acted corruptly? My question applies to any other honour, be it on Rolf Harris or any person found to have acted inappropriately. There are rules around this, and I have written to the Governor-General about Mr Obeid in particular: seven corruption findings, and he is still a member of an order that should represent our best. Eddie Obeid is still titled "The Honourable Eddie Obeid, OAM".

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: My point is taken under Standing Order 76. The member has moved off the subject of the debate, which is the sale of the Currawong property.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** To the point of order: The debate is about corruption.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The debate is wide-ranging; its tenure is corrupt activities or alleged corrupt activities. Though I ask the member for Kiama to constrain his comments to the leave of the debate, I note that the more interjections there are from the other side the more opportunity there will be for the member to stray from the context of the motion.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I make the point because I came to this place to help clean up politics. I know there are people on both sides of the House who want that done. I absolutely appreciate that. Ironically, the member for Macquarie Fields, who took the point of order, is a member for whom I have a deep and abiding level of respect.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** You just don't want to have a debate.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I have no respect for you, not after your appalling behaviour today. I did have regard for you, but you have just proven yourself to be a low-altitude flier. I hope that both sides of this House will come together and agree to have strong corruption law reform in this State—reform in which I passionately believe. I call on all members on both sides of the House to work together to ensure that the things I have outlined today are brought to bear. But we will not have that support from somebody who was at the centre of severe and serious allegations, and we will not have it from people who brought this State undone because of their appalling and outrageous behaviour.

This State needs corruption law reform. I have outlined that before, and I will continue to do so. I will continue to work with whomever in this place believes in it, because the public demands it. I hope that the public will see through an alternative Premier of this State who has acted inappropriately, has shown poor judgement and, in the words of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, whose action shortcomings, let alone an expression of regret for them, leave him a toothless inquisitor in this Parliament. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [5.06 p.m.]:** Having listened to the contribution of the member for Kiama, one would not know that this is a take-note debate about the select committee report on the Currawong property at Pittwater. I want to summarise what I think I heard the member for Kiama saying. I think he is most upset and aggrieved at the idea that a bribe, a legitimate bribe was refused.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: The member for Cessnock spoke about a legitimate bribe. Can the member explain to the House what a legitimate bribe is? What is a legitimate bribe?

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Cessnock has the call.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I will repeat what I said for the sake of the member for Kiama. I said I will try to summarise the contribution made by the member for Kiama, who seems to be a little bit concerned about the offer of a legitimate bribe. A legitimate bribe in Liberal States would be one that is accepted and taken. A legitimate bribe might come in the form of a brown paper bag handed over in the front of a car.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point is taken under Standing Order 76. The member took numerous points of order in relation to these matters during my contribution to the debate.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I took none.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** He is now straying from the substance of the report in relation to this matter. He is talking about things still before the Independent Commission Against Corruption, matters that have not been resolved, as opposed to the matter the subject of the report which was the subject of a parliamentary inquiry and has been resolved.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** To the point of order: I want to clarify that I did not take a single point of order against the member for Kiama. I remind you, Mr Assistant-Speaker, that in your rulings and the rulings of the Deputy-Speaker this debate was described as sufficiently broad-ranging to allow the member for Kiama to talk about members who are deemed "Honourable", have been through an Independent Commission Against Corruption process but are no longer in this place. Comments in this debate that referred to those members were allowed, and in that regard I am not outside the rulings of the Chair.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The member for Cessnock is coming close to canvassing rulings of the Chair. I ask all members to permit other members to have their say. The member for Kiama was upset by the number of points of order taken against him. I suggest this debate will be concluded earlier and with less angst if members are permitted to make their comments without being distracted by continual points of order.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** Returning to my summary of what I think the member for Kiama said, in essence he seemed somewhat uneasy that the member for Blacktown, and Leader of the Opposition refused the bribe outright. Strangely, the proposed bribe was brought to the attention of the media by the member for Blacktown because he knew he had nothing to hide. It was then debated in this place in various forms and became the subject of an upper House select committee inquiry, the findings of which—to use the expression of the member for Kiama—were "opaque". Quite simply, the committee found that there had been an error of judgement in failing to report. If we are to debate the error of judgement and Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] issues, then let us do so in all their glory—or should I say ingloriousness. The reality is that those opposite certainly cannot claim to have clean hands when it comes to bribery offers and/or accepting inappropriate pecuniary contributions.

The member for Kiama when taking a point of order during my contribution said that those matters are still before ICAC and that a finding has not been made. My comments were specifically about matters that have been acknowledged and admitted before ICAC. My specific reference to the exchange of a brown paper bag in the front seat of a car relates to a former member of Parliament who absolutely accepted and admitted that it happened. Earlier the shadow Leader of the House emphasised the serious misuse of this Chamber's responsibility in passing the frivolous motion to extend the speaking time of the member for Kiama on this matter. This House has a large number of bills awaiting debate—and, ideally, resolution—before this Fifty-fifth Parliament concludes in coming weeks. Yet we are debating a matter that is largely opaque: the Leader of the Opposition's refusal to accept a bribe. The member for Kiama made no mention of the fact that Barry O'Farrell is no longer the Premier as a result of ICAC investigations or that Nick Greiner was no longer Premier due to a finding by ICAC. Not a word was said about that.

Yet Government members want to waste the time of this Chamber talking about the refusal of a bribe. I draw the attention of the House—and particularly that of the member for Kiama—to a couple of matters in the select committee's report. At the time of the Currawong sale newspaper reports, and indeed a private member's statement in Federal Parliament, appeared to seek reconsideration of Mr McGurk's bid offer. Those newspaper articles and the private member's statement were by Mr Tony Abbott. It appears that Mr Tony Abbott sought to defend Mr McGurk's bid. Clearly, Mr Abbott was uninformed or did not have knowledge of the proposed bribe. At the time Mr John Robertson simply said that the unconditional offer of \$15 million for Currawong had been accepted, but Mr McGurk's defender—the person who went to the aid of Mr McGurk; the person who spoke in Federal Parliament supporting Mr McGurk's bid—was Mr Tony Abbott.

I draw members' attention to some newspaper articles that outline the details exactly. One is by Mr Imre Salusinszky under the headline "Abbott cries foul in unions' asset sale", which was published in the *Australian* on 16 February 2007. Another article is by Catharine Munro under the headline "Land sale a union scam, says Abbott", which was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 16 February 2007. I advise members opposite, including the member for Kiama, perhaps to look more closely at some of the contributions to the select committee inquiry. Essentially, a bribe was refused by Mr Robertson yet someone linked to crime was supported by Mr Tony Abbott, who is now the Prime Minister of this country. The member for Kiama talked about leadership and whether people have the judgement capacity to be leaders of this State. The leader of this country did not have the judgement capacity to realise that Mr McGurk and his links to crime should be considered before going off half-cocked and making a private member's statement in Federal Parliament.

I recommend that the member for Kiama read the committee's report a little more closely rather than launching into an opaque—to use his word—diatribe, in an attempt simply to smear the Leader of the Opposition. The bribe has no substance; the select committee found it has no substance. No police investigations into the matter were undertaken and the Director of Public Prosecutions took no action. This motion is simply a ruse by the Liberal Party to try to smear the Leader of the Opposition perhaps because those opposite sense some fragility regarding some of their policies and their fortunes at the upcoming election. Mr Tony Abbott took steps to defend Mr McGurk and supported his behaviour. Mr Robertson, the Leader of the Opposition, refused the bribe proposed by Mr McGurk. That is the crux of the investigation—and, I guess, of the entire inquiry. Mr John Robertson showed excellent judgement in refusing the bribe. Fortunately, Coalition members who certainly cannot claim to have done that are no longer in this place.

Mr Robertson refused a bribe and this select committee inquiry was geared entirely towards investigating why. I would have thought that was pretty logical and obvious to most people in this place, but clearly not for some of those opposite. Mr Robertson is the leader on this side of politics and he refused the bribe. The Coalition Government wanted an investigation as to why the bribe was refused. That is quite striking. Mr Tony Abbott, our Prime Minister and Leader of the Federal Liberal Party in Canberra, defended Mr McGurk and his actions. We need to remember that when we take note of the report of the Select Committee on the Sale of the Currawong Property at Pittwater.

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [5.19 p.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on the report of the Legislative Council Select Committee on the Sale of the Currawong Property at Pittwater because I need to correct a few things that were said by the member for Cessnock. It is incorrect that the Prime Minister supposedly defended Mr McGurk. I am a local and I have the great privilege of representing the Pittwater constituency, so I know that the concerns related to the fact that when Unions NSW determined to sell the Currawong site it advocated that the process be run by a group called Kingsway Capital. David Tanevski was its director and Mr Allen Linz was a co-owner of Kingsway Capital, which was heavily associated with the Urban Taskforce and which made significant donations to the Labor Party.

The expression of interest [EOI] process led to a few offers being submitted, one of which was from Mr McGurk on behalf of Mr Medich. Another offer was submitted by a subsidiary of Macquarie Bank and an offer was submitted by a company in which Mr Linz had an interest. It is extraordinary that a person who was linked to a company that was running the EOI process also put in a submission. But I will leave that aside. It was also reported in the media at the time that the Department of Lands made a bid to purchase the site but the then Treasurer and former Secretary of Unions NSW, Mr Costa, instructed Mr Watkins, the former head of the Department of Lands, to withdraw his bid. Ironically, the Department of Lands finally purchased the site—which was the most sensible thing to have happened. The point that the Prime Minister was making at the time is that, despite this ostensibly arm's length EOI process, a bid for \$30 million was submitted by McGurk's company, a bid of \$25 million was submitted by the Macquarie Bank affiliate and a bid of \$15 million was submitted by Mr Linz's company.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the bid from Mr Linz was accepted on the basis that it was the only unconditional offer and the others were conditional upon development consent. He says that is why he accepted a bid that netted Unions NSW \$15 million less than the highest bid. That would seem to make sense except for the fact that it was clear the bid submitted by Eco Villages—Mr Linz's company—was not unconditional. Rather than settling for far less than \$15 million—which was the price that was accepted as part of the "unconditional" negotiations—it settled for closer to \$11 million, so the bid was clearly not unconditional. Conditions of the contract were not met and a series of put and call options continued to be renewed. Ultimately, the purchase price that was settled upon with Eco Villages was substantially less than the \$11 million, on which the put and call agreement was based.

Mr Robertson said that he accepted a bid millions of dollars less for the members of Unions NSW on the basis that it was unconditional. We now know that that bid was clearly conditional because, despite being a \$15 million deal, it was sold for millions of dollars less. The fundamental question that the Leader of the Opposition needs to answer for members of the House and the people of New South Wales is: What was the condition? It is a fair question and he should explain the nature of the condition of the bid, why he said it was unconditional and why Unions NSW accepted the bid on the basis that it was unconditional when it was not.

That is the key issue that Mr Abbott was raising, as he then was, in the Federal Parliament when he asked the fair question that the members of Unions NSW should have been asking. Many questions have been

raised about the subsequent sale of the Currawong property back to the New South Wales Government. We are aware that that sale was the subject of an inquiry by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. However, questions about the original transaction process in 2006 and 2007 might reveal where the skeletons are hidden. There are many unanswered questions about the EOI process, which was given a clean bill of health by Rory O'Connor, a probity auditor at the time whose reputation has also been questioned. I am sure at some time in the future the truth will be revealed.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Mark Speakman and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.**

### **MARINE ESTATE MANAGEMENT BILL 2014**

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

### **COMMSEC STATE OF THE STATES 2014 REPORT**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.39 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes the findings of the CommSec State of the States 2014 report.

Each quarter CommSec publishes a "State of the States" report. It evaluates the economic rankings of each State and Territory in Australia by analysing eight key indicators: economic growth, retail spending, equipment investment, unemployment, construction work done, population growth, housing finance and dwelling commencements. These reports began in 2009 and until recently New South Wales has never led the rankings. In 2010, before the Liberal-Nationals came to office, New South Wales was ranked dead last in Australia in the CommSec reports for January, April, July and October. The latest report shows that, for the first time, New South Wales is ranked number one overall. It has taken 3½ years of hard work and discipline, but the repair work done by the New South Wales Government over that time is paying dividends and confidence has returned. We told the electors of New South Wales at the last election that we would make New South Wales number one again, and we have delivered; New South Wales has its mojo back.

Who can forget the evening in 1993 as we waited for news of which country had won the bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games? Then came the opening of the envelope and Juan Antonio Samaranch saying, "It's Syd-ene; it's Syd-ene", and the excitement that followed when we knew we had won the Olympic bid led by then Premier Fahey and Olympics Minister Bruce Baird, father of the current Premier. That mojo led to what has been described as the best Olympics ever. This was a great opportunity for New South Wales to be the focus of the world's attention. What happened?

**Mr Barry Collier:** 9/11 happened.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** Rip van Winkle continues to interject, but the New South Wales Labor Government was asleep at the wheel and squandered that golden opportunity. Then Premier Bob Carr put up the sign, "Sydney is full; there are no vacancies in Sydney." Sydney was basically closed for business at a time when Queensland and Victoria were expanding. People like the member for Miranda were complicit in driving business interstate, to Queensland and Victoria, failing his constituents, failing working families in his electorate, driving up housing prices and driving jobs from his electorate to other States. We also had congestion in Sydney and high property costs. Why? It is because we had a government that for 16 years wanted to shut up shop in New South Wales. Those opposite squandered the golden opportunity presented by the Sydney Olympics that the Liberals and The Nationals had won for Sydney.

When we came to government New South Wales was dead last in the rankings. We were lagging in economic growth, housing and business confidence. We had the slowest growth of all States in the nation for a decade. Now we have the strongest growth of any State in through-the-year terms. Annual growth in New South Wales is now at 6.3 per cent, which is almost double the annual growth in Western Australia, at 3.3 per cent, and almost quadruple the annual growth in Victoria, at 1.7 per cent. What great economic growth under this Government. People across this State, including those who live in Miranda, suffered the slowest growth in jobs per capita of any State in the last decade under Labor.

**Mr Barry Collier:** You don't really believe that, do you?

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The member for Miranda will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate at the appropriate time. As this is the member's second stint in this place he should be aware of Standing Order 52, which states that a member is entitled to be heard in silence. The member for Cronulla has the call.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I am interested in the contribution of the member for Miranda. I want to know why he and his comrades were asleep at the wheel for 12 years—too busy eulogising Gough Whitlam. The member for Miranda was asleep at the wheel for 12 years while jobs went interstate, house prices skyrocketed and business confidence languished in New South Wales. What did the member do for 12 years on that front? He did absolutely nothing. But now, after a decade of the slowest jobs growth in Australia under Labor, 128,000 jobs have been created in New South Wales since we came to office. We now have the second lowest unemployment rate in Australia. That has not happened by magic or by chance. It has happened because the New South Wales Government has rebuilt business and consumer confidence, and it has increased jobs. New South Wales is number one again.

Initiatives such as the Jobs Action Plan, payroll tax incentives and businesses are creating new jobs. We inherited from those opposite a workers compensation system that was broken and basically insolvent, with a \$4 billion deficit and the prospect of premium rises of 28 per cent. An average reduction of 12.5 per cent in workers compensation premiums in 2013 and a further reduction averaging 5 per cent in June this year have seen almost \$450 million returned to the State's economy. This has made it easier and cheaper to employ people and create jobs. If this Government had not taken that action, according to modelling, we faced the prospect of losing 12,600 jobs. New South Wales has been brought into line with other States in work health and safety, abolishing the job-destroying laws that had been introduced.

This Government has brought the budget under control. Stability and confidence have been returned to the people of New South Wales. Jobs have also resulted from the record number of housing starts and our infrastructure projects. While other Labor States have had their credit ratings downgraded, New South Wales has kept the highest triple-A rating. We have been upgraded by Standard and Poor's to a "stable outlook". Business confidence, according to a NAB business survey, was the lowest of any mainland State for the five years to March 2011 under Labor. These are incredible figures. New South Wales was not just towards the pack of the pack; it was at the bottom of the heap on every major indicator—jobs growth, economic growth, housing starts and business confidence. Business confidence has now been positive for 14 consecutive months.

In retail trade we had the lowest average annual growth of any State under Labor; we are now the strongest of all States in through-the-year terms. Why? The turnaround in housing construction has played an important part. The CommSec report states, "the momentum that we identified in New South Wales has propelled it to the top of the economic performance rankings. And the simple reason for the lift in rankings is housing." New South Wales is playing catch-up after years of underbuilding. Demand for homes has exceeded supply, which has pushed the rental vacancy rate to record lows. We had years of underbuilding when those opposite were asleep at the wheel. Those opposite were not the friends of workers and not the friends of ordinary people such as police, nurses, firies or teachers trying to buy housing in Sydney. Those opposite basically let our housing industry slide into oblivion.

During the last five years of Labor we had the lowest number of new dwelling starts per capita of any Australian jurisdiction. The member for Miranda can sigh all he likes, but what did he do for 12 years to look after workers in Miranda who saw housing prices skyrocket and jobs going to Queensland and Victoria? He did absolutely nothing. In contrast with Labor's dismal housing record, dwelling completions are now at their highest rate since 2006. New South Wales is now ranked at the top in dwelling starts. According to the CommSec report, New South Wales is the strongest in the nation for new home construction, with housing starts more than 36 per cent above decade averages. The report noted that in the June quarter the number of homes started was 7.3 per cent higher than in the previous year. New South Wales has recorded the highest number of housing starts since 2002-03. Why is that?

This Government believes in giving all homebuyers a go. We have raised the threshold for the First Home Owners Grant by \$100,000 to \$750,000. Our incentives are much more generous than those provided by the previous Labor Government. Those incentives are not artificially creating demand and pushing up prices; they are targeting new home construction. Massive land releases have basically tripled those of the previous Government. The Housing Acceleration Fund is a half a billion dollar commitment to deliver housing, which was introduced in 2012. This year local government will receive \$60 million to deliver essential infrastructure to support new housing development. The decline I have described in housing starts and completions in New South

Wales was not replicated in other States. The severe decline we saw in 2004-05 was not reflected in Queensland or Victoria. Indeed, in that period the absolute level of private sector housing construction starts in both Queensland and Victoria—ignoring the different population bases—exceeded that of New South Wales.

New South Wales is now number one again. Our business confidence is back. We have the second lowest unemployment rate in Australia. We also have the fastest economic growth in Australia. That is all against the backdrop of a stable, competent, forward-looking New South Wales Government that is living within its means and has brought the State budget back under control. We have business confidence, in part, because the Government is in control of the budget, rather than the budget being in control of the Government. Alas, there is a risk to that: Those opposite may occupy the government benches after March 2015. Those opposite have opposed every savings and efficiency measure we have implemented. They have opposed savings measures worth \$23.6 billion by 2017-18. New South Wales is back at the top of the States because business, consumers and others have confidence in a government that has brought the State budget under control.

We are also pumping money into productive infrastructure. The highlights in the budget overview include a massive ramp up of State-funded infrastructure expenditure. Under those opposite State-funded infrastructure expenditure was an average of \$5.9 billion in 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11. We have increased it by 25 per cent to an average of \$7.4 billion in 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14, and it is projected to increase to an average of \$8.8 billion—in other words, 49 per cent more each year than those opposite—by 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18. New South Wales has its mojo back because we are getting on with the business of building productive infrastructure. The largest rail construction project in Australia, the North West Rail Link, is under construction. It has a delivery date of 2019.

**Mr Barry Collier:** Who did the Cronulla duplication? It was not your mob.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The member for Miranda will come to order. He knows the rules of this place. The member is being disorderly.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I will acknowledge the interjection by the member for Miranda. He mentioned the Cronulla rail duplication. It had an initial cost of around \$100 million, which blew out to \$340 million—and that is quite typical for those opposite. Business confidence was lost in New South Wales because of the way those opposite squandered money and wasted money on projects when in Government.

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

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** It is quite typical of how business and consumer confidence was undermined in New South Wales because of the gross incompetence of those opposite. They started a \$500 million Rozelle metro project and then abandoned it. They started a solar bonus scheme, which had a cost blowout of \$1.7 billion. Those opposite undertook the Cronulla rail duplication, which was a worthwhile project, but managed to spend \$344 million on it instead of \$100 million. It was another example of their gross incompetence. It is because we now have a competent, stable Government in New South Wales that we have retail growth that is topping the country and we have had positive business confidence for the past 14 months—unlike the record of those opposite when in Government.

We are building not only the North West Rail Link and WestConnex but also NorthConnex, which has a delivery date of 2019; the central business district and south-east light rail, which has a delivery date of 2019; the Western Sydney roads package to support the second airport, which has a delivery date of 2024; a Pacific Highway upgrade, which has a delivery date of 2020; and a plethora of other major infrastructure. Barangaroo will provide badly needed office space. The South West Rail Link has a delivery date of 2015. The next generation rail fleet has a delivery date of 2024. Darling Harbour Live has a delivery date of 2017. The northern beaches health service redevelopment, which I know will interest Minister Stokes, who is at the table, has a delivery date of 2018.

None of those projects would be possible if we relied upon those opposite to balance the books. They have opposed every efficiency and saving measure that we have undertaken, which will be worth a cumulative \$23.6 billion by 2017-18. It is no wonder that retail confidence and business confidence flagged when those opposite were in government. For 16 years they could not control their own budget. If they had met their budget targets for 16 years and done what their budgets said they were going to do, we would now have \$20 billion

more in the coffers than we do. What a contrast there is between those opposite, who could not control their budgets and had a \$20 billion blowout over 16 years, and those on this side, whose revenue and expenditure outcomes have been better than budgeted every year since we were elected to government.

Business confidence has been restored in New South Wales because the State now has a Government that is looking to the future. This Government has a plan to take to the next election on how to build much-needed infrastructure. This Government will recycle assets tied up in electricity networks. The featherbedding of the union mates of those opposite has resulted in higher network charges for retailers, businesses and consumers over the past 14 or 15 years. Network charges have fallen in Victoria and South Australia but risen in New South Wales and Queensland under public ownership and union featherbedding. It is no wonder that the Electrical Trades Union is running a scare campaign.

This Government is not selling off the family silver but rather renewing that family silver—it intends to invest the proceeds from a partial lease of the so-called poles and wires into productive infrastructure, including a rapid transit network to Bankstown and to the north-west, a new harbour crossing and extra central business district stations. This will stop the unproductive waste of people's time when they are stuck in traffic congestion. As I said, the largest road project in Australia is the WestConnex, with a possible spoke to Anzac Bridge from around Camperdown and a possible spoke from Tempe to Kogarah, possibly to the start of the F6—which the member for Miranda said would be built over his dead body; although he has done a bit of a backflip on that in the past six months. Now he does not know where he stands on the F6.

I will be interested to see where his successor candidate for Miranda, Mr Greg Holland, stands on the M6. In any event where would the money come from under those opposite? Who knows, when they have opposed every savings measure we have implemented? They have opposed \$23.6 billion of savings measures. That money has been put back into the budget for the benefit of the people of New South Wales and invested in productive infrastructure and front-line services—more nurses, more teachers and more police—rather than being squandered as occurred under those opposite. This CommSec report is worth noting. It really crystallises a stark contrast. The economic ineptitude of those opposite cost the people of New South Wales jobs, cost businesses in New South Wales and cost retailers in New South Wales—and ultimately it cost the average mums and dads in New South Wales.

They saw jobs driven out of this State and into Queensland and Victoria. They saw economic growth driven off to other States. There was a lack of housing supply and housing affordability for ordinary people in New South Wales. Those opposite are certainly no friends of the workers. This report crystallises all of that. After a hard slog where we have done the hard yards and produced competent, sound, reliable economic management, this Government is now bringing home the bacon, so to speak. We are now seeing in this State the second-lowest unemployment rate in Australia, the fastest economic growth, the fastest retail sales growth and a rebound in business confidence. It is a very interesting report with important findings, and I commend it to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [5.47 p.m.]: I am delighted to take part in this take-note debate as the shadow Treasurer on behalf of the Opposition. This take-note debate is a very curious juxtaposition with the business listed on the *Business Paper*. If one has regard to what has transpired in this Chamber this afternoon, I think one would wonder just what is going on with this Government. Today Gough Whitlam was remembered in a memorial service where not only the Prime Minister but also the Federal Leader of the Opposition, the Premier of this State, the Leader of the Opposition and many past and present Federal and State members of Parliament from both sides of the political divide came together. We were witnesses to the discussion of the best aspects of Australian parliamentary democracy.

What we have seen transpiring in this Chamber this afternoon is really an abomination of the processes of this House and a total and utter traducing of not only the best things that can come out of the Parliament of New South Wales but also the history and tradition of this place. I have been in this place for just over nine years and I do not recall anything as puerile as what we have seen here this afternoon. Since question time we have seen debate on a personal attack on the Leader of the Opposition for about two hours. When there is a great deal of important business before the House we must, without warning, discuss a CommSec "State of the States" report that is more than a week old.

**Mr Mark Coure:** You've only made one mention of the word "CommSec" so far.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I have been here for nine years and a minnow like you is not going to put me off my debate. Just sit there, work out whether you are old enough to shave and shut up.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I draw the member's attention to Standing Order 73 and remind him that he is not to start quarrels across the Chamber and make unparliamentary comments. What the member just said was unparliamentary. He is talking about the standards of this House at the moment. I suggest the member listens to what he is saying.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** Thank you, Mr Assistant-Speaker. You might remind some of your colleagues about the standing orders that they should also keep in mind.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time for canvassing my ruling.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** There is legislation before the House such as the Health Legislation Amendment Bill and the Criminal Procedure Amendment (Domestic Violence Complainants) Bill. No-one could argue that there is a subject more important in society than domestic violence. An Aboriginal land rights bill is being debated, and there is also a pesticides bill and an environmental planning and assessment bill on the program. I notice that the Minister for the Environment is at the table. I wonder if he is asking himself why—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76. As shadow Treasurer the member for Maroubra might want to focus on the economic part of this debate. He should debate what is before the House and not what he thinks should be before the House. I ask you to bring him back to the leave of the motion.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I reluctantly rule in favour of the member for Kiama. The member for Maroubra has been speaking for approximately four minutes and he is yet to address the motion before the House, which is the noting of the CommSec "State of the States" 2014 report. I ask the member to return to the substance of the motion.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I was just making some introductory remarks as to why and how this motion has come before us. The other item of business that I want to speak on tonight is the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Amendment Bill. All of the bills I have mentioned and the litany of business items are vastly more important than this self-serving motion relating to a week-old report from CommSec. If Government members want to grandstand, they can call a press conference. They can go out the back, stand under the tree and talk about this report all they want. Allowing this take-note debate to displace the important business of the House shows that the Government has run out of things to say.

The member for Cronulla was sent to speak in this debate in lieu of the Treasurer. I do not know where the Treasurer is if this report is so important. He is not in the Chamber. The member for Cronulla tried hard, but he fell short. He would have the people of New South Wales believe that this Government conjured up an economic state of play that did not exist before it was elected. I will remind members of the legacy this Government inherited from the former Government. It goes directly to the matters we are discussing.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I remind the member for Oatley that Standing Order 52 applies. It states that members have the right to be heard without interjections and insults. I ask the member for Oatley to cease interjecting.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** This Government inherited a triple-A credit rating. It can take no credit for that. The Labor Government created 200,000 jobs in the last two years of its term. This Government inherited very low debt of \$6.9 billion. This afternoon I heard someone say that under Labor there were no surpluses as far as the eye could see. In fact, 14 out of the 16 budgets that Labor premiers and treasurers delivered resulted in surpluses. Members opposite inherited a \$1.3 billion surplus and strong trend growth that continued in this State despite other States enjoying mining booms that New South Wales cannot benefit from because of the nature of its geology and geography.

One of Labor's proudest achievements was managing this State's budget and economy through a true global economic meltdown in 2008 and 2009, the legacy of which continued for years afterwards. We kept our triple-A credit rating during the crisis and brought our books back into surplus within one year and we did not have to sack a single government worker to do it. That stands in stark contrast to this Government, the first act of which was to announce that its workers—the mums and dads who get up every day and provide services for this State—were bludgers and unionists, and too many in number. The Government said those workers were a deadweight holding back the State and they were going to be trimmed, and trimmed they were in accordance with this Government's economic mantra to sack and sell. Some 15,000 public sector positions have now gone.

This Government marched into office and conjured up a \$5.2 billion black hole that the Parliamentary Budget Officer completely debunked. The Government's answer to that was to do away with the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The Treasurer of the day, who is now the Premier, lost a billion dollars. Two years ago the Auditor-General found 36 major errors in the State's accounts, and capital expenditure figures were out by \$3.2 billion. That is the beginning of the economic argument in this State. Then the Government began its attacks on WorkCover and the Industrial Relations Commission. The "State of the States" report singles out some economic indicators of New South Wales finances, but other documents also tell a story, including the budget papers and the Report on State Finances. The just-released Report on State Finances tells a different story from that which the member for Cronulla and the Government would have us believe this evening. It shows an underlying structural deficit in the State's books. The summary provides:

The General Government Sector Budget Result was a surplus of \$1.2 billion, and the Net Operating Balance of the Total State Sector was a surplus of \$2.8 billion. The improvement over the original 2013-14 Budget forecast largely reflected stronger than anticipated state revenues and an unexpected additional \$1.2 billion in Commonwealth grants ...

About revenue the report says:

Taxation was \$840 million better than the original Budget. This was largely due to an increase in stamp duty of \$1.1 billion due to stronger than expected growth in the residential and commercial sectors...

As I said, the Report on State Finances and the budget papers show that there is a structural weakness. If we take out the additional \$1.2 billion of Commonwealth grants that were advanced and take into account that stamp duty receipts on residential property transfers are abnormally high, the budget slips into a serious deficit. A problem with relying on peaking stamp duty receipts is that they have historically been followed by a sharp decline. At pages 6-14 and 6-16 of Budget Paper No. 2 from the 2014-15 budget papers two charts starkly illustrate the history of the growth in residential transfer duty, transactions and home prices since 2003 and 2004 respectively. I hope those results continue, but they cannot be relied upon. If we disregard the spike in stamp duty and the Commonwealth Government receipts that were brought forward, there is a large structural weakness in this budget.

In the at least three WestConnex announcements that the Government has made this month it has crowed about its strong record on infrastructure. The Government has only completed or substantially completed three projects in this term. One is the Royal North Shore Hospital, which is a \$1 billion project that Labor started before it left office. The second is the third terminal at Port Botany—a \$1.2 billion Labor project that was commenced before Labor left office. The third is the South West Rail Link, which also is a Labor project and which is substantially completed. No other major infrastructure project has been completed by the current Government in its entire four-year term of office. WestConnex will not even have started after almost five years of the Coalition simply talking about it.

The member for Cronulla has said that nothing was built by the Labor Government in seven years. While I have been in this House this afternoon, I jotted down some of the projects that came to mind: the M7, the Lane Cove tunnel, the Cross City Tunnel, the widening of the M2, the South West Rail Link, the expansion of Port Botany, Royal North Shore Hospital, the massive expansion of Windsor Road, the Eastern Distributor, a whole heap of rolling stock—the largest purchase of rolling stock in the history of this State was secured and that is something for which the current Government has taken credit—the largest expansion of the dual carriageway on the Pacific Highway in the history of the State, 37 police stations, and every major hospital in New South Wales either being rebuilt or upgraded.

One of the things of which I am very proud, coming from the south-eastern suburbs, is that before Carl Scully became the roads Minister, there were 31 sets of traffic lights between the north of Sydney and the Victorian border. By the time Carl Scully finished there were none—not one. Coalition members have been in government for a quarter of the time that Labor was in government and they have done absolutely nothing. They have done absolutely nothing—not a single project—yet in this House they crow about the North West Rail Link.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** Recently I happened to run into the constructor at a business function. I asked him how things were progressing on the 33-kilometre tunnel project and the response was that it had progressed 300 metres. In four years of government, 300 metres of the North West Rail Link is all that the current Government has managed to construct. Government members should not dare to crow about their record

on infrastructure in this House because that page is blank. The first page of chapter one has not been written yet. And why would it not have been written? The reason is that the current Government has been underspending on capital expenditure since the day it was elected. The very first budget handed down by former Treasurer Mike Baird for 2011-12 set out that in four years of the estimates there would be a record infrastructure spend of \$61.5 billion. The latest budget stated that in the next four years there will be a record infrastructure spend of \$62.5 billion.

Let me examine the capital expenditure of this Government in its four-year history. In 2011-12 the Government said that \$15.3 billion would be spent on capital expenditure, and it spent \$13.4 billion, which is almost \$2 billion less spent in the first year of this Government than it said would be spent. In 2012-13, the Government said it would spend \$15 billion but spent \$14.4 billion, which was half a billion dollars underspent. In 2013-14, the Government said it would spend \$15.5 billion on capital expenditure but spent \$13.9 billion, which is \$1.5 billion that this Government promised to spend last year but did not. WestConnex could have been commenced. I have been a roads Minister and I know how quickly the widening of an existing highway can be done

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** The current Government announced the model for WestConnex in October 2012. The Premier proudly proclaimed that the WestConnex was fully funded.

**Mr Lee Evans:** Point of order: I ask you to direct the member for Maroubra to confine his remarks to the CommSec report.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra's speech is relevant to the report. There is no point of order.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** The current Premier stated in October 2012 that the WestConnex was fully funded. The first stage was the widening of the existing M4. It took this Government two years to do an environmental impact statement [EIS]. Traffic volumes were known, the route was known, the noise was known, the emissions were known, the on and off ramps were already there, and the endangered species had been clobbered by the bulldozers years ago. It took this Government two years to do an EIS on the WestConnex. Yesterday the Government announced that the planning approval will be started for the second stage of the WestConnex project. It is going to lodge a piece of paper. The first attachment to a planning application is an EIS. When will this Government have the EIS ready on a project for which the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] had designs completed 10 years ago? That will be October next year. This project will not be completed in 2023. In four years this Government has underspent its own budget by \$4 billion in capital expenditure. The widening for WestConnex could have been completed by now.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Just say thank you.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** The people who do not say thank you to the member for Oatley are the people who benefit from jobs derived from capital expenditure. In the global financial crisis [GFC] of 2008-09 Kevin Rudd and Wayne Swan, together with the member for Toongabbie, who is in the House, embarked upon the largest capital expenditure program in the history of this country. Labor did that for one reason—to keep people in jobs. Even conservative economists will say that those measures underpinned 250,000 jobs. Nothing destroys a State economy like unemployment. There are people who are watching this debate, sitting in this gallery, or who will read the record of this debate in *Hansard* tomorrow who would still be out of work if it were not for the fact that the Labor Party came to the rescue with the greatest capital expenditure program in the history of the nation.

We did not scrimp and save on capital expenditure. That is why the New South Wales Parliamentary Library Research Service's economic indicators for New South Wales states that the average annual growth in general government capital expenditure during the Fifty-fifth Parliament, including the 2014-15 estimate, is expected to be 9.7 per cent—compared with the Parliament over which Nathan Rees, Kristina Keneally and Morris Iemma presided, when it was 13.2 per cent. So it is now almost 4 percentage points lower. Mike Baird's response to that challenge is to underspend by \$4 billion on capital expenditure projects, which put people into work.

There are people who are looking for work—tradies, concreters, truck drivers, people who dig holes and people who drive machinery—who are at home now and going through [www.seek.com](http://www.seek.com) when they should be

enjoying a better life with their family. The reason they are not is that the Premier is being sneaky with the books. Four billion dollars that was promised to be spent but not spent stands as an indictment of this Government, which has done absolutely nothing about capital expenditure in four years. Government members are bragging about a figure of \$13 billion spent on infrastructure when the member for Toongabbie left them for dead with a figure of \$16 billion. I am pleased to debate the "State of the States" report. Labor is ready to go to the election based on this Government's record. [*Time expired.*]

**Pursuant to resolution business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.**

#### **REGIONAL RELOCATION GRANTS AMENDMENT BILL 2014**

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

**Pursuant to resolution valedictory speeches proceeded with.**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I do welcome to the Speaker's Gallery the honourable member for Grayndler.

#### **VALEDICTORY SPEECHES**

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT** (Marrickville) [6.10 p.m.] (Valedictory Speech): I made my first speech in the New South Wales Parliament, although that was in the other place, nearly 17 years ago. The issues I spoke about then—the need for Labor to improve equity and opportunities, increasing the number of women in Parliament and the important role of Government in strengthening communities—matter as much today as they did then. I have served in four Governments under four Premiers and was Deputy Premier to two. For 11 of the years I have been in Parliament I have been a Minister and a part of the great Labor mission of using the power of Government, with all its challenges and constraints, to build a better society.

My journey to this Parliament is the product of many of my life experiences, but one of the most formative was studying economics at the University of Sydney. This was made possible only because of Gough Whitlam's revolutionary changes to higher education that put a university degree within reach of working-class kids like me. Today we have mourned the loss and celebrated the achievements of one of Labor's great Prime Ministers. Among those legendary achievements, Gough Whitlam's education reforms changed the lives of so many.

I went into the Legislative Council in 1998, and in 1999 was a beneficiary of Bob Carr's desire for generational change in his second Cabinet. I can still recall the mix of excitement and apprehension I felt when first sworn in as Minister for Juvenile Justice. Having been in Parliament for only a year, I felt somewhat underprepared for this role. I looked around for other role models—women in similar positions from whom I could take inspiration; this helped enormously. But it was the case that in 1999 there were not enough women in leadership positions and, despite some gains, this is still so today. I look forward to further improvements but this will only happen with a concerted effort from both men and women. We must get better at raising girls to be leaders, to have the same sense of entitlement and confidence as boys have, we must have workplaces free from discrimination, and women need access to quality affordable child care and family friendly work practices—and this includes Parliaments.

In my first portfolio I spent a lot of time visiting detention centres, talking with staff, detainees and stakeholders about what was needed to improve both security and rehabilitation in our juvenile justice system. This gave me a real insight into the portfolio, but it also exposed me to some of the profoundly sad life stories of many of the young people in custody. While there is not always a lot of community or media sympathy for criminal justice initiatives that can be construed as "soft", the reality is that the vast bulk of young people who come into contact with the juvenile justice system come from disadvantaged and dysfunctional families, and many have experienced some form of abuse in their young lives. Providing opportunities for them to improve their education and gain life skills is critical if they are to break the cycle of crime.

During my time as Minister, I increased the ratio of staff to detainees, professionalised staff training, upgraded detention centre facilities, and strengthened counselling and support services. There was a decline in the number of young people in custody and we introduced successful diversionary programs like youth justice conferencing. Unfortunately our efforts to reduce the number of Aboriginal young people in custody were less successful—and this remains a critical challenge today. It was in many ways a natural progression to move from Minister for Juvenile Justice to Minister for Community Services—both portfolios deal with the fallout wreaked by poverty, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse and mental illness.

However nothing prepared me for the grim reality of that job and reading the briefs on children who come into the child protection system. I know this is a feeling that all Ministers who have held this portfolio will understand. And if it is hard for us to read of these matters, how much harder is it for the staff of the department, who every day are dealing with damaged families and seeing firsthand the traumatised children? On top of this, Community Services staff face criticisms for how they do their job, when in all truth what they see and experience are beyond the comprehension of most people. I pay tribute to them. When I took on the portfolio, it was under intense pressure and scrutiny from stakeholders, oversight agencies and the media. I realised that there had to be not only a significant injection of funds but also a different approach to dealing with child protection in New South Wales. Along with the then new Director General, Neil Shepherd, one of the finest public servants I have ever worked with, we set about building the case for this to occur.

State government is a complex business and delivering services across health, education and transport chews up vast amounts of dollars. There is never enough money to do all that needs to be done and governments have to prioritise. I know I am not sharing any state secrets when I say that funding for community services is not always at the top of that list. It is a measure of what Labor governments value that, in December 2002, under Premier Bob Carr and Treasurer Michael Egan, I was successful in having an extra \$1 billion over five years injected into the Department of Community Services. Announcing this package was one of the proudest moments of my time as a Minister.

This extra funding provided additional front-line caseworkers, specialist psychological and legal staff, and improved out-of-home care services; and, importantly, quarantined \$150 million for new early intervention services including home visitors, school-based community centres and early childhood services. During my time as Minister for Community Services we also established a trust fund to repay historic wages for Aboriginal people. This redressed a longstanding wrong where between 1900 and 1968 many Aboriginal people were forced to put their wages into a trust fund administered by the New South Wales Government and did not have the money returned to them. We fixed this.

Holding the portfolios of Juvenile Justice and Community and Disability Services only further strengthened my belief that education is critical to breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. So I was thrilled when in 2005 Bob Carr made me Minister for Education. Education and its power to transform lives is such an important part of the Labor story. It was a great honour to be a Labor Education Minister and deliver initiatives such as reduced class sizes, simplified school reports, the Best Start program and a massive investment in upgrading school facilities. I spent some of my happiest times visiting schools across New South Wales and seeing the difference passionate, skilled teachers make to the lives of young people.

One of the greatest gifts we can give young people is a love of learning from a young age, and we are very fortunate that we have teachers who quietly and determinedly go about fostering this each and every day. Labor recognised this by making New South Wales teachers amongst the best paid in the country. Governments, of course, can never pay teachers what they are worth or the salary they deserve for the important job they do, but I was pleased that, while I was Minister and Morris Iemma was Premier, teachers were given a salary increase without the need to resort to the debilitating industrial action that is so often a feature of their pay disputes.

I was also responsible for implementing one of the most significant Labor education reforms: the reduction in class sizes in the early years. The evaluations of this program showed it made a real difference to teaching and learning, gave children a stronger foundation in the basics of literacy and numeracy, and was responsible for more parents choosing public schools. Bringing parents back to public schools is important because public education works best when a diverse mix of parents from all walks of life make it their choice of schooling.

Unfortunately, as we know, and as the Gonski review showed, the link between student background and educational achievement is more marked in Australia than in other high-performing countries. One of the reasons is that it is not just disadvantage that contributes to poorer educational outcomes; it is concentration of disadvantage—and we have greater concentration of disadvantaged in some of our schools than do other countries. Schools do best when they have a mix of students from different socio-economic backgrounds. That is why implementing needs-based funding is so important, and I continue to hope that the Abbott Government eventually will commit to the full six years of Gonski funding.

While the majority of my portfolios were in the social policy area, I also enjoyed enormously my time as Minister for the Environment and Climate Change. I held this portfolio when Australia was debating how to

best reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. In New South Wales, where Bob Carr was responsible for one of the world's first mandatory emissions reduction schemes, it seemed a no-brainer that a market-based scheme was the best way to achieve this. It is to my eternal disappointment that the Rudd Government, who were courageous enough to legislate for the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, did not get the support that they needed in the Senate, to make the scheme a reality. This issue showed the futility of The Greens, who voted with the Coalition in the Senate to kill off the scheme, once again making the perfect the enemy of the good.

Much gets written about the tensions that can exist within Labor Cabinets on the approach to take to environmental issues and the challenges that this poses for an environment Minister. I was certainly not exempt from those tensions. But my achievements in the year I was Minister for the Environment speak for themselves. They include the establishment of a solar energy feed-in tariff scheme, a mandatory energy efficiency target, a sea level rise policy, establishing the regional assessment process for the river red gums and declaring the Yengo National Park Wilderness area. I do note that many of those I locked horns with in Cabinet on these issues are no longer with the Labor Party.

I am particularly proud of commencing the regional assessment of the river red gum forests in the Riverina which ultimately resulted in protecting in perpetuity 100,000 hectares of these ancient trees. Such reforms would not have happened without the support of the then Premier, Nathan Rees. On these and so many other issues it was a privilege to work with someone as talented, courageous and principled as Nathan Rees. Health policy, changes to electoral funding laws, public sector reform, taking on vested interests in the party—Nathan thought deeply about the big issues and was bold when it came to change. It is a great loss to the Labor Party and to New South Wales that he will be leaving Parliament at the next election. The final portfolio I held was Health. I had for some time avoided what is often seen to be the poisoned chalice. In the end, in 2009, I requested the portfolio, and I am so glad that I did. Though my time in the Health portfolio was relatively short, it was an exciting time as the National Health Reform juggernaut stormed the country.

New South Wales engaged enthusiastically with the National Health Reform process. Despite successive Ministers being successful in attracting additional funds to the portfolio, rising demand for health services would be impossible to meet unless the Federal Government was prepared to tip in more funding. We did not have much choice but to engage enthusiastically with the National Health Reform. One of the great challenges that continues to bedevil State governments is that they are responsible for delivering the bulk of services the community relies upon without receiving the commensurate revenue to pay for them—and the Health portfolio demonstrates this clearly. However, it is not just about money; it also is about structural reform. We do not focus enough on prevention. Avoidable hospital admissions are still too high and health care needs to be much better coordinated for our health system to operate more effectively.

I worked closely with then Premier Kristina Keneally on the National Health Reform and admired her tenacity, skill and leadership on this and many other issues. As a result of the National Health Reform agreement, we delivered over \$1.2 billion funding for New South Wales over four years. We also undertook an extensive capital works program, including major upgrades to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Royal North Shore, Liverpool and Nepean hospitals. We established the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, provided additional nurses to New South Wales hospitals, improved cancer treatment facilities, particularly in regional New South Wales, and passed legislation to make the medically supervised injecting room a permanent feature of this State.

During this time, it was an incredible experience to work with the committed and talented people in Health—the administrators, the clinicians and the many other staff who achieve extraordinary things in our health system. I am very grateful for the support provided by the New South Wales Health officials, particularly Professor Deb Picone and Dr Richard Matthews; my strategic and hardworking Chief of Staff, Scott Gartrell; and the ever-enthusiastic Dr Andrew McDonald as my Parliamentary Secretary.

In addition to holding some amazing portfolios, I have had the honour and privilege of representing the constituents of Marrickville. I thank the people of Marrickville who have been good enough to elect me to this place in increasingly tough election campaigns. In the electoral wipe-out of 2011, I was the only Labor member to hold a seat that had a margin of less than 10 per cent. I thank Penny Sharpe, who was my campaign director. I look forward to Penny, along with Jo Haylen, the Labor candidate for Summer Hill, being in the Legislative Assembly in 2015—they are both talented, smart, savvy women who have a big contribution to make.

Being the member for Marrickville has brought me into contact with a kaleidoscope of people and issues. Sometimes those issues are inspiring, sometimes heart-wrenching and sometimes just plain bizarre, but

I must say that they always are interesting. The great thing about being a local member is the connection with people, being a part of the community and doing your bit to make it stronger. In this regard there have been some great wins, including the upgraded Newtown station, improvements to Henson Park—home of the mighty Jets—funding for the Cooks River, new infrastructure at many of our local schools and the extension of the light rail to Dulwich Hill.

But some of the most satisfying experiences are helping people: seeing someone get that secure housing they so desperately need, sorting out an issue with the local school or making sure someone gets the surgery so important to them. I will miss advocating on my community's behalf, fighting for better services and helping those in need. I am grateful for the support of many people. I could not have survived my time in this place without them and I thank them, particularly those who are here tonight. I really appreciate your being a part of this special event for me.

Marrickville is a diverse electorate economically, socially and ethnically. For many years I have worked with the various multicultural communities, and being a part of their community events has been both unique and uplifting. I thank them for their generous support and friendship over the years. I acknowledge the extraordinary work of my electorate staff—Maria Katsogiannis and Liam Caulfield. They are the best electorate staff a member could hope to have. Maria has worked in the Marrickville electorate office for 25 years and I could not ask for a more conscientious and caring office manager. Thank you to my ministerial staff, who, over the years, gave their skills, talent and energy above and beyond what could or should be expected. In particular, I thank my chiefs of staff—Paul Murphy, Michael Refshauge, Matthew Chesher, Scott Gartrell and Neill Jones—for their wisdom, hard work and friendship.

I acknowledge all the extraordinary public servants I worked with, who do some of the most important work in the State for far less pay and recognition than in the private sector. I thank my directors general, who have always given me frank and fearless advice and provided me with great support, including Ken Buttrum, David Sherlock, Neil Shepherd, Brendan O'Reilly, Andrew Cappie-Wood, Lisa Corbyn, Graeme Head and Deb Picone. Thank you to the Labor Party officials who have worked so hard, particularly Damian O'Connor, Luke Foley, John Graham, SEC President Jill Lay and secretary Richard Walsham, and all the branch officials and members and friends who have supported me. I cannot name everyone but I mention Daniel, Maria and Sam Barber, Sean Macken, Barry Cotter, Max Pearce, Janel Ryan, Bob Stone, Janet Johnson, Ardashes Tchamkertenian, Sue Ashby, Fran Rees, Sue Dahl, Cheryl Baume, Shayne Conlon, Francine Biddulph, Dan Lunney and Aydan Casey.

I thank the clerks at the table and all the staff of the Parliament, who have provided such professional support. Thank you to my parliamentary colleagues, who have encouraged me and kept me real. I pay tribute to Labor Leader John Robertson. I have admired enormously the way John took on the role of leader when we were at our lowest ebb and he has worked tirelessly to renew and revitalise Labor. I wish John and the Labor team all the best of luck at the next election. I acknowledge also Verity Firth and Linda Burney. They are not only two fine parliamentarians who have made such great contributions to this State, but also have been great friends to me.

Thank you to my parents and my family, including my brother Peter who is here today. I look forward to having more time with my son, Nathan. I have been in Parliament all his life. I think his strongest memory of it is the night he had to sleep in my office until four o'clock in the morning—not the best memory. While I have struggled with the work-family balance, I also hope that for him the experience of having a mum who pursued what she believed in will be a valuable life experience and lesson. And to Anthony, my husband, I say thank you. You have been there for it all—from Young Labor through to Deputy Premier. Your grounded approach to life and politics has kept me sane, and your love and support has given me the confidence to achieve all that I have. Thank you.

In closing, it has been a fabulous journey—I have loved being involved in some of the big debates and policies that have shaped our State. I have got enormous satisfaction from making a difference to people's lives. I believe deeply in the value of public service and that politics is an honourable profession. I have tried to conduct my political life accordingly. But the time has come to move on, and I look forward to new challenges in my life. Thank you all for your support.

**The SPEAKER:** I am sure the people in the gallery and all members would agree that the member for Marrickville has gained enormous respect in this Chamber from both sides and in the other place, currently and in the past. We will miss her. She is greatly admired and respected. I wish her all the best in the future.

Before I call the member for Lakemba to give his valedictory speech, I acknowledge and welcome to the gallery the member for Lakemba's wife, children, family and friends.

**Mr ROBERT FUROLO** (Lakemba) [6.30 p.m.] (Valedictory Speech): I regard my six years as a member in this place as a privilege and an honour. In the history of New South Wales only seven people have been elected as the member for Lakemba. My service in this role has been a source of pride and, at times, a challenge. This is the nature of our duty as an elected representative. I leave this place with a mix of satisfaction and disappointment. I am pleased with my work serving the people of my electorate, taking up the fight on issues that are important and worthwhile to them. It has been enormously rewarding to be an advocate for local groups and individuals who have relied on me to be their voice in government, working to achieve fairness and equity when their voice was not heard or was ignored.

Project outcomes have been delivered in my community for which I can take a certain amount of pride. Such successes are the result of the efforts of many people. However, I feel a certain sense of accomplishment with a few in particular: the creation of the Riverwood Wetlands, a great community open space on the housing estate of Riverwood; the construction of the facility known appropriately as the Morris Iemma Indoor Sports Centre, a key local asset that serves the needs of families and young people; and the soon to be built library and senior citizens centre, also on the Riverwood estate. I am proud of the role I have played in all of these.

It has also been a privilege being an advocate for our fantastic local schools and the wonderful teachers and support staff who transform the lives of their students. Our schools have been a source of inspiration to me. I have met students who are hopeful and optimistic, full of a sense of what can be achieved. This has driven me to stand up and fight for the resources that they need to have the best start in life. I acknowledge the principals, teachers, parent bodies and students who allowed me to champion their issues and deliver programs and projects and updates for them. Together, we have made a difference. I know that long after my time in this role these schools will continue their crucial and outstanding work.

During my period in office I have supported the vital work of local neighbourhood centres. These organisations, which I referenced in my inaugural speech, are the bedrock of the local community. The Riverwood Community Centre and the Canterbury City Community Centre, in particular, have literally changed for the better the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our community. As the member for Lakemba, I have been able to support their great work with funding through the Community Building Partnership program—a great Labor initiative—and through my position in Parliament I have been able to highlight their outstanding work as well as to bring attention to government decisions that have disadvantaged them. In return, these groups have helped me to feel that my time here has made a difference and has been valuable in helping them with their critical community building work.

A valedictory speech is of course a chance to reflect. In preparing for this farewell speech it was right and proper that I consider my first speech in this place. One issue that I highlighted was the importance to communities like mine of having properly functioning and well-run councils. Tonight I once again pay tribute to the management and staff of Canterbury City Council. In particular, I give my sincere thanks to and express my highest regard for Mr Jim Montague, PSM, who is one of the longest continually-serving general managers in the history of local government. Jim is here tonight, and it would require an entire speech to outline his contributions to the community of Canterbury. I will be forever grateful for the working relationship we were able to develop and the outcomes we have achieved for local residents.

In my first speech I said I would always be a strong advocate for local government. I am disappointed that I was not able to achieve more to help local government become more financially sustainable and better recognised for its capacity to deliver key services to our communities. I also regret that the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry into donations and public funding for local government were not adopted. If we accept that confidence in the integrity of decision-making at all levels of government is a key ingredient of our democracy then rules on donations, campaign expenditure and public funding that apply for New South Wales elections should also apply to local government elections. There is still time for the next New South Wales Government to take up these recommendations, because reform is needed. We need to reduce the demand for donations and their potential to influence decisions at the local government level.

It was in my role as the chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters that I feel I made my most significant contribution as a member of this place. Through this committee the former Labor Government introduced caps on campaign expenditure, capped the size of donations, and, through a greater role for public funding, helped to reduce the demand for donations by political parties. I believe this has helped make New South Wales a leader in campaign reform across Australia. It was also through this committee and its inquiries that I learned that sound evidence-based and consensus-based decisions could be made in this place.

Sadly one of my greatest frustrations over the past six years has been how little consensus-building occurs. Surely, when we are largely in agreement about the outcomes we want for the people of New South Wales, we should be working harder to move away from adversarial and combative methods and focus on genuine objective-based and consensus-driven decision-making.

I emphasise this point. Frankly, I do not believe we are getting the best outcomes for our respective constituents by bringing bills to this place to debate and vote upon when they have not already been considered, explored and refined. I know I am naive, and I do not apologise for this, but our decision-making would be much better if bills were the subject of multi-party working groups that were able to ask questions of the bureaucracy and discuss issues with communities and key stakeholders. Members could then suggest changes to the Minister before bills were introduced to this House. Of course we would never agree on everything but at least, with the benefit of an engaged and informed Parliament, we would have better bills and more consensus, which is not such a bad thing in my book.

Nearly everybody I have spoken with since I announced my decision not to contest the next election has asked me the same and understandable question: Why? I admit that I did not intend such a brief period of service in this place. This is my answer. I have always described my election to Parliament as part of my journey and not my destination. To me, public life and Parliament are vehicles through which change can be made. The changes I sought to achieve stem from something deep in my core: the desire to address inequality, deliver opportunity and build hope that things can and will be better. Being an elected representative—whether as a councillor, a mayor or a member of Parliament—was the way I believed I could achieve this.

However, after more than six years in this place I feel that achieving these goals in our current system of politics is becoming more difficult. My hunger has not been sated but my ability to use my position to achieve these goals has diminished. Fortunately, 20 years of working in the local community has shown me that people achieve successful, positive outcomes beyond politics and can improve the lives of others in many ways. The next leg of my journey is not set in concrete but the goals and values that have driven me in public life will continue to be at the core of my being; I just need to find a new vehicle.

Another consideration for my decision is my view that politics is being conducted increasingly as a sport where the only objective is to win or retain power, rather than as a contest of beliefs and ideas and an opportunity for reform. I believe this is evident in the way that Government and Opposition members are willing to take positions that are not based on values they hold deeply but on what they believe will deliver them the ultimate goal of winning an election—or at least a good line in the media or a grab on the six o'clock news. There are many challenges for political parties, their leaders and their members. The first is to believe in something, to have deeply held convictions based on values. They must then articulate why their position is in the community's interest and be prepared to defend it in the battle of ideas. Leaders and their party members do constituents a great disservice when they are prepared to abandon their beliefs for the perceived benefits of political popularity.

Great leaders do not simply mirror popular opinion or the views of aggrieved minorities. Rather, the electorate can and will embrace those who manage to show how their vision and values are in the interests of the community as a whole. Strong leaders are prepared to be judged for their deeply-held views and back their ability to convince the electorate of the virtue of their plans. They do not forsake these beliefs to secure electoral success. Witness the outpouring of positive reflections for a true colossus of Australian politics—our recently departed Gough Whitlam. He was a true political leader who could challenge orthodoxy, defend his ideas and change the direction of the country by convincing the electorate of his vision. Attending his memorial service today reminded me of what great leaders can achieve. Sadly, the likes of Whitlam are few and far between.

I want to share a quote that has been quite seminal for me. I have shared it with students at my local schools as an illustration of how I see my role as a member of Parliament. It was contained in a speech to the electors of Bristol by Sir Edmund Burke almost exactly 240 years ago—and I note that it was referenced by my colleague the member for Miranda yesterday. I quote:

...it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion, high respect; their business, unremitting attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfactions, to theirs; and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own.

But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure, no, nor from the law and the constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

Another issue that requires serious leadership is one I identified in my inaugural speech: Strengthening the bonds of social harmony and creating an environment that fosters mutual respect and understanding. Over the past few months communities like mine have been severely tested. Not because of their actions or their inactions, but because in the minds of some the religious beliefs of many in this community have condemned them. I find the impact of developments on the other side of the world and the response from our political leaders here has created an environment hostile to many of our own citizens. It has to stop. The greatest asset we have with which to protect ourselves against the vile intentions of extremists—irrespective of whatever religious or nationalist cause they claim to be operating under—is our unity. When we abandon this out of fear or ignorance or wilful intent, we are doing the work of those who are seeking to divide us and turn us against ourselves.

The greatest risk to the harmony that has been the hallmark of Australian society for large swathes of our history is allowing Australians in Australia to feel un-Australian. When this occurs, the circumstances exist for those who feel alienated or disenfranchised to feel justified in rejecting the laws and conventions that unite and protect us. Our leaders, including our religious leaders and media interests, need to recognise the obligation they have to prevent this from occurring. Australia is not at war with Islam, yet Australian Muslims are being made to feel that they are the enemy of this great country. This must stop. At every opportunity our Prime Minister, our Premier and all of us in this place need to be explicit that any acts that terrorise Australians, whether it be under the misguided aim of nationalism or a perversion of religion, will not be tolerated.

As this is likely to be my final speech in this place, it is important to acknowledge a number of people who have been instrumental in shaping my contribution to this place and who have supported my ambition to serve in the oldest Parliament in Australia. I start by thanking the faithful Labor branch members of the Lakemba electorate. I have worked with, served, and been elected and supported by hundreds of local residents over the past 20 years. Their belief in the party and the role it plays in building a stronger society has driven them to attend meetings every month and help out at every council, State and Federal election. They seek nothing in return; they do it because they believe. They trusted me to represent them and through that to serve our community. I thank them sincerely and deeply.

I also acknowledge the broader Labor Party. It is no secret that I have been in disagreement with some recent decisions of this magnificent but flawed movement. Tonight I express my gratitude for the support and opportunity the party has provided to me. I recognise that I would never have won election to council or to Parliament if I did not stand under the Labor banner. It has been the greatest professional privilege to have served in these roles, and I thank the Labor Party for its support. I thank the local residents who have put their trust in me since I first stood for election, unsuccessfully, in 1995. Through their support they have given me a rare opportunity, and I will be forever grateful and honoured.

I acknowledge my former colleagues on Canterbury council and current councillors, with whom I worked to effect significant change in our community. I was fortunate to be able to work constructively and with a shared vision for local residents, and together some great outcomes were achieved. I note in the gallery my very good friend and former deputy mayor of Canterbury, Bill Kritharas. I also congratulate him on his recent nuptials to his beautiful wife, Veronica. I also acknowledge someone who inspired me to consider entering public life and through it have the opportunity to improve the lives of others. Many here will know of the man who gave me my start in his electorate office more than 20 years ago. Without this start, I doubt that I would have ever realised the privilege of serving as a councillor, mayor or member of Parliament. Not only did Morris Iemma give me a job; he gave me a calling. Working with him in his electorate office opened my eyes and taught me how to use elected office to be a champion for my community. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to him but I hope he understands what his influence has meant to me.

There is also a group of people with whom I have had the honour of working who are the great unsung heroes of our representative democracy. They are on the front line of the day-to-day work of listening to and advocating for local residents. The electorate staff I have worked with since being elected to Parliament are an extraordinary group of people. Once again, my words tonight will not adequately acknowledge their talent, dedication and compassion. Julie Brown, who started in my office almost exactly six years ago after my by-election win, was initially a three-month appointment. In no time at all, she established herself as the foundation stone of my office and has been a wonderful advocate for all the constituents who have sought our help. More than that, she has been incredibly loyal and decent to me, and has enabled me be more effective than I otherwise had any right to be.

Sandy Grekas and I worked together with Morris many years ago. Sandy has been an integral member of our team. With degrees in science and teaching, and a master's in foreign policy, Sandy is one of many staff

in my office who, frankly, is much better qualified for my job than I am. With her no-nonsense approach, overriding sense of fairness and dry wit, Sandy has been wonderful to work with. Agnes Yi is another staffer with a substantial career working in senior policy roles with several Ministers. She has been with me for the past 3½ years. In my time as a shadow Minister and since then, Agnes, with her attention to detail, meticulous research ability and fundamental decency and compassion, has made a fantastic contribution. Together with Belinda Popovska, who is another highly qualified, talented and compassionate person, my office has been a tour-de-force of effective advocacy for our residents. But more than their hard work, I will be forever grateful for their intellect, decency, loyalty and friendship.

Coming to work was never a chore with this amazing group of people. I will miss each of you and regret that my decision has closed this fun and productive chapter in all our lives. In my inaugural speech, I acknowledged the role that my brothers, sister and parents played in forming my nature and values. Since that speech, mum has passed away but the influence of both my parents and all my siblings on my nature remains. I send my love to all of them and to their families. I thank them for their role in my life. I send a special hello to my brother, Joe, his wife, Su, and their daughter, Stella, who are watching the webcast from their home in France. Bonjour!

This leaves me a few moments to thank those who are at the core of my being—my wife, Jessica, and the two people who make me the proudest of all: my brilliant daughter, Isabella, and my remarkable son, Alexander. The nature of public life is often quite selfish. This is not something widely spoken about. In order to succeed, we often have to make choices the brunt of which are borne by those closest to us. Public life brings rewards but these rewards are not shared equally between those who pay the price. To my beautiful wife, Jess, I love you completely. You have helped me grow as a person through your love for me and have made me so very happy. To Isabella and Alexander, thank you for being understanding and for rarely complaining when I had to attend events and functions when I really wanted to be with you. I love you beyond words. When all this is done, I hope you understand why I did what I did and I hope that I made you proud by doing it.

I want to end my last speech to this place in the same way as I ended my first speech—with the motto from the War Widows' Guild. It is so simple yet to me so powerful. And it sums up the values we should all be trying to promote and encourage. We need a more collective conscience as a society and a more selfless attitude to meet the challenges of inequality. The motto reflects a spirit that exists in my community and has been a source of inspiration for me when I have met the hundreds of volunteers who selflessly give of themselves to help others. The motto reads:

We all belong to each other,  
We all need each other,  
It is in serving each other and in Sacrificing for our common good  
That we are finding our true life.

I thank the House.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I thank the member for Lakemba for his significant contribution to this place over the past six years and note the affection and esteem in which he is held. He has gained the respect of members on both sides of the House, and I wish him well for the future.

## **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 to provide for the following routine of business forthwith:

- (1) Government Business.
- (2) Private members' statements.
- (3) Matter of public importance.
- (4) The House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

**Pursuant to resolution government business proceeded with.**

**MOTOR ACCIDENTS (LIFETIME CARE AND SUPPORT) AMENDMENT BILL 2014****Second Reading****Debate resumed from 22 October 2014.**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [6.53 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Amendment Bill 2014. Members of the Labor Party are very proud of the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme, which provides for the treatment and care needs of persons injured in motor vehicle accidents. It was groundbreaking legislation, introduced—if I am not mistaken—by the former Minister for Disability Services the Hon. John Della Bosca. It introduced the concept of lifetime care and support for those who are, unfortunately, catastrophically injured in motor vehicle accidents. Importantly, it introduced the concept of the removal of fault in relation to those claims.

The bill seeks, first, to clarify that the Lifetime Care and Support Authority may satisfy its liability to pay for expenses incurred in relation to an injured person's treatment and care needs by making a "reasonable contribution"—in the words of the bill—to alternative expenditure that the authority is satisfied will provide for those needs in a cost-effective manner; and, secondly, to enable the authority to enter into contracts with other local and interstate insurers and authorities with similar functions for the purpose of providing services to injured persons who are eligible under similar schemes.

I do not wish to be unduly provocative in my comments, but when it comes to legislation such as that which is before the House the Opposition simply does not trust the Government. We say that with some justification because this term of government has seen quite an ambush of people who are injured. It began of course in 2011 with an unjustifiable attack on workers compensation. We then saw a former Minister attempt to revise or reform—if I can use that word—the compulsory third party [CTP] green slip scheme. That included things like cutting benefits for injured children. So we have zero trust in the Government when it comes to bills such as this.

When bills like this one come forward—and I have to say this is not a reflection on the current Minister; he is certainly far more honourable than his two predecessors in the Finance portfolio—we rely heavily on the advice we get from honourable people who have the care of and regard for injured people at the heart of their business. I hold in high esteem the New South Wales Bar Association and the Law Society of New South Wales for the advice and assistance they have provided in dissecting these sorts of bills. As a result of talking to those bodies, the Opposition will not oppose this bill on the basis that the Government has indicated it will change the scheme guidelines.

The scheme began for children under the age of 16 from 1 October 2006 and for adults from 1 October 2007. As at 30 June 2013 there were 796 participants in the scheme, of whom 84 were children. Unlike the Motor Accidents Scheme, it does not pay compensation to individuals. Instead, it pays for treatment and services for each participant. Funding is obtained through the Medical Care and Injury Services [MCIS] Levy that is paid by motorists when they purchase their CTP green slip insurance policy. The bill will allow the Lifetime Care and Support Authority to administer a similar scheme in the Australian Capital Territory through the completion of an intergovernmental agreement.

New section 11AA of the bill will also enable greater flexibility in the provision of treatment and care. For instance, it will enable the Lifetime Care and Support Authority to make a reasonable contribution towards the total cost of a motor vehicle that has already been modified rather than requiring the person to purchase a vehicle suitable for modification and then having the authority pay the cost of the modifications. The Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice recently tabled its "Fifth review of the exercise of the functions of the Lifetime Care and Support Authority". All those agencies and organisations that made a submission to the review were emailed a copy of this bill and asked whether they had any concerns or comments. The Law Society of New South Wales—which the Government did not consult about this bill—subsequently expressed concern that new section 11AA, while valuable in that it provides flexibility, may operate in unintended ways, with unforeseen consequences.

It recommended to the Minister that a definition be inserted for the term "alternative expenditure" and that the participant's consent be obtained before the authority is able to satisfy its liability under part 2A of the Act in this way. Both the Injury Compensation Committee of the Law Society and representatives of the Bar Association then met with the Lifetime Care and Support Authority and the Safety, Return to Work and Support

Division. As I said earlier, they are now satisfied that their concerns will be addressed by the new provisions the people at the meeting agreed to insert into the scheme guidelines. On the basis of their advice, the Opposition has no objection to the bill.

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE** (Campbelltown) [7.00 p.m.]: I support the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Amendment Bill 2014. The object of the bill is to make two changes to the scheme under the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Act 2006, which provides for the treatment and care needs of persons injured in motor vehicle accidents who are in need of lifetime care and support. The first change is to clarify that the Lifetime Care and Support Authority may satisfy its liability to pay for expenses incurred in relation to an injured person's treatment and care needs by making a reasonable contribution to alternative expenditure that the authority is satisfied will provide for those needs in a cost-effective manner. The second change is to enable the authority to enter into contracts with other local or interstate insurers and authorities with similar functions for the purpose of providing services to injured persons who are eligible under similar lifetime care schemes.

This bill is necessary to ensure that the New South Wales Lifetime Care and Support Authority has the power to agree to perform some or all of the functions of the Lifetime Care and Support Commissioner of the Australian Capital Territory, as the Territory has requested. At this stage the Government has no plans to facilitate the administration of other schemes with similar functions to that of the authority; however, in the interests of efficient and effective use of legislative resources, the bill has been drafted to enable this to happen by the making of a regulation should it be appropriate to do so.

Before agreeing to enter into any other arrangement to administer a care and support scheme on behalf of another authority the Government would most carefully consider the proposal. Matters to be considered would include the resource implications for the New South Wales Lifetime Care and Support Authority and what benefits would accrue to New South Wales if it entered into another such arrangement. The bill also provides that each care and support arrangement that the New South Wales authority administers is to have a separate account established for it in the New South Wales fund. These accounts will need to be kept in sufficient funds to enable New South Wales to pay for services provided to participants in the scheme that is the subject of the care and support arrangement. The bill ensures that the New South Wales fund is properly insulated from any liability to pay for the treatment and care expenses of participants in schemes administered by the New South Wales authority under a care and support arrangement by clearly stating:

A liability of the Authority under a care and support arrangement is not a liability of the Fund except to the extent that the liability can be satisfied out of money standing to the credit of the separate account established for the arrangement within the Fund.

The bill also ensures that no regard is to be had for the liabilities of the authority with respect to a care and support arrangement made with another authority when determining the amounts to be contributed to the fund in order to ensure that it is fully funded. As the survivor of a large fatal head-on collision in the New South Wales bush, I am fully aware of the implications of serious motor vehicle accidents. I still carry the emotional and physical scars of my accident. For that and other reasons, I thoroughly support the bill.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [7.03 p.m.]: I support the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Amendment Bill 2014. The bill makes two significant changes. The first amendment allows the scheme to operate to support a parallel scheme in the Australian Capital Territory through the framework provided in the New South Wales legislation at no cost to New South Wales participants in the scheme. The second amendment allows for flexibility in the way that support is provided to severely injured people through alternative forms of support other than those specified in the Act where the case can be made and is agreed to by the participant.

These are sensible amendments made by the Minister in a genuine attempt to positively modify the solid base that the former Labor Government presented for the scheme. I like to acknowledge when previous governments have done something constructive, and I believe this scheme is such a case. It assists severely injured people who were perhaps not best served in the past by lump sum payments that could create uncertainty for them in their later years. The Lifetime Care and Support Scheme serves those people better by ensuring that they will have an adequate level of care for the rest of their lives after suffering a catastrophic injury in a motor accident.

The Lifetime Care and Support Scheme provides lifetime treatment, care, support and services to people catastrophically injured in motor vehicle accidents in New South Wales. The Australian Capital Territory recently enacted legislation establishing a comparable scheme. Taking into account the skills, expertise and

experience in service delivery that New South Wales has developed in the delivery of its scheme and our proximity to the Australian Capital Territory, it is appropriate that we find a way of assisting the Territory to administer its scheme. While informal negotiations as to the terms of the arrangement and the operating framework have been ongoing in the background, this legislation is the first formal step towards enabling New South Wales to assist the Australian Capital Territory as it has requested. I am very pleased to support it.

I note that the arrangement to be made with the Australian Capital Territory will be beneficial to New South Wales residents who are catastrophically injured in a motor vehicle accident in the Australian Capital Territory, with the New South Wales authority well placed to integrate the necessary medical treatment and rehabilitation and support services for a New South Wales resident who unfortunately becomes a participant in the Australian Capital Territory scheme. I acknowledge the contribution of the Law Society of New South Wales and the New South Wales Bar Association in ensuring that the legislative framework for the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme remains robust and that the authority makes effective decisions in accordance with new section 11AA.

As members are aware, the bill inserts new section 11AA into the Act to clarify that the authority may satisfy its liability to pay for expenses incurred in relation to an injured person's treatment and care by making a reasonable contribution to another type of expenditure that will meet the broad ends but that had not been specified previously in the Act. This amendment will give the authority flexibility in meeting a participant's treatment and care needs by making an alternative payment that achieves the same outcome provided it is cost effective to do so.

I am aware that the New South Wales Bar Association and the Law Society of New South Wales have made submissions to the Government about this provision. As lawyers, they have raised some concerns about the scope of the provision. In particular, these bodies have asked the Government to ensure: first, that participants for whom a contribution to an alternative expenditure for a treatment and care need may be contemplated will not be disadvantaged by the authority making a contribution to alternative expenditure as permitted by new section 11AA; and, secondly, that participants and involved family members or carers agree or consent to the alternative expenditure contribution being made in order to meet their assessed treatment and care requirements.

In response to these concerns the authority has consulted with representatives of the Bar Association and Law Society on the terms of a statutory guideline to address these matters. A draft guideline has been agreed and will be gazetted once the legislation is enacted. It will implement appropriate guarantees to satisfy the concerns of the legal profession relating to the operation of new section 11AA. These are sensible amendments to an Act that is sound and good but that can be made to work even better in the interests of people in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory who may unfortunately be severely injured in a motor accident. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Menai) [7.09 p.m.]: I support the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Amendment Bill 2014. The purpose of this bill is to make changes to the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Act 2006, which provides for the treatment and care needs of persons injured in motor accidents who are in need of lifetime care and support [LTCS]. The changes include to clarify that the Lifetime Care and Support Authority may satisfy its liability to pay for expenses incurred in relation to an injured person's treatment and care needs by making a reasonable contribution to alternative expenditure that the authority is satisfied will provide for those needs in a cost-effective manner, and to enable the authority to enter into contracts with other local or interstate insurers and authorities with similar functions for the purpose of providing services to injured persons who are eligible under similar lifetime care schemes.

Under the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Act 2006 the Lifetime Care and Support Authority was established and is responsible for the administration of the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme. The scheme pays for all of the reasonable and necessary treatment and care expenses of people who have been seriously injured in a motor accident in New South Wales. Injuries may include spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, complex or multiple amputations as well as serious burns or blindness resulting from an accident. The Lifetime Care and Support Scheme is a New South Wales Government scheme, which is funded by a levy on green slips and compulsory third party insurance. It has been running since 1 October 2006 for children under 16 and 1 October 2007 for adults. This scheme currently covers all those injured in a motor vehicle accident, regardless of fault.

As at 30 June 2013, the LTCS Authority had accepted 965 people into the scheme. Of those, unfortunately 27 have died and 142 have left the scheme, leaving 796 participants in the scheme. There are now

438 lifetime participants in the scheme, which is an increase of 134 from last year. Children aged 15 years and under make up approximately 10.5 per cent of the current participants. Seventy-one per cent of all participants are male and 63 per cent of child participants are male. The scheme can pay for treatment, rehabilitation and care services to meet the needs related injuries sustained in motor vehicle accidents. This may include medical treatment such as hospital stays and doctor's appointments, rehabilitation, aids and equipment such as wheelchairs, home and vehicle modifications such as ramps or bathroom rails, attendant care services, including personal care, domestic services and home nursing as well as assistance to return to study or work. It is important to note that the services must be reasonable and necessary, and help with the injured person's goals for function and participation in daily life.

The Lifetime Care and Support Scheme is a leading scheme in Australia and is serving as a model for the development of the National Injury Insurance Scheme [NIIS]. To implement the NIIS for motor accidents, minimum benchmarks have been developed for State and Territory compensation schemes that have been modelled on the New South Wales scheme. All seven States and Territories have agreed to the benchmarks, including New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory [ACT]. To meet the minimum benchmarks, the ACT has enacted the Lifetime Care and Support (Catastrophic Injuries) Act 2014, thereby establishing the Australian Capital Territory's lifetime care and support scheme for people catastrophically injured in motor accidents—again, regardless of fault. The scheme provides for a lifetime care and support scheme that is essentially the same as the New Sales Wales scheme.

The Australian Capital Territory has requested the Lifetime Care and Support Authority assist the ACT by administering its support scheme. The Liberal-Nationals Government has agreed in principle to help the Australian Capital Territory, subject to suitable arrangements being entered into. The Minister has mentioned that once this legislation is enacted, he will propose to Cabinet that it endorse the intergovernmental agreement with the ACT. It is great when our State is recognised for doing the right thing and for doing it the best. I like that very much. I am also really pleased to be part of a Government that is willing to partner with others, and share our knowledge and learnings to assist another part of this fabulous country to develop laws that will provide the best outcome for citizens. It is always good to see States and Territories sharing their learnings so that teething problems that might be encountered with a new bill can be bypassed. I thank the Ministers involved in this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.14 p.m.], on behalf of the Minister for Finance and Services, in reply: I commence my reply to debate on the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Amendment Bill 2014 by thanking the members for Maroubra, Campbelltown, Riverstone and Menai for their contributions to the debate. The New South Wales Lifetime Care and Support Scheme is a leading scheme of its type in Australia. It is well placed to assist the administrators of like schemes to deliver treatment and care services to those who are catastrophically injured in accidents. This bill will enable the New South Wales Lifetime Care and Support Authority to share its expertise in the administration of schemes providing treatment and care to people who have been catastrophically injured in accidents, for the benefit of schemes similar to its own, whether in New South Wales or other Australian jurisdictions.

The immediate beneficiary of the power in the bill for New South Wales to make arrangements to administer other lifetime care and support schemes is the Australian Capital Territory's lifetime care and support scheme that was established on 1 July this year. The small number of people predicted to be eligible for participation in the ACT scheme means that it is unlikely, once established, to be an administrative burden for the New South Wales Authority to administer the ACT scheme; nor will it adversely impact on its service delivery obligations to participants in the New South Wales scheme.

The bill provides for the proper separation of accounts held on behalf of other lifetime care and support schemes in the New South Wales Lifetime Care and Support Authority Fund and specifically protects the New South Wales fund from any obligation to meet liabilities of the authority that arise out of an arrangement to administer another authority's care and support scheme. The bill also clarifies that the authority may satisfy its liability to pay for expenses incurred in relation to an injured person's treatment and care by making a reasonable contribution to another type of expenditure that will meet the same treatment and care need. This amendment will give the authority flexibility in meeting a participant's treatment and care needs by making an alternative payment that achieves the same outcome, provided that it is cost effective to do so.

In response to submissions made by the New South Wales Bar Association and the Law Society of New South Wales about the scope of the amendment, the authority also proposes to make a statutory guideline to clarify the scope of the new power to ensure, first, that the authority will consider making a contribution to

alternative expenditure under new section 11AA when the treatment or care outcome for the participant will more probably than not be at least equally beneficial to the outcome for the participant that would result from the payment of the expenses to meet the initial assessed treatment and care need and, secondly, that the authority obtains the agreement of the participant and any other person making or contributing to the alternative expenditure to the authority making a contribution to the alternative expenditure. This guideline is the result of cooperation between the authority and representatives of the legal profession. I appreciate the efforts of the profession in assisting the authority to ensure that its decision-making processes are robust and are for the benefit of participants in the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme. 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 John Sidoti, on behalf of Mr Dominic Perrottet, 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.**

### **WATER NSW BILL 2014**

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

### **BIOSECURITY BILL 2014**

#### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 23 October 2014.**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [7.19 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Biosecurity Bill 2014. The shadow Minister with the carriage of the matter is the Hon. Steve Whan in the other place. Labor will oppose this bill in this Chamber. The objects of the bill are as follows:

- (a) to provide a framework for the prevention, elimination and minimisation of biosecurity risks posed by biosecurity matter, dealing with biosecurity matter, carriers and potential carriers, and other activities that involve biosecurity matter, carriers or potential carriers,
- (b) to promote biosecurity as a shared responsibility between government, industry and communities,
- (c) to provide a framework for the timely and effective management of the following:
  - (i) pests, diseases, contaminants and other biosecurity matter that is economically significant for primary production industries,
  - (ii) threats to terrestrial and aquatic environments arising from pests, diseases, contaminants and other biosecurity matter,
  - (iii) public health and safety risks arising from contaminants, non-indigenous animals, bees, weeds and other biosecurity matter known to contribute to human health problems,
  - (iv) pests, diseases, contaminants and other biosecurity matter that may have an adverse effect on community activities and infrastructure,
- (d) to provide a framework for risk-based decision-making in relation to biosecurity,
- (e) to give effect to intergovernmental biosecurity agreements to which the State is a party,
- (f) to provide the means by which biosecurity requirements in other jurisdictions can be met, so as to maintain market access for industry.

Biosecurity is, self-evidently, critically important for New South Wales. Australia and New South Wales have a very strong record of protecting our environment and producers from disease, and from animal and plant pests.

We would, of course, all remember the impact of equine influenza and the very complex arrangements that needed to be put in place to eradicate that. And we all would have seen the devastating impact in other countries of foot and mouth disease. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences says a small-scale three-month outbreak of foot and mouth disease would cost our economy \$7.1 billion, while a 12-month duration large-scale outbreak was estimated to cost \$16 billion. The United Kingdom outbreak in 2001 is estimated to have cost the United Kingdom economy about \$10 billion, while an outbreak in South Korea resulted in destruction of 25 per cent of the national cow and swine herd.

Outbreaks of pests can be just as damaging. Australian bee keepers live in fear of the varroa mite, a parasite that is destroying bee populations in Asia, and we would all understand the danger of Queensland fruit fly in the Riverina. Plant diseases can be just as damaging. For example, imagine a new rust strain that destroys our wheat crop. Biosecurity covers weeds as well; as we all know, weeds cost our primary producers more than \$1.2 billion per annum. New South Wales is proud to have a reputation as a clean, green producer of food and biosecurity is a significant, pre-eminent and critical part of that. That is why we should be extremely cautious about changing the legislative structure that governs our power to deal with biosecurity—particularly entrusting this Government with a piece of legislation that essentially says, later on down the track we will come back with regulations. In her second reading speech the Minister said:

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 situation.

And of course she went on to claim that this was about reducing red tape. Well, when it comes to biosecurity it is entirely appropriate to have strong legislation. It is not just about reducing red tape; the Opposition agrees entirely with eliminating unnecessary or ineffective regulation, but we need to be sure that it is unnecessary or ineffective. During the time available so far for this bill to be considered, it appears the Government has created a vessel with a large portion remaining to be filled. This is a very substantial amount of legislation—some 152 pages. While I acknowledge there has been a consultation process leading up to the bill being introduced into this place, that actual bill has not had sufficient time to be discussed by the large range of groups that need to be consulted.

The Opposition has not yet heard the considered opinion of important constituent groups such as NSW Farmers, the Environmental Liaison Office, the Invasive Species Council, and other plant and animal grower or industry groups. Those groups simply have not yet had time to fully consider all aspects of the bill—a fact, I might add, made even more absurd by the proposition that the Opposition was handed a pile of amendments about three minutes ago. We do know that the Government rejected recommendations from its recent weeds review to establish a permitted list approach to the management of weeds, something both farmers and environmentalists wanted to see happen.

It does appear that there are substantial portions of this bill that reflect the powers available in previous legislation; to that extent, it may be a bill the Opposition would eventually support. However, it is a bill that requires significant consultation and the Opposition does not believe pushing the bill through the remaining three weeks of Parliament provides enough time to do that. I am reminded of Federal biosecurity legislation that was considered in 2012. When that was considered the President of NSW Farmers publicly complained that the draft legislation was open for public comment for only 30 days and not 90 days.

With this legislation the Government did not even release the proposed bill in its final form for public comment. Instead, it introduced it into this Chamber on 23 October with the expectation of it being passed through the Parliament in less than a month. The Opposition believes this is far too important a bill to be pushed through this Parliament, and on that basis we will oppose its passage now. Like so many things from this Minister, the Government has taken an excessively long time to come up with this legislation; and having taken 3½ years to get the legislation, it is unreasonable to expect all the people who might be impacted to consider it in less than a month.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** Do your jobs.

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** The interjector said, "Do your jobs." That member might tell his Minister not to give us amendments five minutes before the bill is debated. It is a classic example of the incompetence and stupidity of this Government, as drawn to the attention of the House by the member for Orange. I congratulate the member for Orange on his interjection.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! The member for Orange, the member for Northern Tablelands and the member for Myall Lakes will come to order. The member for Liverpool will be heard in silence.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** What is the standing order?

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** Why do you not observe the standing orders and stop interjecting? Unfortunately, this Government's record on biosecurity is very poor. This Minister, as a cost-saving measure, cut 50 biosecurity positions from the Department of Primary Industries. These were the scientific staff who actually worked to help eliminate equine influenza and who were absolutely critical to quick detection of potential biosecurity incursions. Their skills are now lost to the public sector. This Minister then created the debacle of the Local Land Services, abolishing catchment management authorities and livestock health and pest authorities, and creating this amalgam of these two quite different groups.

Along the way she lost most of our State's experienced extension officers, people who chose to leave rather than be offered generalist positions at lower levels in the new Local Land Services. These people were the on-the-ground team who worked when a biosecurity response was needed. We have complaints from the North Coast that this Minister's cuts have left the region short of the staff needed to deal with Hendra virus, and recently concerns from North Coast farmers that the Department of Primary Industries does not have enough staff to deal with an outbreak of cattle tick fever.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! The member for Monaro and the member for Orange will come to order. I call the member for Orange to order for the first time.

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** Frankly, this Minister cannot be trusted with an issue this important anymore.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! I call the member for Orange to order for the second time.

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** The member for Orange is intellectually incapable of dealing with this matter.

**Mr John Barilaro:** Point of order: The member's comments have nothing to do with the bill. I ask that he be directed to return to the leave of the bill.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! What is the member's point of order?

**Mr John Barilaro:** The member has strayed from the leave of the bill.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Standing Order 76.

**Mr John Barilaro:** There you go.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! The member for Liverpool may continue.

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** In accordance with the usual traditions of this place, in leading for the Opposition I am allowed to range widely. Granted this bill relates to biosecurity, the last point of order reflects an intellectual capacity that is rarely seen in this House. The consistent hallmark of the Minister's stewardship of the Primary Industries portfolio has been that she always puts Treasury's cost-cutting agenda ahead of the needs of farmers. This bill is too important to be rushed through by this Government. Labor will oppose it until those interested outside this Parliament have had the opportunity to provide feedback. We oppose the bill.

**Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [7.27 p.m.]:** That speech was pathetic.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Well, that's the pot calling the kettle black.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** Remove that member from the House, Madam-Speaker.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! The Chair will make those decisions. The member for Orange has the call and he will deal with the bill.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** It was an in good faith attempt to assist you in your duties, Madam-Speaker. The fact that the Opposition are opposing the Biosecurity Bill 2014 shows how absolutely bereft they are of support for the agricultural sector in New South Wales, and how bereft they are of an understanding of what is important to the New South Wales economy—and that is supporting the agricultural sector.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! The member for Northern Tablelands will come to order.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** The member for Northern Tablelands makes an extraordinarily valid point. That the member for Liverpool led for the Opposition on this bill shows how city-centric that lot on the other side are.

**Mr John Barilaro:** That's Country Labor.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** That is Country Labor. We saw it in Queanbeyan.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! The member for Orange will be heard in silence.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** I am happy for the member for Monaro to interject, Madam-Speaker.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! That is not a choice that the member for Orange can make. If he does not wish to resume his seat, I suggest he address the bill.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** We saw it in Queanbeyan on the weekend. At their big Country Labor conference they would have been lucky to have 100 people. There were hardly any of them down there. We all saw the photographs. There was Mick Veitch sitting in the front row, trying to work out where he went wrong with his payroll tax amendments and the \$200 million hole. We saw it all. The fact they are saying that they are opposing this bill I think speaks volumes about the level of their support, or lack thereof, for agriculture in New South Wales. I think it is disgraceful. I support this bill, along with all right-thinking members of this place. The Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to developing and implementing nationally consistent plant and animal biosecurity legislation by 2015. This is landmark legislation. The bill has so much to commend it. I will go through a few features for those opposite, because apparently they have not had time to read the bill or to process it.

**Mr John Barilaro:** We might draw them some pictures.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** Yes, we might. That is the Sydney-centric Labor Party of today.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay):** Order! I call the member for Monaro to order.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** Key components of the Biosecurity Bill 2014 include the general biosecurity duty to prevent, eliminate or minimise biosecurity risks and to control orders and biosecurity zones to provide consistent means to eradicate or manage serious biosecurity risks over varying periods. It also features emergency orders and authorised officer emergency powers to allow for swift and decisive action in biosecurity emergency situations and in line with national agreements. There are restrictions and requirements around prohibited matter—that is, matter that is either not in New South Wales or in certain parts of New South Wales—known to cause significant impacts to the economy, environment and community. Failure to notify of the existence of prohibited matter will attract a high penalty. There are registration requirements for certain activities to minimise disease and pest risks and threats to public health and safety and to assist with tracing in the event of a disease outbreak.

There are also biosecurity certificates and auditing—that is, accreditation of third-party certifiers to assist our industry with market assurance and access, and to reduce red tape. There are also consistent general authorised officer powers, including the ability to cooperate across multiple regions and levels of government. Further, there is recovery of compliance costs and compensation—that is, clearer cost recovery for services and equitable compensation arrangements in the case of emergencies. For offences and penalties there are higher penalties and the inclusion of strict liability offences for all offences under the bill that reflect the seriousness of these offences and the damage that can be caused to the economy, environment and community from biosecurity impacts. I understand that there are people from NSW Trade and Investment who have worked very hard on this landmark legislation and that many of them are watching via the video link. We are lucky to have these dedicated staff members in regional New South Wales.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Orange.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** Including in Orange, as the member for Northern Tablelands points out. These staff members have spent months putting this legislation together, only to have it churlishly brushed aside by the

cat's paw of the member for Liverpool. I apologise to all those hardworking officers from Trade and Investment on behalf of all right-thinking members for the fact that those opposite will not support this bill. I acknowledge those hardworking men and women from Biosecurity NSW, Bruce Christie, Andrew Sanger, Jane Gudde, Jess Bommer and Peter Regan. I also acknowledge Di Watkins, who is in the House tonight. We appreciate all the hard work of Biosecurity NSW staff. Those in the legal branch of Trade and Investment who contributed are Susan Alchin, Jacqueline Moore and Janine Kermodé, who is also in the House tonight. I also acknowledge Janine's husband, Andrew, who is another legal titan of the Central West. Although he did not have much to do with this bill, he was very supportive of Janine and is a wonderful asset to the legal community of New South Wales.

Once commenced this bill will cut red tape and make compliance easier, because the bill will remove the duplication and inconsistencies we currently have due to multiple pieces of issue-specific legislation. The streamlined, flexible and outcomes-based regulatory powers contained in the bill will meet our national obligations and protect New South Wales' enviable pest- and disease-free status, helping us maintain access to priority markets. This will benefit our primary industries and associated businesses, many of which are located in rural and regional areas, as well as the broader economy.

That is the point that those opposite failed to get. This bill is all about supporting regional New South Wales and the agricultural sector. This bill will provide a single, comprehensive and consistent legislative framework with scoping flexibility to regulate the many and connected biosecurity risks—both known risks and unknown risks—that have the potential to negatively impact our State. This bill will provide a best-practice approach to protecting our economy, environment and community and reinforce our reputation as an international leader in biosecurity management.

I thank all the hardworking staff members from Biosecurity NSW, NSW Trade and Investment and the Minister's office, including Scott Barrett, who is in the House tonight. I assure all those hardworking officers that their work is not in vain. Their support of the agricultural sector in New South Wales is not in vain, because the New South Wales Government will make sure that this legislation passes. We will support biosecurity and the agricultural sector in New South Wales, despite the churlish offerings of those opposite. Those opposite have let regional New South Wales down with the appalling approach they have taken to this bill. It is disappointing but, unfortunately, not surprising. Those opposite need to be condemned for that. All the hardworking officers are shaking their heads at the churlish approach, an approach that is in line with that of the bomb-thrower from the Legislative Council, Jeremy Buckingham. He tried to chuck grenades at this legislation, but this Government will support regional New South Wales and biosecurity. I commend this bill to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [7.37 p.m.]: I support the Biosecurity Bill 2014 and congratulate the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson, on bringing this bill before the House. I also commend the member for Orange for his outstanding contribution to this debate. His intellect is far greater than that of the previous speaker. The member for Orange is a great champion for his people and for agriculture across New South Wales. It is interesting that the member for Liverpool, who would not know what is on the other side of the sandstone curtain, led in debate on this bill for the Labor Party.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis):** Order! What is the member's point of order?

**Mr John Barilaro:** What is the standing order?

**Mr Paul Lynch:** I will answer the Acting-Speaker's question, not the question of the member for Monaro. My point of order relates to Standing Order 75. If the member for Myall Lakes wants to launch an attack on me he has to do so by way of substantive motion and not the disorderly way in which he is behaving.

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

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** That is typical of members of the Labor Party—when this side of the House is speaking the truth, they get upset and agitated and they raise spurious points of order.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The member is now straying well away from the leave of the bill. Whatever he is saying has nothing to do with the bill.

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

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** As soon as someone says anything, the member for Liverpool is up and at it rather than sitting and listening. He might learn about what is on the other side of the sandstone curtain—a thing called agriculture about which he knows nothing. For 16 years the Labor Party turned its back on and neglected regional New South Wales. The Labor Party did everything it could to wreck New South Wales and the member for Liverpool is a living and breathing example of that. The New South Wales Government is committed to making this State competitive and productive for its businesses and the community, and to making it number one again. The only way to make New South Wales number one again is by including regional New South Wales and not neglecting it as those opposite did.

This bill will promote economic growth—something those opposite do not know about; the member for Liverpool would not have a clue about what economic growth or fiscal responsibility is—and productivity by reducing red tape, encouraging and supporting innovation, and growing exports. New South Wales primary industries contribute approximately \$12 billion a year to the State's economy—not that those in Labor would ever care. While it is difficult to put a price on protecting the environment and our public's safety, nature-based tourism contributes approximately \$23 billion per annum to the Australian economy—something which The Nationals know all about and support. One of the many ways this bill will make the New South Wales economy more competitive is by recognising existing self-certification for quality assurance and market access, and making provision for the recognition of similar schemes in the future.

For 16 years those opposite were in government and never thought of anything like this. Let us look after the agricultural sector. For example, the bill recognises the Interstate Certification Assurance [ICA] scheme—a primary industries self-certification scheme in which the horticulture and nurseries industries are the major participants in New South Wales. This scheme allows New South Wales producers to certify that their produce is free from particular pests and/or diseases, or has been treated in a certain way and, therefore, meets the importation requirements of other jurisdictions. Under the ICA, producers can choose to have the Department of Primary Industries certify their goods or undertake accreditation for self-certification, depending on what is more cost effective for them.

Currently, while New South Wales is an active participant in the scheme, there is no legislative underpinning to sanction rogue operators. The bill includes offences for matters such as false and misleading information on certificates and other matters that can affect the scheme's integrity. It provides for the recognition of accredited certifiers and third party accrediting bodies and, thus, business opportunities. These tools will allow business to make informed decisions about where and when they will source accreditation or certification services. It will allow government to focus its resources on high-risk areas and operators. Therefore, it should result in reduced compliance costs for businesses, if they do the right thing, as audits will be performance linked, and more consistent audit performance will mean lower costs for complying businesses.

The bill provides greater certainty for the scheme's operation in New South Wales and also sufficient flexibility for other industries to adopt such a scheme, if warranted. This is not about leaving industry to fend for itself. This bill is outcomes focused and will allow industry to find the most cost-efficient means of meeting their obligations. It will protect New South Wales's enviable pest- and disease-free status, maintain access to priority markets, and maximise export and investment opportunities with major trading partners, which is exactly what the people in regional New South Wales want. Regional New South Wales has been looking for a Government that will look at trade and investment opportunities for the produce of New South Wales, which is the food bowl of Australia, and we are delivering.

When New South Wales is powering, Australia powers. This Government is making sure that New South Wales is number one again. When the Labor Party was on the government benches, with its coalition of Independent and Greens supporters, it let New South Wales go from the penthouse to the outhouse. Every indicator showed that New South Wales was the laggard of Australia, whether in employment, housing or business confidence. The triple-A credit rating was under threat; triple-A with a negative outlook. This Government came in with a five-point plan to turn this great State around and it has done that. Every economic indicator today shows that New South Wales is now the number one State in Australia again, where we belong and where it was when Labor took over at the commencement of its 16 years in office. For 16 years Labor wrecked the joint and we are turning it around.

In 3½ years we have done more than Labor did in its 16 years. Part of that is making sure that regional New South Wales is included in that dynamic change. Those members sitting on the benches behind me—the

member for Monaro, the member for Northern Tablelands, the member for Lismore, the member for Murray-Darling, that great member for Orange and the member for Port Macquarie—all support regional New South Wales. We want to ensure that when we turn New South Wales around regional New South Wales is part of it. Only The Nationals and the Liberal Party could do that. We turned around what those opposite wrecked in their 16 years. In her second reading speech that great Minister Katrina Hodgkinson stated:

[The bill] 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.

The bill aims to ensure an efficient and flexible response to biosecurity risks regardless of whether they are an emergency or an ongoing management issue. The Minister stated that a major biosecurity event can have far-reaching implications from on the farm to the entire nation's economy through trade restrictions. That is what this bill is all about. Shame on Labor for not supporting it. This bill is about protecting the biosecurity of this great nation and New South Wales, and Labor opposes it. It is unbelievable. As complex as this bill is, may I suggest that the problem is that it has no diagrams, graphs or pictures for the Opposition. For the member for Liverpool, who has an attention span of about five seconds, the bill was all too much. He could not understand the amendments. I would love to invite the poor member for Liverpool to come with me past the sandstone curtain and look at how real people work in this great country and how they need the support of a government. That is what we are delivering. It is with great honour and privilege that I support this bill and the Minister who introduced it.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.47 p.m.], on behalf of Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, in reply: On behalf of the Minister for Primary Industries, I foreshadow amendments that have been tabled with the Clerk. I thank members for their contributions to the debate: the member for Liverpool, the member for Orange and the member for Myall Lakes. This bill was a key election commitment of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. We undertook to make emergency preparedness and security from pests, weeds, diseases and contaminants a priority for this State and to introduce nationally consistent plant and animal biosecurity legislation by 2015. Years of work have gone into the development of this legislation. New South Wales is internationally recognised for its high-quality primary produce and its biodiverse natural landscapes enjoyed by local communities, tourists and key trading partners.

These assets and the economic activity they generate support vibrant rural and regional communities and New South Wales' place as a top destination for business and travel in the region. It is important that we have modern and flexible tools to protect them. The bill's risk-management framework, combined with the regional planning provisions prescribed in the Local Land Services Act 2013 will focus New South Wales government resources on the highest-risk activities, and will empower industry and the community to take a proactive role in biosecurity management. This Government trusts the people of New South Wales and businesses to manage low-risk activities, with guidance and support where necessary. For example, managing low-risk weeds is an area in which stakeholders could be more active.

The contribution of the member for Liverpool, who led for the Opposition on this bill, speaks volumes about how out of touch with the New South Wales primary industries sector he is. Those opposite claimed there has not been enough consultation on this reform. What an absurd statement. If they bothered taking any interest whatsoever in our crucial primary industries sector they would know we have been consulting for more than three years on these important changes, including during the development of the whole-of-government Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021, which the Minister for Primary Industries released last year.

That strategy, founded on the principle of shared responsibility or that everyone has a role to play in biosecurity, is reflected in this bill. Earlier this year we released the next step of that consultation, a framework to protect New South Wales, which underpinned the legislation currently before the House. More than 140 written submissions were received on that framework and the Department of Primary Industries met with 40 industry representatives at a forum and hosted two webinars on the framework, in which more than 200 people participated. Consultation with industry stakeholders will continue as the regulations that will implement the bill are developed.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is proud of its capacity to manage biosecurity risks, within the Department of Primary Industries, which this side re-established after years in the wilderness under the former Government. We are proud to have the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute. This bill recognises the breadth of our valuable State assets and industries, which could be impacted by a biosecurity risk. In doing so, it deliberately sets out a framework broad and flexible enough to protect them. This bill will make

the tools of biosecurity management more accessible, promote business opportunities, cut red tape and make more efficient use of public resources. Ultimately it will help us to work together and bring us closer to our 2021 vision for a strong economy, a biodiverse environment and safe, healthy communities. 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.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mrs Leslie Williams.**

### Consideration in Detail

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis):** By leave, I shall propose the bill in groups of clauses and schedules.

**Clauses 1 to 387 agreed to.**

**Schedule 1 agreed to.**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie-Parliamentary Secretary) [7.53 p.m.], by leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 8 on sheet C2014-145B, in globo:

**No. 1 Prohibited matter**

Page 134, Schedule 2, Part 1. Insert in Columns 1 and 2 after the matter relating to *Bactrocera papayae* (Asian papaya fruit fly):

<i>Bactrocera philippinensis</i>	Philippine fruit fly
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**No. 2 Prohibited matter**

Page 135, Schedule 2, Part 1. Insert in Columns 1 and 2 after the matter relating to *Ctenopseustis obliquana* (Brown headed leafroller):

<i>Dasineura mali</i>	Apple leaf curling midge
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**No. 3 Prohibited matter**

Page 136, Schedule 2, Part 1. Insert in Columns 1 and 2 after the matter relating to *Puccinia striiformis f. sp. hordei* (Barley stripe rust):

<i>Raffaelea laurelensis</i>	laurel wilt
<i>Ralstonia solanacearum</i>	race 2 moko
<i>Rhagoletis pomonella</i>	apple maggot
<i>Roesleria subterranean</i>	grape root rot
<i>Scirtothrips aurantii</i>	South African citrus thrips
<i>Sphaceloma perseae</i>	scab
<i>Spiroplasma citri</i>	stubborn
<i>Stagonospora sacchari</i>	leaf scorch
<i>Sternochetus frigidus</i>	mango pulp weevil
<i>Stromatium barbatum</i>	drywood longicorn beetle
<i>Synchytrium endobioticum</i>	potato wart
<i>Teratosphaeria zuluensis coniothyrium</i>	eucalypt canker
<i>Tetranychus piercei</i>	spider mite
<i>Tetranychus turkestanii</i>	strawberry spider mite
<i>Thaumatotibia leucotreta</i>	false codling moth
<i>Thrips palmi</i>	melon thrips
<i>Tilletia barclayana</i>	kernel smut of rice
<i>Tilletia indica</i> Karnal	bunt
Tomato yellow leaf curl virus	tomato yellow leaf curl virus
<i>Tomicus piniperda</i>	pine shoot beetle

<i>Trioza erytreae</i>	African citrus psyllid
<i>Trogoderma granarium</i>	Khapra beetle
<i>Urocerus gigas</i>	yellow-horned horntail
<i>Verticillium dahliae</i>	verticillium wilt (defoliating strain)
X disease phytoplasma	peach X disease
<i>Xanthomonas axonopodis</i> pv. <i>allii</i>	xanthomonas leaf blight
<i>Xanthomonas citri</i> subsp. <i>citri</i>	citrus canker
<i>Xanthomonas citri</i> subsp. <i>malvacearum</i>	bacterial blight/angular leaf spot
<i>Xanthomonas fragariae</i>	angular leaf spot
<i>Xylella fastidiosa</i>	Pierce's disease/citrus variegated chlorosis

No. 4 **Prohibited matter**

Page 141, Schedule 2, Part 1. Omit the following matter from Columns 1 and 2:

<i>Pheidole megacephala</i>	African big-headed ant
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No. 5 **Prohibited matter**

Page 145, Schedule 2, Part 1. Omit the following matter from Columns 1 and 2:

<i>Mytilopsis</i> spp. (all species)	Black-striped mussel
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No. 6 **Prohibited matter**

Page 146, Schedule 2, Part 1. Omit the following matter from Columns 1 and 2:

<i>Procambarus clarkii</i>	Red swamp crayfish
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No. 7 **Prohibited matter**

Page 147, Schedule 2, Part 1. Omit the matter relating to *Mytilopsis sallei* (Black-striped mussel) from Columns 1 and 2. Insert instead:

<i>Mytilopsis</i> spp. (all species)	Black-striped mussel
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No. 8 **Prohibited matter**

Page 148, Schedule 2, Part 1. Insert the following matter in Columns 1 and 2 after the matter relating to *Potamocorbula amurensis* (Asian clam, brackish-water corbula):

<i>Procambarus clarkii</i>	Red swamp crayfish
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**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [7.53 p.m.]: I make a very brief point. We will not vote against the amendments but we were given them about half an hour ago. It is rather eloquent confirmation of the points I made about how the process of this bill has been mucked up in that the Government is introducing amendments to its own bill at the same time it is introduced in this House.

**Question—That Government amendments Nos 1 to 8 [C2014-145B] be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Government amendments Nos 1 to 8 [C2014-145B] agreed to.**

**Schedule 2 as amended agreed to.**

**Schedules 3 to 5 agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail concluded.**

### Third Reading

**Motion by Mrs Leslie Williams, on behalf of Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, 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.**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (ELECTIONS) BILL 2014****Second Reading****Debate resumed from 22 October 2014.**

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [7.55 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014. The shadow Minister, the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, in the other place has carriage of the matter. I ask: What is the Government's hurry in trying to rush through legislation again to tinker with the provisions of the Local Government Act? There is absolutely no need. I have said repeatedly in this House that by constantly tinkering with a fine piece of legislation that was enacted in 1993 the Parliament has made it completely unworkable.

The current Minister for Local Government is again tinkering with a bill in respect of local government elections that are not due to be held for two years. There is no pressing urgency for this tinkering no matter where the idea comes from. The Minister for Local Government is continuing, as has this Parliament for a number of years, to trash the legacy of Gerry Peacocke's 1993 Act, which was groundbreaking legislation. If one wants to know what is wrong with the Local Government Act one should consider the repeated changes that the Parliament has made since 1993 that have made the legislation unworkable.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** Here we go.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** The member for Orange interjects. He may think I do not know what I am talking about, but I remind the member for Orange that two weeks ago I proposed an amendment in respect of the legislation concerning red tape and I said that rushing the bill through was a mistake. Members opposite all interjected and screamed out, the Minister went and got advice and on a division on the amendment those opposite all sat together—in effect, on the wrong side of the House—but the Government in the other place is moving the very amendment that it knocked over in this House.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis):** Order! If Government members do not come to order they will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I know that there are only seven more sitting days and some members will not be here after that and I know that they are feeling the pressure, but I remind those opposite that they will be judged in five months time because they are legislators and they have a responsibility for the laws that they are passing in this House. It is important when matters of substance are raised in respect of legislation that some intelligence is applied rather than members just running to one side of the House like Pavlov's dog, salivating together, instead of looking at the bill and giving it consideration. What is the hurry to rush this bill through Parliament? I understand completely that the government of the day wants to introduce this legislation to deal with Sydney city council to get rid of the troublesome Lord Mayor. For 100 years this House and the government of the day have been trying to change the political make-up of the Sydney city council—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: It is Standing Order 76. I have an enormous amount of respect for the member for Heffron but he is referring to matters past. He should address the bill and I remind him that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters recommended these changes. The claim that these matters have not been considered properly is irrelevant.

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** For 100 years this House and the government of the day have sought to fiddle with the election mechanism to change the political make-up of the Sydney city council to suit the political make-up of the government of the day. I understand that issue but now the Government is starting to intrude on other election provisions in an ad hoc manner for no purpose whatsoever. The Government has indicated that it is seeking the cooperation of local government until 30 June next year to effect restructuring decisions. Yesterday neither the Premier nor the local government Minister would give an undertaking to this House that they would adhere to their policy of no forced amalgamations.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** But you want to amalgamate them, Ron.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I have unlimited time so I can speak for two days. We should get to the substance of the philosophical issues and differences between us. The Minister for Local Government is acting like a petulant child who has been caught out, as he was caught out two weeks ago.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: Reflections on members should be by way of substantive motion. It is inappropriate and unparliamentary—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis):** Order! There is no point of order. I remind the member for Heffron to return to the leave of the bill.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I am dealing with the leave of the bill and the interjections by the Minister for Local Government, who is screaming out like a banshee. The reality of the situation is that this Government has had a series of reviews about what should occur in local government. It has had an independent tribunal and a review of the Local Government Act and its response is the Fit for the Future package.

**Mr Paul Toole:** You were there.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** No, I was not there. The former Minister for Local Government understood that one size did not fit all councils, but he knew he had to persuade people from all parts of the political spectrum that there was a need for reform and that it had to be done on a bipartisan basis. That is what every great Minister for Local Government has done, whether it was the great Gerry Peacocke, Ernie Page, the member for Auburn or the member for Liverpool. Certainly the member for Ballina did it that way. The member for Ballina persuaded me that there was a legitimate need to review councils. He was a Minister who was highly regarded across the political spectrum. Since his departure from that office there have been a series of fiddles with election mechanisms and there is no need for it because no council election is due for two years. Irrespective of which party wins the election next year, one way or the other there will be major reforms to local government.

This bill is compounding a series of legislative errors. I propose that the bill be considered in detail. I have amendments to two major provisions, which I will now hand to the clerks and provide a copy to the Minister for Local Government in case he wishes to receive advice in respect of it. I wish to address each of the major portions of the bill. In my view, many of the amendments proposed in the bill lack proper public policy rationale. Some of them are a thinly veiled effort to make local government election results more favourable to conservative candidates.

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** The first major area deals with the countback system of votes to fill casual vacancies. Caution is needed when considering the countback system to ensure that errors are not made that result in councillors being elected who were not intended to be elected. It should be similar to the Legislative Council election where the person who fills the vacancy is next in order on the ticket. The bill has to be worded particularly carefully to avoid the countback system resulting in the election of an opponent. I have read the wording of this bill and it seems to cover all areas. It refers to regulations but the members who have experience in local government should ensure that the bill gives effect to the Government's intention. A word in the wrong place could lead to the wrong candidate being replaced.

Labor does not support local government elections being conducted by anyone other than the New South Wales Electoral Commission. Having said that, in the 2012 local government elections the Botany Bay City Council chose to run its own elections in accordance with the proposed legislation. In 2008 a parliamentary inquiry was prompted because rather than being a government service with reasonable charges, the Electoral Commission gouged money out of councils for elections and it cost councils a fortune. At the request of the Local Government Association the current Government legislated that councils were able to conduct their own elections and it compelled the Electoral Commissioner to effectively tender and offer councils a cost. I asked the general manager of Botany Bay city council what the 2012 election cost the council. She sent me an email in which she said that it cost the City of Botany Bay council \$157,039 to conduct the 2012 elections. Indicative costs from the New South Wales Electoral Commission to conduct the 2012 elections amounted to approximately \$213,000. So there were savings of \$55,961, or 26 per cent, on the projected cost.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** That's why we changed the law.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** The member for Kiama is interjecting that that is why the law was changed. The reality is that had the Electoral Commissioner not gouged councils in 2008—it was not done in 2004—the demand would never have been made. I have always been a supporter of the Electoral Commissioner conducting elections. Even in the 1980s when the council appointed an independent person to act as a returning officer, because it did not want the general manager to do so, I was subject to a fair bit of criticism at the time; it was

unheard of. I instigated and put to the Government that the commissioner should conduct future local government elections, and I have been the greatest supporter of the commissioner conducting local government elections.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Except in your own council.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I gave the member for Kiama reasons for that, and I have just given him the costings. The Electoral Commissioner created an environment basically to force councils away. That created another problem for councils that wanted to conduct their own elections. Modern-day senior council officers are not experienced in counting in proportional representation voting systems. The old guard—people such as John Rayner or Jim Montague—and senior people have been doing it all their lives and are experienced at it, but the latter-day or modern general managers have never had to do it because the Electoral Commissioner has been doing it for so long. Consequently they outsource their services to a particular election company, and I am told that has problems.

Labor would rather the Electoral Commissioner stopped gouging councils, charged them a reasonable amount and adopted a reasonable approach. That would provide a consistent approach to elections being conducted. The provision that creates a permanent roll for non-resident voters is opposed, and the amendments that I propose delete that provision. The New South Wales Government has previously enacted legislation in its current form in respect of the non-residential roll. The advice was that council elections could be invalidated if non-resident rolls were not maintained adequately. It was considered that it was best to compel the maintenance of a roll simply to encourage non-residential ratepayers more easily to vote or encourage them—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Encouraging them is about leaving them on the roll.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** They can always apply to be on the roll, but the situation is that if they remain on the roll and they are no longer there but somebody votes, then the roll is invalid and the election may be invalidated. That advice was given to the former Government.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Say that about a consistent roll.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** The member for Kiama should stop bleating and listen to my suggestion. I suggest that the advice must be available to the Minister, as it has been available to former Ministers. The Minister should look at the advice before this bill passes through the other place to assure the Government that it is on solid ground. Often there is a difference between advice from a department, for example, and advice from the Crown Solicitor or independent counsel. Bear in mind that is advice to the Government. It should not be political and it should be available to the Minister.

As one would expect, the aspect of the bill concerning postal voting is strongly opposed. We seek to have that rejected and the amendments I propose in respect of deleting postal voting options are for that purpose. Only 3.5 per cent of people voted by postal vote in 2012. As members opposite would know, the circumstances relating to elections are changing. The greatest growth in polling at any form of election is not postal votes; in fact, it is pre-poll votes. Those numbers are increasing. The election system, as best as possible, should be identical for local government and the State and Commonwealth parliaments. There should be no difference. If councils are a legitimate tier of government, their mechanism for voting should be the same. Therefore, it is important to maintain the same system. I do not support giving councils the discretion because those decisions become political and get based upon self-interest. That is a public policy decision that the State should make.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** You don't have any faith in councils.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** No, I do not in respect of elections. The members opposite should not have faith in them either in respect of voluntary amalgamations. It will not matter how much money the Government is offering because councils back self-interest every time.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** It worked in Canada Bay.

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** It did not work well at all. I suggest that members opposite talk to Canada Bay council. We should aim as a matter of public policy for consistent election systems between three tiers of

government. We should not give councils the option of deciding a voting system. Another problem with postal voting is that it does not encourage formal votes. For example, it does not encourage people from non-English speaking backgrounds to participate in the democratic system. One can imagine someone with limited English skills receiving a postal voting application form in the mail; the application will end up going straight in the bin. We are trying to encourage more people to participate in local government democracy. Fines apply if they do not participate in local government democracy.

If we can maximise the number of people voting in local government elections we might get better outcomes from the candidates who are being elected. To copy systems from other States, as the independent review panel sought to do, misunderstands the situation completely. We cannot look at the systems in Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia because they have voluntary local government elections; they do not have compulsory voting. It is a completely different system and structure. For a three-year period in the 1970s we did not have compulsory voting, and there was a 3 per cent or 4 per cent turnout at some local government elections. In places like South Australia people remain in office for 30 years and 40 years—

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Like you.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** At least I was elected by 85 per cent of the vote.

[*Interruption*]

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** Those people are able to maintain their position based on 3 per cent or 5 per cent of the vote. Let me tell members how that manifests itself. When there is voluntary voting, if 200 people in a senior citizen centre make a demand on a mayor or councillor they often get their way. When 200 people make a demand on a mayor who is elected by popular vote from a whole constituency, there is a much better chance of decisions being made in the interests of the whole community rather than the mayor being intimidated by a couple of hundred people. In Queensland councillors are full time, they have their own wards and officers and they get paid. Mayors get paid the equivalent of members of Parliament and I think councillors get paid almost the equivalent of members of Parliament. One of the public policy decisions that is constantly made in New South Wales is that mayors and councillors are not full-time positions.

They do not necessarily have the same role as that of members of Parliament. Indeed, each of the reviews by the independent panel and the one chaired by Mr Turner recommended that consideration should be given to that. When panels such as these make that sort of recommendation I worry about the premise of their other recommendations. Those of us who have served in local government know what is involved in the job. In my view it is not a full-time job and, from what I can gather from the interjections, those opposite do not think it is either. When looking at the premise of the people writing these reports one has to wonder about the other premises. Indeed, when a Minister introduces legislation that has come from bits and pieces of one or other of those reports one has to wonder about the basis of the premise.

The postal voting issue follows the South Australian model. It will not result in any cost savings and the Opposition opposes it. In respect of the non-residential roll, there would be a not insignificant administrative cost in recovering and waiving fines for those who had left the area and did not vote. Labor believes that, as much as possible, local, State and Federal elections should be conducted on the same basis in order to make democratic participation simple and easy for voters. I suggest that the proposed changes to our local government elections risk this State drifting to the South Australian and Western Australian models, under which more than two-thirds of the people do not participate in that democracy.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [8.22 p.m.]:** I speak in support of the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014. I wish to congratulate the best Minister for Local Government this State has had. The Minister understands local government, having come from a local government background. I know that it is steeped in his family. I am also pleased to see that many of the reforms proposed in the bill have emanated from recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, which I chair, and our recent inquiry into the previous local government elections.

The bill proposes a number of amendments to the Local Government Act 1993. I will address them shortly but, first, I will respond to the comments made by the member for Heffron. The member made a couple of interesting statements. He talked about the democracy of council meetings. The member for Northern

Tablelands remarked to me that he used to enjoy watching the webcast of Botany Bay city council meetings—something strange to do in one's spare time. He remarked that if he went out to get a coffee he would probably miss the meeting because Lord Hoenig would walk into the council meeting and table his mayoral minutes, which would be adopted in full. The member for Heffron is incredibly experienced in local government, for which I have a great deal of respect, but I remind him that the committee that inquired into these matters was bipartisan and the recommendations in this bill were supported by his party.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** That does not make it right.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** The member interjects that that does not make it right. What he is really saying is that the members on the committee who represent the Labor Party are idiots—with that I would agree. It was a bipartisan committee. It is not correct to say that there is no bipartisanship. The committee took evidence from a number of bodies, including the Local Government NSW, whose president supports that body of the report. He made it quite clear publicly that—

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** He is a dope too.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I acknowledge the interjection that the member for Heffron believes that Keith Rhoades is a dope. I do not believe that. I think Keith Rhoades is doing a tremendous job steering local government in the right direction. I really enjoyed the commentary from the member for Heffron that Labor supports the Electoral Commission except in Botany Bay. He said, "We support the Electoral Commission running elections but what did we do in our own council? We used the Government's amendments to run our elections."

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Christopher Gulaptis):** Order! The member for Bankstown will resume her seat. All members should refrain from walking across the Chamber. The member for Kiama has the call.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I strongly supported those amendments because councils should have the option. The Australian Election Company was the only other organisation that conducted those elections and by every report they were conducted fairly and reasonably. I support the amendment to give councils that choice—a choice that the council of the member for Heffron took up. Apparently Labor supports the Australian Electoral Commission and would not countenance using anything else. I found it interesting that the member for Heffron talked about democracy. North Korea has more democracy than Botany Bay. The number of elections that used to be held in Botany Bay were few and far between. I am sure that was because—

**Mr John Sidoti:** They liked the mayor.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Yes, they did like his work. I do not dispute that he was a very effective local government councillor and, obviously, a very popular and well-respected mayor. I make it clear that postal voting is optional for councils. I disagree with the assessment by the member for Heffron about not trusting councils to make this decision. Those on this side of the House have a policy of returning local decisions to local communities. Indeed, we took that commitment to the last election. I support the concept of letting councils decide what is best for them. I was perplexed by the member's comments about the non-residential roll. Who looks after the roll of rates for non-residential properties? The council. Who is going to be able to assess who should and should not be on the non-residential roll? The council. I do not understand his argument. Perhaps I need to hear more from him about that.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Let's bring him back.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** No. We do not need to hear anything more; he did a very good job the first time round. I can allay the concerns of the member for Heffron in respect of that. This bill is about reducing costs and improving the administration of council elections. The bill requires councils that administer their own elections to demonstrate to their communities that they have the capacity to do so, before it is too late for them to engage the Electoral Commissioner. One council in particular said that it was going to run its own elections but could not and had to belatedly engage the Electoral Commissioner. That was a very sensible council—tick to the Minister.

The bill contains amendments to ensure that councils that choose to administer their own elections have access to soft copy information contained in the electoral roll that is necessary for the effective administration of their elections and to ensure that this information is used solely for the purposes of administering the election.

Evidence was given to the committee that indicated the Electoral Commission was less than helpful in providing electronic rolls to help administer those elections for councils that had made the decision to engage someone else. It is only fair that those soft copies should be made available. The bill proposes to allow councils to avoid the significant expense of holding a by-election to fill vacancies that arise in the first 18 months of their term by giving them the option of using a countback system based on votes cast at the last ordinary election.

I want to allay the concerns of the member for Heffron. I do not believe we will have the situation as he outlined where people will benefit from the countback system who should not otherwise do so. The provision is sound. It mirrors similar provisions in the Australian Capital Territory that relate to countback elections. It makes good sense to give councils that option. If someone does not wish to continue as a councillor then councils will have the option of using a countback model. The bill builds on the reforms to non-residential enrolments for the City of Sydney and promotes non-residential voter participation at other council elections by allowing the City of Sydney the option of conducting its elections by universal postal voting instead of attendance voting and extending this to all councils in the future. I note that the Lord Mayor of Sydney put out a mayoral minute condemning this proposal. We are absolutely distraught. We are quaking in our boots that the Lord Mayor would be against this proposal.

Of course, she is against the proposal because she does not want to have to take into consideration that the business community constitutes 78.5 per cent of the rates revenue of her council. For the first time, Lord Mayor Clover Moore will have to give as much weight to business interests as she gives to community interests should she wish to win the next election. Given that approximately 8 per cent of the nation's gross domestic product comes from the City of Sydney, I think that is highly appropriate. This Minister for Local Government had the guts to make the reform that members of the Opposition, controlled by the union movement, were not prepared to do.

The bill will boost non-residential elector participation in elections for councils other than the City of Sydney by relieving non-residential voters of the need to reapply to vote at each election. That was part of the gerrymander established by Labor. Opposition members talk about misusing electoral law but who changed the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly in order to benefit their own interests in the run-up to redistribution? It was the Labor Party. Time and time again, the Labor Party has emasculated this State's electoral legislation to its own tawdry, ridiculous, corrupt benefit. Members of the Opposition should not lecture me on reforms to the electoral system because they are the past masters. They wrote the playbook on rorting the system in that regard.

In relation to the amendments proposed to the Local Government (General) Regulation, the amendments to the Act will be complimented by amendments to the regulation, which will be developed in close consultation with the NSW Electoral Commissioner. These amendments will prescribe the detailed procedural requirements for the use of countbacks to fill vacancies and conducting universal postal voting in elections. In addition, the amendments to the regulation will give effect to a number of other recommendations of the committee. In particular, they will improve the administration of elections by requiring the Electoral Commissioner to report to the Minister on council elections, to add to the candidate data currently collected by the Office of Local Government, and to provide information about candidate membership of registered political parties for the purpose of identifying candidate participation trends to inform future policy development.

The amendments also require the Electoral Commissioner and general managers of councils that administer their own elections to report voter turnout numbers. There are also improvements to participation in elections by abolishing the qualification requirements for postal and pre-poll voting for voters in the City of Sydney, allowing all voters—including non-residential voters—to cast their vote this way should they choose to do so, and extending this to all council areas in the future, which I believe is a good reform. Instead of having a gerrymander whereby people have to enrol each time, they will be on the roll permanently. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I am pleased that that was not a conscience vote. The Government recently demonstrated its commitment to promoting voter participation in council elections in its support for the recently enacted City of Sydney (Elections) Act 2014. This saw the introduction of a new model for non-residential elector enrolment in Sydney, also recommended by the committee, that is based on the one used for the City of Melbourne. Importantly, this reform addresses a longstanding democratic anomaly, which at the most recent election saw those who contribute 78.5 per cent of the council's ratepayer revenue constitute only 2.13 per cent of the votes. The major element of this model requires the City of Sydney to automatically enrol non-residential electors using the same method that is used in Melbourne. This will mean that, as with residential electors, non-residential electors will be automatically enrolled without having to apply formally.

Having made this significant reform, I am pleased to see that, through this bill and amendments to the regulation, the Government now seeks to remove some of the barriers and disincentives that may operate to deter the soon-to-be automatically enrolled non-residential electors in the City of Sydney from exercising their right to vote at the next election for that council. I think all members of this House would agree that we need to make it easier for those people who have a recognised franchise to exercise that. Who wants to extend the barriers? It is those opposite. In particular, I am pleased to hear that the Government intends to adopt the committee's recommendation to remove the qualification requirements for postal and pre-poll voting for elections for the City of Sydney, allowing all electors to choose to exercise their vote this way. This will particularly benefit non-residential electors, who may find it more difficult than residential electors to attend a polling place in the Sydney local government area on polling day to exercise their right to vote.

I believe this is a worthy reform and I am pleased to hear that the Government also proposes to expand it to other local government areas in the future. I commend the Minister for that decision. I am also pleased to see that the bill proposes to enable the City of Sydney to determine that voting at its elections may be conducted exclusively by means of postal voting instead of attendance voting. Again, this will allow the City of Sydney to exercise this option to promote non-residential elector participation at its elections should it choose to do so. The Victorian experience has demonstrated the benefits of universal postal voting in terms of increased voter participation and lower election administration costs—completely contrary to what we heard earlier.

I am therefore pleased that it is proposed also to eventually extend these potential benefits to other local government areas, which include lower costs for ratepayers and greater participation. Of course, the member for Bankstown does not want people to participate in any ballot other than the ballot in Auburn, where she is trying to do over Barbara Perry. She should get back to work on her branch stacking. The M4 may have saved Anna Watson but it will not save the member for Auburn. I am sure the member for Bankstown is working on it.

Finally, in the debate about the recent amendments to the City of Sydney Act we heard acknowledgment from both sides of the House of the significant barriers faced by non-residential electors who wish to exercise their votes at successive council elections. It is indefensible that non-residential electors must go to the trouble of having to formally reapply to be re-enrolled in order to vote at each council election. Such an onerous requirement serves no identifiable policy benefit and operates only to deter non-residential electors from enrolling—clearly to the benefit of The Greens and the Labor Party. This is amply demonstrated by the low non-residential enrolment numbers in all council areas.

It is therefore both timely and appropriate that this bill maintain the reform momentum of the City of Sydney amendments by making it easier for non-residential voters in other local government areas to participate in elections for their councils by removing the requirement for them to re-enrol after each ordinary local government election in order to vote at the next election. This legislation is about democracy—something those opposite know nothing about. The Minister for Local Government has said that we want to encourage those who have a recognised franchise to exercise their vote, and this Government is doing that by giving councils the option. We believe councils are the right bodies to make those decisions.

The member leading for the Opposition in this place today said that he does not trust councils. But those on this side of the House do: We put our faith in elected local representatives to make decisions. Of course, I am not surprised that a party based on socialism has no interest in property rights and allowing people to have some say in how their rates are paid and allocated. I am not surprised that the socialist lot opposite are not interested in any way in ensuring that people who have a recognised right to vote have a say. Clearly, the member for Mount Druitt and the rest of his comrades want to extinguish the rights of those who are making an enormous contribution to council coffers. We will not do that. This Minister has stood up for those people; this Government will stand up for those people. I commend the bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Bankstown will resume her seat. Members will refrain from walking across the Chamber.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [8.37 p.m.]:** The Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 is this Government's latest chapter in its book on how to manipulate local government elections. The City of Sydney's corruption-free and stable government is again the focus of yet another attack from a Liberal government. Parliament recently passed legislation that doubled the vote for big businesses and property owners while residents get only one vote. The Government's aim is to reduce the influence of residents in City of Sydney elections, given that they have a proven tendency to elect Clover Moore. That bill, which changed voting rules and fundamentally impacted on democracy, was rushed through Parliament without independent assessment.

Just as we were told at the outset of debate on that bill that the process had bipartisan support only for the Government to be proven wrong, we have just heard from the member for Kiama that the recommendation for compulsory postal voting had bipartisan support, which is also wrong. The minutes of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters reflect that Labor members dissented. Of course, the bipartisan approach that the Government is referring to is obviously the bipartisan approach adopted by the Government and the Shooters and Fishers Party. We know there is strong bipartisan support for them to join forces.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Kiama will cease interjecting. He has made his contribution to the debate.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** Under this bill, the Government proposes that the City of Sydney council choose to conduct its future elections exclusively by postal voting. Under the current system, voters cast their vote at booths across the local government area on polling day or at pre-polling locations in the two weeks before—which, as the member for Heffron said, is becoming increasingly popular—or they can opt for a postal vote. The bill will allow a council to remove attendance voting options and restrict elections entirely to postal votes. It is difficult to understand how removing voting options can improve democracy. In introducing the bill, the Minister referred to the so-called "compelling" benefits of universal postal voting for voter participation. He quoted the 2012 council elections in Victoria where councils with universal postal voting had a turnout of 72.53 per cent, compared with 63.62 per cent for other councils.

These so-called "compelling" figures reflect the outcomes for 70 Victorian councils that conducted elections entirely by postal vote and eight that maintained attendance voting. While the Victorian Electoral Commission speculated at a Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters hearing on 28 February that the increased turnout could be due to the convenience of postal voting, the evidence is far from conclusive; this proposal needs close assessment. The number of councils with attendance voting is small, which makes comparisons difficult and could reflect the effect of other factors. Furthermore, while representatives from the Victorian Electoral Commission stated that exclusive postal voting increases the turnout for people aged over 70 years and non-resident voters, there has been no assessment of the impact on other voters.

How would exclusive postal voting affect young people and those living in share houses? Many young people do not check their mail and have piles of unopened incoming mail in their home. I regularly hear from constituents who fail to open infringement notices until it is too late. Many of my constituents are time poor, and the added paperwork associated with postal voting compared with just arriving at a polling booth on election weekend may in fact prove to be an impediment for some. At this time it would be more useful for the Government to put its energy into introducing more ways for eligible electors to cast their vote by allowing for electronic or iVoting at local council elections. I note that this was also a recommendation of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and hope that the Government looks to embrace iVoting for local council elections. This would surely encourage more people to vote, especially younger voters, and reduce informal voting.

Postal voting campaigns are expensive to run. If postal voting is compulsory, the candidates who can afford postal vote campaigns, in addition to the Electoral Commission's enrolment campaign, will have an unfair advantage—especially given there are no spending caps for local government election campaigns. The Government could provide postal voting for non-resident voters while referring the matter of exclusive postal voting for residents to the Local Government Acts Taskforce to investigate its impacts. Democracy is too important to take any chances with it. This is too important an issue to be rushed through this place. As the member for Heffron said, a local government election is not due for another two years. My City of Sydney Amendment (Business Voting and Council Elections) Bill 2014 included automatic postal voting for businesses, property owners and ratepayers while giving them the ability to opt out. The Government should have supported that proposal.

If councils can limit elections exclusively to postal votes, they will choose whichever option is most likely to reinstate their power. That is completely undemocratic. One cannot help but wonder what the motives are. I am also opposed to changes that would make the non-residential rolls permanent for all local government areas. As I stated when permanent non-residential rolls were introduced in the City of Sydney elections, they can be dangerously inaccurate and open to rorting because non-residential voters can be on multiple local government rolls and do not have triggers to keep their details up to date. In 1995 the Crown Solicitor identified such serious inaccuracies with the permanent non-residential City of Sydney rolls that it concluded it was "unsafe to hold an election" and, following its advice, non-residential rolls were destroyed after each election.

My bill on business voting created permanent registers for non-residential voters that the Electoral Commissioner would confirm before each election, ensuring the accuracy of the roll while removing the requirement for businesses to re-enrol for each election.

The bill does improve transparency for councils that run their elections, which I support. I do not oppose provisions to allow a council to fill a councillor vacancy through a countback system. However, I understand there are different models and there should be an independent assessment of the proposed model before it is implemented. A healthy democracy does not change voting rules without being absolutely sure that the changes will not disillusion or alienate voters. The issue should not be the "cost per vote" but rather maximising the opportunity for eligible citizens to vote. How can reducing the ways that people are able to cast their vote improve democracy? The Government's agenda is to manipulate the outcome of local government elections and I do not support the bill.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [8.44 p.m.]: I support the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014. I do so proudly as someone who spent around nine years in local government, and about half of those as mayor. I was also the senior vice president of the Shires Association of NSW, which will become very relevant later in my contribution when I touch on other topics and respond to some of the comments made in this debate. I am not surprised that the Opposition will not support the bill. Opposition members showed during their time in government—and Labor had a series of local government Ministers—a reluctance to tackle the tough issues in local government and to make reforms. Not everyone is always happy when reform occurs; yet the sector acknowledges that it must. In fact, it has been acknowledging this and crying out for some government and some Minister to show leadership on that issue for some time.

I know that because I was involved in the sector until a short time ago. I have been to many conferences, of both the Shires Association of NSW and Local Government NSW, where this issue was raised. I remember a number of great speeches being made at Local Government NSW conferences by the member for Heffron calling on governments to give more autonomy to local councils to make the necessary reforms. Like me and everyone else associated with the sector, he could see that doing nothing was simply not an option. Change had to be made. That was the genesis of the Destination 2036 forum in August 2011. Many people who are now in this place attended that forum. I was there too. The current Minister for Local Government attended; he was Mayor of Bathurst at the time. We heard earlier that, disappointingly, the member for Heffron was not at the forum, but no doubt his council was represented. Many of the amendments in this bill had their genesis at that forum. Everyone in local government in this State came together and agreed on a format, a schedule and a number of issues to reform local government to make it stronger. That formed the basis of the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, and those recommendations have been brought forward in part in this legislation.

I will respond to a couple of points made by the member for Heffron and the member for Sydney. The common theme was that the bill has been rushed and that a local government election will not be held until September 2016. But is the fact that there will not be an election for two years a reason not to make reforms? The reforms have not been rushed; we discussed them in August 2011. The then Minister for Local Government and member for Ballina, the Hon. Don Page, subsequently introduced various legislative reforms to give councils the option of running their own elections. As the member for Heffron said correctly, the NSW Electoral Commissioner, Colin Barry, was ripping councils off. He was robbing them absolutely blind so many councils chose to go down a different route—which caused the NSW Electoral Commissioner to sharpen his pencil.

We have had recommendations from the independent local government review panel and from the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. It can hardly be said that this bill or the changes within it have been rushed. In fact, they have been telegraphed very clearly to the sector—which members would know if they bothered to talk to those in local government about it. That is the clear message being sent by the local government sector. The member for Heffron said that he fully supports the NSW Electoral Commission and that Labor is philosophically opposed to the provision that allows councils to use anyone other than the NSW Electoral Commissioner to conduct elections. Yet in 2012 his council did not use the NSW Electoral Commissioner; it decided to use someone else. That would seem to be a slight contradiction. Nevertheless, it proves the point that the NSW Electoral Commission may deliver a good outcome in running elections in some instances, but not all.

In fact, if we are serious about treating local government as a mature, autonomous level of government—it is one of the three spheres of government in this country—we should give it the ability to determine who conducts its elections, while the rules are established consistently across the State and applied to

all. To illustrate that point, in 2012, 14 councils chose not to use the Electoral Commission to conduct their elections. I was mayor of one such council: Gunnedah Shire Council. We were one of two councils in the State that decided to appoint an independent returning officer. The NSW Electoral Commission quoted the council a cost of \$66,000 to conduct the 2012 local government election. We thought we could do it for \$52,000.

We opted to appoint our own independent returning officer. We were actually wrong. The election actually cost a lot less than \$52,000. We made a saving of in excess of \$14,000. Despite having to conduct a recount of the votes, which was not the case in 2008, the poll was declared two days earlier than the Electoral Commission could declare the 2008 poll, even though we had a recount and even though we had more candidates at the 2012 poll. In essence, that proved the Electoral Commission was not only not efficient, it was also charging way in excess of the true cost of running the election. Gunnedah Shire Council is a prime example of where the reforms of this Government have resulted in more efficient elections and savings for councils, particularly rural councils.

We have heard a lot of discussion about city councils, but for rural councils—the vast majority of the 152 great councils in this State—it resulted in a saving of important money for those councils. Responsible country councils should be allowed to choose. Generally they are not partisan and do not run on tickets. They are interested in the community. Allowing country councils to make mature decisions results in savings because they know what is best for their communities. The member for Heffron also opposed the provision in the bill relating to postal voting. We are not talking about making postal voting compulsory, despite what the member for Sydney said. It gives the City of Sydney the option—but also possibly in the future other councils, via regulation—of choosing elections to be run exclusively through postal voting.

I acknowledge that exclusive postal voting may not be the best option for all councils. Local government is run differently in different parts of the State. The way local government is run by the City of Botany, which has a population of 39,000 people covering an area of 26 square kilometres, is very different from the way in which local government operates in Bogan Shire, with a population of 3,000 people across an area of 14,500 square kilometres. For Bogan, exclusive postal voting is a great option. It will save the council a lot of money. But aside from that, local government elections are run completely differently in Bogan from the way they are run in Botany. Botany is very political, very partisan; everyone runs on tickets, et cetera. We all know the score. In Bogan everyone runs as an individual, everyone knows each other and the election has a very collegiate atmosphere.

What is wrong with giving councils the ability to choose to run the election that way if they think it is best for their community? I do not know why members opposite would oppose giving councils a choice? Do we not trust councils to make mature decisions? I certainly do. In the case of Bogan Shire Council and after talking to Mayor Ray Donald, a former President of the Shires Association, council has done the mathematics and can say that exclusive postal voting is what the community wants and that it will save them a truckload of money. Why would we not empower councils to do that? Why would we force them to run an election that costs more money and is inefficient because people have to travel for hundreds of kilometres to get to a polling booth?

While I understand what the member for Heffron was saying, I think he fails to recognise that local government is run very differently outside the City of Botany, outside the electorate of Heffron and outside the Sydney area. More members on that side should recognise that local government in country areas is very different from what it is in city areas. It is more focused on community; it is less partisan, it is less political; and it is more about community. We should trust those councils to make that decision. We should not force them to do anything but give them the choice to make a mature decision. They are accountable to their community; allow them to do that. There is nothing wrong with that at all.

This bill simply picks up some of the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. It picks up a lot of the discussion coming forward from Local Government NSW, formerly the Local Government and Shires Associations. It picks up on discussions from the Destination 2036 local government forum giving councils the ability to determine how they run their elections with more autonomy. If they want to go down that path we should trust them to make the best decision in the best interests of their community. Let us not judge all councils in this State by the few that have made errors in the past because from a country perspective—

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** What about Ryde?

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** Ryde is in the city, but from a country perspective we have good councils that simply want to run as efficiently as possible and get regulation and government off their backs. I support the bill and commend it to the House.

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [8.54 p.m.]: I, too, speak on the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014. I acknowledge the passion involved in this debate as so many members are experienced in local government. I acknowledge the previous speaker, the erstwhile mayor of Gunnedah, the member for Northern Tablelands, and acknowledge his time in local government and tenure as mayor. I, too, have considerable experience in local government, having served for more than 21 years, and some eight years and five months as mayor of the City of Lake Macquarie.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Emeritus.

**Mr GREG PIPER:** That is correct, emeritus. The Minister is in the Chamber and he indicated some surprise. He did sign the certificate for me just a couple of weeks ago, so I thank him for that. We all have strong views about these matters; they are a part of our experience and part of our patch. For many it is the reason we took the next step of representing our community in the New South Wales Parliament. I would love to be able to stand here and say that I fully support the bill. However, even though the Minister is enthusiastic, I cannot bring myself to support it. I have some real concerns about the bill and I share many of the views expressed by the member for Heffron, particularly matters pertaining to the methodology of elections.

I certainly support the notion that councils undertaking to administer their own elections should be cognisant of their responsibility to do so efficiently, but the very notion of legislating to ensure this is the case seems not just unnecessary but also more than a little paternalistic. Every council in every area of its operations has an obligation under the Act to apply high standards of governance and they are ultimately held to account for waste and inefficiency by their constituent ratepayers. The notion of requiring councils to separate from their usual process of accountability to demonstrate to their constituents 18 months prior to the election that they have the capacity to do so is unnecessary and, in my view, patronising.

I do agree that the provision of the countback system is of benefit. It is a method of filling casual vacancies using the results of the previous election that will be beneficial and will save money. Elections can be time consuming and resource consuming, and so long as the council has previously agreed to this measure before a situation arises and provided that the vacancy arises within 18 months of the previous general election, the countback system could and will significantly reduce unnecessary expenditure. I also support the provision that the countback system will not be applicable to the position of a popularly elected mayor. This particularly important role in which the direction of the council can be significantly influenced should be separate. I believe the electorate would generally give greater consideration to their vote in this matter and a countback may not reflect contemporary views. It is therefore imperative that we allow the citizens to vote for this position upon every occasion that it becomes vacant.

A number of people have reflected on decisions by the Electoral Commission to apportion costs. The commission steadfastly refused to declare the reasons for those costings in 2008, having run the elections in 2004 and then substantially increasing the numbers. Although I have great respect for the Electoral Commissioner, Colin Barry, and the work of his officers—and I acknowledge how well the Electoral Commission runs elections—it was of great concern to councils and mayors across New South Wales that the Electoral Commissioner, while claiming that councils had underestimated the cost of elections and not brought to full account all those hidden costs, did not show where the commission's costings came from.

We created the system for the 2012 election that allowed councils to go to bodies other than the Electoral Commission to run the election. As the mayor of the City of Lake Macquarie I supported that and we employed the Australian Election Company to run the election. That election was run satisfactorily and it was a fair election that could not be reasonably contested, but I believe that the Electoral Commission would have run it better and provided results much earlier. I would prefer that councils were able to make the decision, but generally speaking I would like the Electoral Commission to be more competitive and transparent in the way it sets its costings.

Another cause for concern runs through the entire bill—that is, it undermines the importance of local government elections, or at least the perception of their importance, by applying methods and protocols that are different from those for elections in State and Federal jurisdictions. I do not want local government elections to be considered any less significant or integral to the wellbeing of communities and to governance in New South Wales than other elections. I fear that councils taking up the option to use a postal voting system will impress upon residents that council elections are somewhat different and perhaps not as important.

The member for Northern Tablelands said that not every local government area is the same and gave the example of Botany council as opposed to the large rural council areas in his electorate. I acknowledge the

difference, but if that is the case why are we not applying the same logic to State elections? The same differences apply in State electorates; however, we are not proposing to change our elections. We are saying that local government is different. There is a real risk that position will play into the hands of people who do not have the respect and regard for local government that we have.

I support conventional voting in the sense that voting means casting a vote either electronically or by paper at a designated polling booth. We live in a fantastic country. Our people have wonderful opportunities. We have a stable economy, good if not brilliant infrastructure and great social services. In Australia and New South Wales nobody who is in need is left behind. Local government provides fantastic services that everybody benefits from at least weekly if not daily. All we ask in return is that every now and then people attend a polling booth. People must go and put a mark in a box every three years for Federal elections and every four years for State and council elections. I do not think that is a huge ask. I also think there is an importance to the ritual. If we want to change that ritual we should change it across the board so that we do not diminish one tier of government when compared with another.

I have real concerns about the matters I have raised. I also have concerns more specifically related to the City of Sydney changes that have been made. While I am sure the Minister will hotly defend that amendment, I think it was an aberration to give greater weight to the votes of property owners based on the money they pay into city coffers. That was wrongheaded and it is not a principle that should underpin democracy. I also believe that businesses were not pushing for that change. This bill contains a few modest improvements, but it deals with nothing of such great moment that it requires being passed in this term of Parliament. Therefore, I have real concerns about the bill and I cannot support it at this stage.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) [9.03 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Heffron, the member for Kiama, the member for Sydney, the member for Northern Tablelands and the member for Lake Macquarie for their contributions to debate on the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014. We are fortunate that the member for Kiama, who chaired the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, has been involved in local government as a deputy mayor. He has heard what the sector has been asking for in many areas for a long time. It was also great to hear from the member for Northern Tablelands, who was also a councillor and mayor. He is a strong advocate for the sector and the community he represents.

I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his work in local government and I make no bones about it. It was a pleasure to sign his emeritus mayor certificate and see him join the list of illustrious people who have been given that award for many years of service to local government. I was fortunate enough to receive that award many years ago. It is good to see the member for Lake Macquarie catching up to the long list of Emeritus Mayor Award recipients. The member for Heffron spoke about the local government sector, but neglected to mention the \$1 billion package the Government has put on the table to support councils in New South Wales. We have never seen a package like that.

But I know members opposite are embarrassed about their background of pure neglect of local government. Their performance in government was pathetic and dismal, and showed that for many years they did not care about the sector. They sat back and watched the infrastructure of councils crumble and did nothing to support them. When they felt threatened they appointed an administrator. I will not be dictated to by Opposition members, who have the most pathetic and lousy record on local government in this State. This Government wants to partner with councils in New South Wales. We have demonstrated that by the number of commitments we have made and the changes that we have worked alongside the sector to implement. For the member for Heffron to attack the president of Local Government NSW under parliamentary privilege was very poor form. The president is representing councils across New South Wales and the member for Heffron called him a dope. That was a lousy performance from the member on behalf of the Opposition.

The Liberal-Nationals Government wants to work with local government and that is what it is doing through this bill. The Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 demonstrates the Government's continuing commitment. It is about reducing the cost of local council elections. We also want to improve their administration and enhance the democratic outcomes by removing barriers to voter participation. These reforms came out of the 15 recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. Members on this side of the House are getting on with supporting those recommendations. The member for Heffron said that we should not trust councils. I am sorry, but we have great trust in councils. Significant costs could be saved by not holding a by-election to fill a casual vacancy that may occur 18 months after an election.

We know that during the 18-month period after the 2012 local government elections, approximately 15 councils held by-elections. The cost for those by-elections could range from \$60,000 to \$100,000, which is a cost to those communities and to ratepayers. This Government is endeavouring to ensure that the community does not have to meet that type of expense for elections. This process has been requested by the sector and is part of a recommendation by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

This bill is also about transparency because 18 months prior to a local government election, local councils will be required to indicate how they intend to run their elections—either by running the elections themselves or by using the services of the Electoral Commissioner. As part of that requirement they must demonstrate to the community that they have the capacity to run elections. The other issue referred to postal voting. I inform the House that I received a letter from Local Government NSW on 7 May 2014 that indicates support for this recommendation. It is worth noting that councils in Victoria have the option of conducting their elections by universal postal voting. At the 2012 Victorian council elections 70 of 78 councils chose to conduct their elections by universal postal voting. Those that chose to conduct their elections by universal postal voting had a turnout of 72.53 per cent compared to 63.60 per cent for councils in which attendance at elections was required.

Universal postal voting also has proved to be a more cost-effective means of conducting an election compared to the cost of elections conducted by way of universal iVoting. There was also a 16 per cent reduction in the cost of universal postal voting elections compared to elections where attendance was involved. This Government has introduced timely reforms. This is another demonstration of the Government's support for local government in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 37**

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Rohan
Mr Aplin	Ms Gibbons	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Ms Berejikian	Mr Hazzard	Mr Stokes
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Toole
Mr Brookes	Mr Humphries	Ms Upton
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Kean	Mr Ward
Mr Conolly	Mr Maguire	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Marshall	Mrs Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr O'Dea	
Mr Evans	Mr Page	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Flowers	Ms Parker	Mr Patterson
Mr Fraser	Mr Provest	Mr J. D. Williams

**Noes, 18**

Ms Burney	Mr Hoenig	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Collier	Ms Hornery	Mr Zangari
Mr Crakanthorp	Mr Lynch	
Mr Daley	Dr McDonald	
Mr Furolo	Ms Mihailuk	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Greenwich	Mr Park	Mr Amery
Ms Harrison	Mr Piper	Ms Hay

**Pairs**

Mr Baird	Ms Burton
Mr Constance	Mr Lalich
Ms Hodgkinson	Mrs Perry
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Rees
Mr Roberts	Ms Watson

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Paul Toole.**

### **Consideration in Detail**

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** By leave, I will propose the bill in groups of clauses and schedules.

**Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.**

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [9.21 p.m.], by leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet C2014-140 in globo:

**No. 1 Lapse of rolls after elections**

Pages 4 and 5, Schedule 1 [4]–[9], line 39 on page 4 to line 36 on page 5. Omit all words on those lines.

**No. 2 Exclusive postal voting**

Pages 5 and 6, Schedule 1 [10], line 37 on page 5 to line 26 on page 6. Omit all words on those lines.

**No. 3 Expansion of exclusive postal voting by regulation**

Pages 5 and 6, Schedule 1 [10], proposed section 310B (1), line 40 on page 5 to line 2 on page 6.

Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

- (1) This section applies to the City of Sydney local government area.

The Opposition's amendments relate to the lapsing of ratepayer rolls after the election and the exclusive postal voting option. During debate the member for Kiama—with his normal forensic flourish—indicated that the Labor members of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiring into the 2012 local government elections supported these provisions.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** I don't think I said that.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** The committee's recommendation No. 11 was that each council be granted the option to conduct its election using a postal ballot in lieu of attendance voting on a designated polling day. The member suggested in his forensic flourish that Opposition members agreed with that recommendation and that that was the basis of this provision. I draw the attention of members to the minutes of the committee meeting, which state in respect of recommendation No. 11 that it was moved on the motion of the Hon. Amanda Fazio that paragraph 5.50 and recommendation No. 11 be deleted. Discussion ensued, the question was put and the committee divided. The ayes were the Hon. Amanda Fazio and the Hon. Peter Primrose, and the noes were Mr Ward, the Hon. Robert Borsak, Mr Fraser, Mr Maguire, the Hon. Trevor Khan and the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps.

I am not suggesting that the member for Kiama deliberately misled the House. As I indicated, it was probably an error caused by his forensic flourish. I brought it to the member's attention and he considered it. However, if this provision is based upon a recommendation of that committee, which is based on a recommendation from the independent review panel based on a methodology used in Victoria or South Australia, it is a false methodology and should not be used. The Opposition is completely opposed to it. In relation to giving councils the option to decide whether to abolish attending a polling booth for local government elections, I reiterate for the benefit of the House that the Opposition believes that all elections—whether they be Federal, State or local government elections—should be the same.

Enabling individual councils to prevent people going to a polling booth particularly prejudices the indigent and people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and it will result in a reduction in the number of people participating in local government elections. I can imagine the Electoral Commissioner wishing to prosecute either an illiterate person or a non-English speaking person because he or she did not participate in a compulsory postal ballot. It is a stupid provision and the Government should reconsider it rather than ram this legislation through the House at 9.30 p.m. without any consideration.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) [9.25 p.m.]: The Government opposes the amendments because it is concerned about increasing voter turnout at local government elections. Members on this side of the House are also concerned about reducing the cost of local government elections. This is a win-win for councils. Unlike the Opposition, this Government supports councils. The Opposition wants to increase the cost of elections and to ensure a lower voter turnout.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [9.26 p.m.]: I advise the member for Heffron that if I did make those comments, I withdraw them. However, I point out that the committee was bipartisan and a majority of the recommendations were agreed to without a division. I do not believe I referred specifically to those provisions. However, if I did, I withdraw because, as the member has demonstrated, the statement would have been incorrect. I oppose the amendments for the same reasons that the Minister outlined.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [9.27 p.m.]: I support the Opposition's amendments. If the Government were concerned about increasing the turnout at local government elections and reducing the cost of elections, we would be dealing with legislation that empowered voters and increased their options.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George)**: Order! I advise the member for Sydney that the interjections are coming from Opposition benches, not Government benches.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH**: That would include iVoting and electronic voting, which would engage younger voters, who have a very low level of participation in local government elections. I hope the Government considers looking at additional voting options for local government elections. By reducing the voting options and allowing councils to make a political decision—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George)**: Order! There is too much audible conversation coming from Opposition benches. The member for Sydney will be heard in silence.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH**: Not all of them will make political decisions, but some will. I strongly oppose allowing councils to limit voting options to stack the deck.

**Question—That Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 3 [C2014-140] be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 18**

Ms Burney	Mr Hoenig	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Collier	Ms Horner	Mr Zangari
Mr Crakanthorp	Mr Lynch	
Mr Daley	Dr McDonald	
Mr Furolo	Ms Mihailuk	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Greenwich	Mr Park	Mr Amery
Ms Harrison	Mr Piper	Ms Hay

**Noes, 38**

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Ms Gibbons	Mr Rohan
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Rowell
Ms Berejikian	Mr Hazzard	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Stokes
Mr Brookes	Mr Humphries	Mr Toole
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Issa	Ms Upton
Mr Conolly	Mr Kean	Mr Ward
Mr Dominello	Mr Maguire	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Marshall	Mrs Williams
Mr Evans	Mr O'Dea	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Flowers	Mr Page	Mr Patterson
Mr Fraser	Ms Parker	Mr J. D. Williams

**Pairs**

Mr Lalich	Mr Baird
Mrs Perry	Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Rees	Mr O'Farrell
Mr Robertson	Mr Roberts

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 3 [C2014-140] negatived.**

**Schedule 1 agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail concluded.**

**Third Reading**

**Motion by Mr Paul Toole agreed to:**

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

**Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS****AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FIELD DAYS**

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [9.39 p.m.]: I draw the attention of members, including the member for Drummoyne, to the fact that the Australian National Field Days were held in Orange from Thursday 23 October to Saturday 25 October 2014. What a stunning success they were—showcasing the best of agriculture in the Central West and New South Wales, and supporting the agricultural sector. Perfect weather conditions prevailed, and 18,000 people came through the gates. This was significant because this was the second year on which the field days had covered a Saturday. Perhaps in some ways that reflects the changing demographics of the area, but I was out there for all three of the field days and they were a stunning success.

First we attended the opening ceremony on Thursday 23 October. The Rural Woman of the Year, Pip Job, gave a wonderful address, which was very well attended. We had music played by the children of Canobolas Public School. The member for Drummoyne will be very familiar with them; they do outstanding work. At the opening ceremony a number of awards were presented. TAFE student Brian Ostini was the recipient of the prestigious Ivan Kingham award. Mr Ostini, who hails from Euchareena, is a farmhand on a cattle and sheep property. The award for best local exhibitor went to Phil Morrow of CRT, the Local Blokes. Bushmans Tanks managing director Chris Glen accepted the award for best presented agricultural exhibit. Charles Sturt University student Jaimi Brown also was presented with an award for the Charles Sturt University student who had demonstrated achievement and leadership. The opening ceremony was an outstanding success, as were the three days of events.

The committee members who worked so hard include chairman Robert Armstrong, who did an outstanding job and who is the son of Cliff. He has supported the field days since their inception. The deputy chairman is Kieran Renshaw, an old friend of mine who is known to his many friends as "Chook". The administration manager is Jayne West and Geoff Brabrook took care of the grounds. Judy Cosier is the accounts manager and in administration are Jenifer Bucknell and Mandy Littlewood. The subcommittee chairs also deserve special mention: logistics, Chris Lennon; grounds, Allan Watts; promotion, Chris Soloman; cattle, Sam Connell; sheep, Brett Douglas; education, Andrew Norton; finance, Wal Whiteley; and non-agricultural activities, Rob Hewett. There are many highlights of the field days, but for me the standout exhibit is always the Country Women's Association [CWA] stand.

**Mr Matt Kean:** The scones.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** Yes, it is all about the scones—the member for Hornsby hit the nail on the head. The CWA did a wonderful job. Gail Hayden was there and I picked up a cookbook, as I usually do. The cookbook will go into a Christmas hamper. I also mention Max and Margaret Swift. Margaret is a long-time member of the CWA. I stayed around for Fashions on the Field, which was meticulously organised and professionally run by Fiona Schofield, a local fashionista. I picked up a few tips along the way, including that for this season white long pants go with anything. I thank everyone who supported the Australian National Field Days, all exhibitors and all committee members. It was an outstanding success and the continuing success of this event is important to the economic future of Orange and the agricultural sector of New South Wales. I congratulate everyone concerned.

#### **HIS EMINENCE BEATITUDE PATRIARCH CARDINAL MAR BECHARA BOUTROS RAI**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [9.44 p.m.]: I was honoured to join Sydney's Maronite Church and Lebanese community last week for the official visit of His Beatitude and Eminence Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and Maronite Eparchy of Australia. This was the first time His Beatitude had visited Australia, and his arrival was of great historical significance not just for Australia's Maronite community but for all of us, because at a time of great upheaval in the world the visit of His Beatitude reminds us of the importance of having a voice of peace and unity. His Beatitude provides a voice when others will not. His is a voice that rises above the din to speak out against human atrocities and for the right to religious freedom.

His Eminence was born in Himlaya in the Matn District of Lebanon on 25 February 1940. He attended a Jesuit school in Lebanon and entered the Maronite Order on 31 July 1962. He was ordained as a priest on 3 September 1967. Between 1967 and 1975 he was responsible for the Arabic transmissions of Vatican Radio. In 1975 he received a PhD in canon and civil law and he also studied for three years at the Lateran University in Rome. His Eminence was consecrated as Auxiliary Bishop of Antioch on 12 July 1986, and was later appointed Bishop of Byblos on 9 June 1990.

At 71 he was elected Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East on 15 March 2011, following the resignation of Patriarch Sfeir. The following year His Beatitude was appointed a member of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and was created a Cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI in a consistory on 24 November 2012. Early last year Pope Benedict XVI appointed His Beatitude as a member to serve the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants, and the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. Later that same year Cardinal Patriarch Rai was named a member of the Congregation for Catholic Education by Pope Francis, on Saturday 30 November 2013.

Sydney's Maronite community is a vital part of our diverse multicultural society. The Maronites are known best for their strong faith in God, family values and volunteering work ethic to help those in society who are less fortunate. It is these strong values that have produced some of our great local community leaders such as our very own Liberal Party colleague and member for Granville, Tony Issa. Like the member for Granville, I have a strong and vibrant Maronite community in my electorate of Hornsby. Hornsby's Maronite community is largely based around St George Maronite Catholic Church in Thornleigh. It is a church with a rich history dating back to the early 1900s, when Lebanese migrants from the northern Lebanese village of Bann and surrounds migrated to Sydney and chose to live in Thornleigh. It is believed these original settlers chose Thornleigh because at that time the bushy landscape of the area reminded them of their hometown in Lebanon.

In 1989 the original church known as St Joachim's was sold to the Diocese of St Maroun. The church was then renamed St George to coincide with the village Church of St George in Lebanon. St George Church was consecrated on 29 October 1989, with the blessing and encouragement of Bishop Abdou Khalifi. Excitement overwhelmed every Lebanese family in the area, as it was a big achievement for them. Father Hanna Lahoud was appointed the first parish priest to serve in the community, followed by many of the Maronite orders including St Charbel's Monastery, the Congregation of the Lebanese Maronite Missionaries and other diocesan priests. On 22 August 1999 his Grace Joseph Hitti celebrated the last mass. Construction of the new church began in September 1999 under the supervision of Father Badwi Habib from the Lebanese Maronite Missionaries.

The Maronite community rallied to help build our church. The Maronite community came together as one family and built this magnificent church. They generously donated materials, money and their labour and

time to ensure that this church would be built. While the church was being constructed, the Maronite mass was still being celebrated for the community at the nearby Seventh-day Adventist Church. The consecration of the new St George Church in Thornleigh was celebrated on Sunday 1 April 2001. On this day St George was officially declared a parish. Today's church in Thornleigh has continued the great work of the Maronite community's ancestors and continues to serve our local community.

Through the hard work of Father Boutros Samia and Deacon Nagi Dimian the church will continue to grow and keep its valuable traditions alive for a new generation so they can enjoy the same spiritual benefits and guidance through life as their ancestors have. Special mention must go to Father Bechara Trad. He is a wonderful parish priest who has the affection of the entire community for his hard work and generous heart. I thank him for his continued leadership of our church.

The story of the Lebanese community in Hornsby is one of the great Australian migrant stories. The community came to this country with very little, yet through sheer hard work it has achieved success in every facet of life in our community. The story of the Lebanese community is one that has been built family by family and one that has greatly enriched our nation. Names like Saliba, Sukari, Tatchi, Kharmis, Anissee, Sarkis, Baynie, Moit, Mait, Zeiter and El Khouri are not just the names of leaders in the Lebanese community; they are leaders in the broader community and have contributed greatly to building our nation. I am proud to call many of these people very dear friends. In closing I make special mention of St George parish Thornleigh's youth group heads, Clare Simpson and Morris Maklouf. These future leaders of the church do a great job engaging our youth and promoting church activities.

I also mention all those involved in organising the visit of His Beatitude to St George parish, in particular the Takchi and the steering committee and parish council. I also had the privilege of attending the Australian Maronite Youth Festival Night for all the Maronite youth of New South Wales, held at Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral grounds, Harris Park, New South Wales. The festival showcased the charitable, faith and community-building activities of the Maronite youth groups and the MaroniteCare services for the youth. The event was a wonderful occasion to celebrate the Catholic faith and welcome His Beatitude. There were over 3,000 youth in attendance.

The crowd was warmed up by the very impressive Father Rob Galea, the rock star priest. Special congratulations must go to my dear friend Monsignor Shora Maree. Monsignor Shora is a great blessing to all of us who love the Catholic faith, and I acknowledge the amazing work he does inspiring young people and bringing them to Christ. I also acknowledge the hard work of Maroun Draby, President of the Maronite Youth Organisation, Anthony Assaf and Anthony Yacoub. I also acknowledge the extraordinary leadership of his Excellency Antoine Taraby, Maronite Bishop of Australia. The Maronite community is greatly blessed to have such a brilliant leader at the helm. In the short time he has been bishop he has gained a reputation as an outstanding intellect and fine leader.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [9.49 p.m.]: I reiterate the comments of the member for Hornsby. I had the pleasure of attending the same function and meeting His Beatitude and Eminence Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai, patriarch of the Maronite Catholic Church. I am in envy of the wonderful congregation of in excess of 1,300 people who attended the evening—and did we know it when we were leaving as it took half an hour to get out of the car park. The Maronite community across Sydney is a strong community with strong beliefs. The structure within the church is amazing. I compliment Bishop Taraby on his outstanding work throughout the community and Sister Rose Tannous, who has been absolutely outstanding in all my encounters with the Maronite community, as well as Father Emmanuel Saka. I commend the remarks of the member for Hornsby and wish His Beatitude all the very best.

#### **INTERNATIONAL CHILD CARE COLLEGE**

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [9.50 p.m.]: I speak in support of the International Child Care College [ICCC], a reputable trainer of childcare educators based in the Hunter region which has seemingly and inexplicably been denied accreditation to continue as a vocational training provider under the new Smart and Skilled framework. I express my concerns also about the process of accreditation for Smart and Skilled, which seems to lack rigour and transparency, particularly in this case. The International Child Care College has been providing training in children's services for more than 15 years and has been on the Approved Providers List for the past decade, having trained more than 1,200 childcare educators in that period. It is an award-winning organisation that is highly regarded within the profession and much valued in our region as a provider of quality vocational training.

The ICCC currently delivers funded training to 361 students and provides support to 128 preschools, childcare centres and family day care operators across the Hunter and the Central Coast and in Sydney. Its client base includes early childhood centres and preschools in my electorate of Lake Macquarie. The ICCC delivers training for a certificate III and diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care, and also provides professional development and mentoring to the industry. Its director of studies and chief executive officer, Karen Kearns, is a recognised expert and innovator in the field of early childhood education who has written textbooks that are widely used by teaching professionals. In July last year, the college was audited by the Australian Skills Quality Authority—a Federal Government regulator—and achieved 100 per cent compliance, placing it among the top 17 per cent of registered training organisations [RTOs] in Australia.

With the introduction of Smart and Skilled, providers such as the ICCC have had to reapply for recognition as approved training organisations. With its broad business base and successful record of operation, the ICCC had every reason to be confident it would continue to be a training provider in partnership with State training. However, it was shocked to discover two weeks ago that it had not received a provider contract, meaning that after 31 December it can no longer provide subsidised vocational training. One has to ask how an established training organisation with such an excellent record of achievement and compliance could be so readily overlooked for accreditation under the new system.

The ICCC is exactly the sort of professional organisation that should be a flagship for the Smart and Skilled framework. This decision will severely undermine the viability of this respected organisation, putting the jobs of its 24 employees at risk and robbing our region of an industry-leading, locally based training organisation that is widely respected in its field. The college has been flooded with letters of support and protest from preschools and childcare centres that use its services. Among them was one from the supervisor of a centre in my electorate, who said:

ICCC is regarded as an outstanding RTO in the Hunter/Lake Macquarie area and we object strongly to this RTO being denied the opportunity to continue as a training provider for our trainees.

I believe the highly questionable decision to discontinue accreditation for the International Child Care College throws doubt on the credibility of the entire Smart and Skilled assessment process. Smart and Skilled purports to be a quality teaching framework, but the assessment undertaken was, according to the information I have received from the college chief executive officer, Karen Kearns, entirely quantitative and neither scientific nor thorough. The RTOs were scored on the basis of answers provided on a questionnaire. No supporting documentation was required to validate the information provided, no inspection of college premises was made and no consultation was undertaken with the college or any of its clients.

In contrast, the accreditation process the college undertook last year with the Australian Skills Quality Authority required extensive supporting documentation and involved a day-long inspection of the premises and face-to-face interviews with management. I fear the predicament of the International Child Care College is just the tip of the iceberg. On 29 October the *Australian* reported that up to 1,000 private college staff across New South Wales could lose their jobs as their employers come to terms with what it described as the "apparently arbitrary" contracting process for Smart and Skilled. In addition, private providers have been frustrated by an inability to communicate directly with the Smart and Skilled team to discuss complicated matters relating to the contract process, as a generic email address is the only avenue of available contact.

A training organisation of the calibre of the International Child Care College deserves better treatment than it has received under Smart and Skilled. It is not good enough for an organisation that has been an approved and compliant provider for more than a decade to suddenly be cut from the contract list—courtesy of a brief, curt email—with no explanation or avenue for appeal. Clearly, the accreditation process needs to be more transparent and rigorous. I believe the Minister should urgently review the decision to cut the ICCC from the provider list and address the deficiencies in the accreditation process for Smart and Skilled.

### GERRINGONG AND GERROA BOUNDARIES

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [9.55 p.m.]: I am incredibly proud of the town in which I was born and grew up. Those who have experienced the township of Gerringong in my electorate would be aware of its striking beauty and diversity, from the charm of its shops and businesses to its breathtaking beaches and, most notably, its place within the surrounds of exquisite green fields and farms that are so much a part of coastal culture and scenery. It is this scenic beauty I address in this House today. I make it unequivocal: I am completely committed to preserving the southern boundary of Gerringong from developers who would seek to destroy the character of the town in which I grew up and to which I am committed to fighting for today.

I will fight any effort that sees the southern boundary of Gerringong become the northern boundary of Gerroa. These two towns are unique and I intend to ensure they remain that way, which is what residents want of me as their representative in the State Parliament. The Government and the planning bureaucracy should be in no doubt about the overwhelming view in our community. In order to provide some recent history with respect to this matter, I turn back to 2011 when Kiama Municipal Council considered the Kiama Urban Strategy alongside its local environmental plan. On the question of the southern boundary, Kiama council received 692 submissions, of which 686 submissions were against the southern boundary being extended.

The reasons against the proposal were many and included that farmland should be protected for food production for the future; the land identified in the urban strategy is good agricultural land suitable for dairying and is likely to be sustainable in the long term even with climate change impacts; farmland, surrounding hills and beaches should be protected for their landscape value and natural beauty; a desire to retain and concern about the loss of village character and atmosphere; urban expansion is not required to meet the housing needs of an ageing population who need urban infill housing and medium-density housing; the Department of Planning population projections are overestimated and should be checked; and Gerringong and Gerroa should be retained as separate villages to retain their coastal identity.

There are many and varied views on where development should stop and start and submissions received on this question were 44 for south of Elambra, nine for east of Fern Street and four for west of the Princes Highway. Other reasons include that more than half of the proposed Kiama local government area urban expansion is in the Gerringong area and should be reduced; loss of tourism value due to loss of landscape and character; the urban expansion would lead to unnecessary environmental impacts, for example, sediment, vegetation, wildlife and pollution; the proposal is inconsistent with the Illawarra Regional Strategy, which seeks to retain agricultural land; and land in the area is flood prone and unsuitable for residential development.

I support these concerns and my community's call to protect the distinct and unique townships of Gerringong and Gerroa. Any government—present or future—should be aware that it will have a fight on its hands if it seeks to change it. The latest draft planning document of the Department of Planning—the Draft Illawarra Regional Growth and Infrastructure Plan, which sets a target of an additional 45,000 dwellings for the Illawarra region by 2031—has identified south Gerringong as a potential greenfield area. The document says:

We will work with Kiama Council to review the potential of these areas, and to identify an appropriate boundary for the southern expansion of Gerringong, noting the importance of maintaining Gerringong and Gerroa as separate urban areas.

I believe no such review is necessary; in fact, I am completely and implacably opposed. The community has spoken and any further discussion is simply analysis paralysis. I am not anti-development and understand the needs for moderate growth. But these decisions should never be made by bureaucrats in offices far away from the communities their decisions ultimately affect. These decisions must rest with local communities who are invested in the sort of environment they appreciate and desire. Anything else would be completely and utterly unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of residents of Gerringong and Gerroa, whom I proudly represent in this House today.

It is important also to consider one's record in relation to these matters. As a Shoalhaven city councillor I stood against proposals to develop around Cambewarra village. I stood against overdevelopment in areas like Berry. I believe in the preservation of important and beautiful areas of my electorate like Kangaroo Valley. These areas are unique. The people who live there moved there for a reason and they want that reason to be maintained. The Department of Planning must listen to their concerns. Gerringong and Gerroa is the area where I grew up. It is a beautiful area and home to many people who love it for the reasons I have outlined tonight. The House should be aware that I will continue to advocate for these residents and particularly for the township where I was born and grew up and which I dearly love.

### **HEALTH ASSESSMENT FOR REFUGEE KIDS PROGRAM**

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [10.00 p.m.]: Earlier this year I attended a seminar at the Children's Hospital Westmead, which discussed the health care of refugee children in New South Wales. Large numbers of these children are not eligible for Medicare cards, meaning that much of the responsibility for their assessment and treatment is left to NSW Health. In Australia there are hundreds of children in immigration detention centres and hundreds more in immigration residential housing. This number is now down from a peak of around 2,200 in June 2013. However, as more children are released into the community from detention centres NSW Health will be the agency that will need to provide health care for them.

As well as the children in immigration detention centres, there are children in community detention and there are children in Australia on bridging visas. More than 20,000 people in Australia are on bridging visas. After their claims are assessed about 85 to 90 per cent will be deemed to be refugees, based on previous experience. In addition, well over 100 children remain in detention on Nauru. These children are very much considered to be out of sight, out of mind. For that reason their health assessments are vital. The major agency that has been carrying out these assessments for more than 10 years has been the Health Assessment for Refugee Kids [HARK] program that is run in various hospitals in Sydney. These clinics are not funded; they run on the smell of an oily rag, as health professionals juggle their time to provide a comprehensive health screening service.

As well as having had harrowing past life experiences, many of these children have undetected physical and mental health problems. We know that only 10 per cent of these children self-report health problems, yet on screening about 80 per cent of these children have physical health issues that need to be addressed. The most common health issues are vitamin and mineral deficiencies, such as vitamin D and iron, and they need an immunisation catch-up. About 50 per cent need some form of dental intervention. There is virtually no screening of children in detention and there is often poor communication of screening results and previous drug management. There are major concerns about the quality of health care provided to children in detention.

On top of that, significant mental health problems are very common and underreported. Mental health problems can be caused by past trauma and loss in their country of origin, their harrowing journey, their experiences in closed detention in Australia and by the uncertainty of their future in community detention. They often live with family members who have mental health issues due to previous trauma. The lack of family support compounds these issues. Early child abuse causes long-term damage in many ways, including neuronal developmental damage. By the age of three the brain is pretty much hardwired as a result of toxic stress and many of these children are at risk of mental health problems for the rest of their lives. That is why the Australian Medical Association considers that keeping children in detention is tantamount to child abuse. Eighty per cent of paediatricians when asked about this issue agreed with that statement.

There are some very good programs. One program is the nurse-led health screening based at the Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre, funded by the National Australia Bank and the South East Sydney Local Health District. Many children attending this centre start school within a couple of days of arrival in the country. The centre had screened 357 children by April this year, the majority from the Middle East, Africa and Asia. As I said, about 80 per cent were found to have significant mental health problems. The children who attend the centre are linked to a general practitioner. It is well known that improving health care improves learning.

NSW Health professionals believe that providing services to people without fear or favour minimises harm. NSW Health workers are required to provide direct medical help as independent health practitioners and not to be silent about their findings. They may be required to provide individual medical reports to the courts and may require time to do so. Most important is the need for health professionals to never allow governments, bureaucrats or private operators to reduce the plight of refugees by allowing them to say that adequate services are being provided. The opposite is the case. The staff of NSW Health who work in the HARK program do a wonderful job and they deserve to be congratulated. I urge the New South Wales health Minister to support them with funding and allocating the time in which they can do their vital job. This is a brilliant service that deserves the support of the community.

### **TRIBUTE TO ROBERT MULAS**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [10.05 p.m.]: It is a great privilege this evening for me to detail the achievements, dedication and community advocacy that Mr Robert Mulas has fulfilled and nurtured throughout my local community and beyond. Robert Mulas, better known as Bob Mulas, has been an outstanding community advocate for the best part of his adult life. Many members will recall my speaking about Bob and his many projects at Fairfield High School in the past in his capacity as school principal. There is good reason for me to speak about his achievements. The commitment, dedication and hard work he displays are always exemplary and deserve to be commended.

Bob has been teaching since 1977. He has taught in nine different schools, enriching the lives of numerous students, colleagues and members of the surrounding community throughout his tenure. Throughout my term so far as a member of this Parliament I have been fortunate to work closely with Bob on a number of community projects and activities within Fairfield High School. Given those experiences, there is still a degree of difficulty in retelling Bob's achievements, as it is incredibly hard to try to figure out where to begin. Most

notably Bob introduced a comprehensive work skills program for students not seeking an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR] for the Higher School Certificate. He introduced also a Leaders in Learning program, encouraging teachers to step up into leadership roles within the school.

Bob Mulas has both recognised and made it a personal mission to ensure that our multicultural community can communicate, socialise and work together towards a common goal. This has been seen time and again through a number of community initiatives he has enacted. One such example is the Fairfield High School Parents Cafe. The Parents Cafe came to fruition to encourage community cohesion and to give migrant parents and their families a place to band together over something everyone can enjoy—good food and a nice cuppa.

Since its inception, the Parents Cafe has not only catered to in-school events but also branched out to assist in local community functions, and I must say it does an amazing job. The Parents Cafe is an embodiment of what a diverse group of local community members can achieve when they work together in a cohesive team aiming towards a common goal. The success of the Parents Cafe has been acknowledged and commended in this House and by the *Daily Telegraph* and SBS and at local community events. This program certainly deserves the kudos it receives. It is an amazing initiative and I firmly believe it would do wonders if it were adopted in schools across the State.

Another fine achievement that has come out of Fairfield High School through Bob's leadership is the *Our faces, Our Stories* publication. This publication has received success worldwide with its vast collection of stories from a number of the school's migrant students. *Our Faces, Our Stories* has been published for the past six years, with the latest book being a compilation of the previous five years publications. In each compilation, students who have originated from different parts of the globe tell their personal stories, their goals, their ambitions and the hardships they have faced to get to where they are today. *Our Faces, Our Stories* is a very moving and informative publication. I highly recommend that everyone takes the time to read it.

Many of the students who participated in this publication have vividly detailed their family and their own struggles back in their home country, with many indicating the lack of freedom and a very limited capacity to speak and act freely while trying to create a better life for themselves and their families. So many of these students have spoken openly about how empowered and happy they are to now be here in this great country. They say that here they receive so much support and encouragement to be all that they can be while doing what makes them happy.

Despite the many hardships that students have faced over the years, I was taken aback by their level of engagement, their smiles and the overall happiness they are now experiencing as a result of being in a loving and welcoming environment. And it is all thanks to Bob Mulas and his wonderful team of teachers. Much of this has been possible because Bob Mulas, his colleagues and students at Fairfield High School have dedicated their time and resources to making the project the success it is today. It is worth noting that through consultation with the school community, they have created the CARE logo. It stands for "community, achievement, respect and environment", which are key areas that Fairfield High School values and promotes on a daily basis.

On 18 October I had the pleasure of attending the retirement dinner for Bob Mulas at the Park Royal in Parramatta. I was joined by a large number of his current and former colleagues. It was evident that Bob has had a significant impact on many of his colleagues during his years of teaching. Bob's final day before entering retirement was 7 October 2014. Bob would use the term "retirement" rather loosely because he is driven by his ambition to help members of his community. He will not cease advocating for and supporting those who are in need. I congratulate Bob on his retirement and wish him all the very best in the many years ahead. I also express my sincerest appreciation for the many years of service he has given to our community empowering and moulding the minds of tomorrow.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**Pursuant to resolution matter of public importance proceeded with.**

## **WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS**

### **Matter of Public Importance**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [10.12 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I note as a matter of public importance the Western Sydney Wanderers. The A-League 2012-13 season saw the birth of the Western Sydney

Wanderers. In their inaugural year, they won the Premier's Plate, qualified for the A-League Grand Final against the Central Coast Mariners and qualified for the Asian Champions League [ACL]. These achievements were amazing for the club's first year. Accolades were aplenty as the club grew. Parramatta Stadium was sold out, thus capping memberships. An outstanding club culture evolved and the Red and Black Bloc pushed the boundaries and raised the bar for sports fans across the country in all sporting codes. Parliamentary Friends of the Western Sydney Wanderers was formed in this Parliament. The member for Parramatta, Dr Geoff Lee, and I co-chair the group, and are joined by more than 40 members of this Parliament.

From their first year of existence, the Western Sydney Wanderers have continued their success, with victory over two legs of the final of the Asian Champions League against Al Hilal in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. The story of how the Wanderers claimed the coveted title will go down in Australian sporting history as truly extraordinary. The victory by the Wanderers would make the late Johnny Warren proud. When he said the magic words "I told you so" all those years ago, he was referring to the giant that was waiting to make its mark on the world football stage. The Socceroos moved into the Asian Confederation and qualified for three consecutive Fédération Internationale de Football Association [FIFA] World Cups. The A-League and W-Leagues were formed, and the Football Federation Australia Cup was born. How can one forget the phenomenon that is the Western Sydney Wanderers? This phenomenon was encapsulated by the words of coach Tony Popovic after the Asian Champions League final, when he said:

We were called a small club yesterday. Today, we are the biggest in Asia.

The Wanderers have galvanised the Western Sydney region. On Sunday morning Parramatta Centenary Square was packed with 4,000 supporters ready to watch the game on the big screen. More than 2,000 supporters packed the arrivals lounge at Sydney Airport to welcome the victorious team. You will hear the words "the Wanderers family" banded about frequently, and it is a family. The way in which the club engages with its fan base is to be commended. Even though it has been only a short time since their inception, the Western Sydney Wanderers have grown to be giants among men and women in Western Sydney. Everybody in the area knows when the soccer season starts. The region turns into "Wanderland", with a sea of black-and-red jerseys, wigs, painted faces and flags. The ever-present Wanderers scarves are held up in the stands at every game and seen on fans throughout communities across Western Sydney.

The Wanderers players do us proud each time they run onto the field, and we would be hard-pressed to find a household in the region where there is not one Wanderers supporter. In their most recent victory, the Western Sydney Wanderers displayed amazing skill, tenacity and, most notably, heart in their blazing success when they took on the top teams from Asia in the Asian Champions League. They surely made a name for themselves in their first appearance at the ACL competition. They are the Australian team who won the title and nobody will call them the little club anymore.

In the lead-up to the final, the Wanderers played some tough matches, facing Ulsan Hyundai twice, losing the first match 1-3. However, they redeemed themselves in the second match to win 2-0. China's Guizhou Renhe was defeated by 1-0 in the first match and by a monstrous 5-0 in the second match. Japan's Kawasaki Frontale was defeated 1-0. The Wanderers played in the round of 16 against Sanfrecce Hiroshima, winning 3-3 on aggregate. The quarterfinal was played against Guangzhou Evergrande, and they won 2-2 on aggregate. They were semifinal victors, winning 2-0 over Football Club Seoul. The string of victories propelled the Wanderers into the final match against Al Hilal, when the Wanderer's were triumphant again with a 1-0 victory on aggregate to bring home the trophy. They have made Australia, and particularly Western Sydney, incredibly proud.

I express my thanks to the current playing squad and the foundation squad of 2012-13; chairman of the board Paul Lederer, Jefferson Chang, Glenn Duncan and David Slade; founding chief executive officer Lyall Gorman; current chief executive officer John Tsatismas; the Football Federation of Australia; inaugural captain Michael Beauchamp; current captain Nikolai Topor-Stanley; former assistant coach Ante Milicic; current assistant coach Ian Crook; the Western Sydney Wanderers staff; and, last but not least, the fans. Without all of you, the Western Sydney Wanderers would not have had the opportunity to get to where they are today—nor would they stand as the mammoths of the west.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.17 p.m.]: As a member of the Parliamentary Friends of the Western Sydney Wanderers, it is a pleasure to speak on this matter of public importance. I thank the member for Fairfield for bringing to the attention of the House the achievements of the Western Sydney Wanderers, the most recent of which was their victory in the Asian Champions League. Their

victory was secured following a nil-all draw in the second leg against AI-Hilal very early on Sunday morning, Sydney time. On their way to securing the Asian Champions League they also defeated the defending champions, Guangzhou Evergrande, in the quarterfinal.

The Western Sydney Wanderers are the first Australian team to win the Asian Champions League. Every football fan in this country is very proud of this phenomenal feat. The starting 11 were: goalkeeper Ante Covic, Antony Golec, Brendan Hamill, captain Nikolai Topor-Stanley, Shannon Cole, Mateo Poljak, Iacopo La Rocca, Mark Bridge, Kwabena Appiah, Brendon Santalab, Labinot Haliti. On the bench were players Dean Bouzanis, Daniel Mullen, Matthew Spiranovic, Jason Trifiro, Vitor Saba, Jaushua Sotirio and Tomi Juric. This milestone is even more amazing because the Western Sydney Wanderers have been around for an extremely short time and this was only their third season. The players, coaches and staff, including initial chairman Lyall Gorman deserve great credit for the achievements of the Wanderers.

Following their initial success in the first year, I had great pleasure representing our Premier and met the team with Lyall and Tony at a function at their home training ground at International Park, Blacktown. Lyall went into great detail about how the Wanderers were formed initially, with a strong emphasis on community. They have certainly achieved that. Thousands of fans assembled outside Parramatta Town Hall in the early hours of Sunday morning to watch the final of the Asian Cup at Centenary Square. I congratulate Parramatta City Council on setting up the live site, with the broadcast commencing at 3.30 a.m. Thousands of excited Western Sydney Wanderers fans were also at the airport to greet the players when they returned to Australia earlier this week.

The Wanderers possess a bond and a determination to succeed that has captured the imagination of the football-supporting public. This side and their achievements in a short space of time have united Western Sydney football fans like never before and returned football to its rightful home in Western Sydney. They play in front of capacity crowds, have high membership numbers and excite their fans wherever they play. Indeed, the Red and Black Bloc—as they are known—bring a level of supporter activity through their chants and singing at their matches on an intensity and scale not seen before in Australia. Chants such as "Win or Lose", "We are the Terrace", "Call to Arms", "Score a Goal", "Streets of Western Sydney" and, of course, "Who Do We Sing For?" are an exciting and popular fixture of Western Sydney Wanderers matches.

The name "Wanderers" came from the very first club registered in Australia, which originated and played in Parramatta in 1880. Coach Tony Popovic was recruited from Crystal Palace, where he was an assistant coach. He had other offers to coach in Australia but decided that he would like to be involved in building a club from the ground up. Their hard work and dedication in undertaking this monumental task was rewarded in the Wanderers' first season, when they made the A-League Grand Final. The momentum to reach the grand final was built in a magnificent 10-game winning streak. Players such as Shinji Ono were a large part of the success and became well known and loved by Wanderers fans in the first two years.

Some unsavoury incidents and comments were directed towards the Wanderers after they secured the recent Asian Champions League. In typical Wanderers style, they rose above the comments and continued to do what they do best—play great quality football and let their achievements speak for themselves. I congratulate the players and coach who have conducted themselves in an extremely dignified manner, given the hostility directed towards them. Winners are grinners; there is nothing further to be said. The Wanderers will now contest the FIFA World Cup in Morocco, with their first match against Mexican side Cruz Azul. We wish them well.

Following their victory, one tweet from the Western Sydney Wanderers Twitter account summed up the mood nicely. It said, "From fans of the original district clubs, the ensuing state league through to the NSL and current day WSW fans, this win is for each of you." How true that is. Their achievements have delighted and bonded Western Sydney like never before. As a dad who has followed my son, Ryan, around Western Sydney playing football since 1990, I know first-hand how popular football is in the area. Ryan was at the recent derby between Sydney FC and the Wanderers. He texted me half an hour before the game started and said, "You have never seen anything like this before in your life; it is the most amazing experience being live and watching these fans." This was before the game had even started.

As we look to the future and with an additional 1.3 million people expected to move into Western Sydney over the next 15 to 20 years, we now have a team in the Wanderers who are recognised as world leaders in football. It is an outstanding accomplishment. As I have said many times in this House, Australians punch

well above their weight in many areas—whether it be sport, academia or business prowess. One of the great strengths of this country is "our never say die" attitude combined with a fierce tenacity and resilience when our backs are against the wall. But we are always prepared to lend a hand to those who need it most. It is a combination of the best attributes of people in this country who have come from every corner of the globe and who together are responsible for who we are now: proud Australians one and all. Well done to the Wanderers. May their success continue long into the future.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [10.23 p.m.]: I join the member for Fairfield and the member for Hawkesbury in recognising the success of the Western Sydney Wanderers football team in the days following their win in the Asian Champions League. It has been said that in only a couple of seasons the Wanderers have shown that they are not just a well-supported football team from the western suburbs of Sydney. As someone said not long ago, the Wanderers are not a team; they are a movement. That movement appears to have captivated the fan base across Western Sydney and made football one of our major codes not only locally but also across Australia.

The A-League has been gradually growing in success. I started following the Sydney FC club when it first started, as it was the only team in Sydney. Since the A-League started everyone has been calling for a Western Sydney team. I am pleased that Sydney FC continues to do well and win matches in front of big crowds. As a result the local derby between Sydney FC and the Wanderers is now probably the biggest event on our calendar. It is starting to rival the big rugby league and rugby union matches that are so much a part of our sporting calendar.

All the records, the support levels and the excitement in the A-League reached a new level when the Wanderers were formed. As the local member I visit football clubs in my electorate with which I have been involved for many years. As club patron I attend the Eastern Creek Soccer Club presentation day every year. Although they play in the Australian colours of green and gold, I notice in the crowd kids as young as four or five and their parents and grandparents wearing the Wanderers shirt, be it in the Wanderers home colours or their away kit. That shows the Wanderers have a fan base at all the clubs. I also visit the Mount Druitt Town Rangers. The club fields a number of teams at various levels, but they play in a league that is only one level below the A-League. I attend their presentation events, and we have done a lot to provide facilities at the club. I can see that the audience is proud of the Mount Druitt Town Rangers, but when the Wanderers are playing at Parramatta all the fans jump in their cars and minibuses and head to Parramatta Stadium to watch them.

As I was driving to work this morning I saw a jogger running along Rooty Hill Road, Plumpton. What was he jogging in? He was in the Western Sydney Wanderers home shirt. I walked through Westfield Shopping Centre at Mount Druitt on Monday and saw parents walking with children wearing Wanderers shirts, proudly showing their colours. It is interesting. Those who had expectations about the Wanderers now realise that the team is more successful and more wanted than we ever imagined. Well done to the Wanderers and to all the people recognised by the member for Fairfield and the member for Hawkesbury for their continued success.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [10.26 p.m.], in reply: I am delighted that the member for Hawkesbury and the member for Mount Druitt have contributed to the discussion of this matter of public importance. They are two keen Wanderers fans and keen members of the Parliamentary Friends of the Wanderers. I will touch on a few things the member for Hawkesbury said. He spoke of the pride of the fans at the airport and mentioned that the origins of the Western Sydney Wanderers date back to 1888. So the Wanderers are the newest oldest club in the league! The member for Mount Druitt also referred to players and to playing for clubs in Western Sydney. At presentation evenings, training or whatever, there are always Wanderers jerseys—whether it is the home jersey, the away strip, a cap or a flag. It does not matter where we go in Western Sydney—whether it is Penrith, Auburn, Bankstown or even Hornsby—we see the colours flying loud and proud. That has united us all. We are very proud.

No matter what side of the political spectrum we are on, one thing is for sure: We support the Western Sydney Wanderers, and that is absolutely fantastic. The member for Hawkesbury touched on the brilliance of Shinji Ono. It was amazing to have a player of Shinji Ono's calibre play with the Wanderers and contribute to our success in clinching the trophy. That success is the result of foundation players such as Aaron Mooy, Youssouf Hersi, Shinji Ono, Michael Beauchamp—great players who laid the foundation for where we are today. We cannot forget the heroics of Ante Covic, who was voted the most valuable player of the Asian Champions League. Ante is pressing for selection for the Socceroos squad to play in the Asian Cup soon. Let us hope that Ante gets the yellow jersey he deserves.

Who can forget the strike from Tomi Juric in the sixty-fourth minute in the first leg at Parramatta Stadium, which basically sent us on a massive trajectory towards clinching the cup for the first time? Now that we have the trophy, we move on. The next game is against the Mexican Cruz Azul team in the quarterfinal of the FIFA Club World Cup in Morocco. The winner there will take on the European champions, Real Madrid. I know we have a long way to go but we are nearly there. This small club will eventually get bigger and bigger, and we will be better for it.

**Discussion concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 10.29 p.m. until  
Thursday 6 November 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

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