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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 6 November 2014

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

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

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 October 2014.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.06 a.m.]: I oppose the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. Any crisis of confidence in TAFE and vocational education and training [VET] in New South Wales is due to scaremongering from Labor and The Greens. Why are The Greens constantly talking down TAFE? Why are Labor and The Greens constantly trashing the reputation of this great institution? We are making changes to the vocational education and training system to support our economic and social goals set out in the NSW 2021 plan to make New South Wales number one. Let there be no mistake about the Government's fundamental commitment to vocational education and training in New South Wales.

We have delivered a State budget that provides \$2.3 billion for VET in 2014-15. Is that a cut? No, it is a 5 per cent, or \$125 million, increase on last year's expenditure on VET. We are putting more resources into VET, not less. The TAFE budget is \$1.862 billion and capital expenditure is \$77 million on top of that. On my mathematics, the figure of \$1.862 billion for TAFE compared with \$2.3 billion overall for VET means that 80 per cent of this year's VET budget is for TAFE. That is hardly decimating or privatising TAFE. Rather, it represents this Government's fundamental commitment to the public system of TAFE as the principal public provider of vocational education and training in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Balmain will come to order

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: We are introducing significant reforms that will ensure that more students can access training. Some 46,000 more students will be able to train than if the current fees were retained. Students will have increased choice, with one set of fees applying across approved public and private training organisations. Quality will be at the heart of the system, with fixed prices ensuring that providers compete on quality, not price. Students will get value for money, with the subsidy and fee reflecting cost-efficient training. By charging a fee for the qualification rather than by the year students will know what they will pay up front.

Disadvantaged students know they will get support, with loadings for higher-cost learners and community service obligation funding for TAFE NSW and Adult and Community Education [ACE]. Prices are simpler for providers as a result of collapsing three current pricing models into one. This Government is not reducing places and is not cutting back on VET in New South Wales, but increasing those places. The budget shows that enrolments in higher-level qualifications, certificates III and above, in the 2014 calendar year are forecast to increase by approximately 3.1 per cent and enrolments in diploma-level courses and above are forecast to rise by 14 per cent. That is in line with TAFE NSW's strategy to increase enrolments in longer high-level qualifications to better equip students for jobs in the twenty-first century. Labor and The Greens say that this Government is not providing for vulnerable people, but to the contrary generous concessions and

exemptions will apply to 26 per cent of students. Unemployed youth in non-apprentice qualifications up to certificate IV will pay between \$80 and \$244 for a full qualification. Diploma and advanced diploma students will pay no fee at the time of enrolment as they will have VET FEE-HELP loans, which are repaid when the income reaches the threshold of approximately \$50,000.

Aboriginal students will be exempt from fees for all courses. Students with a disability will be exempt from fees for one qualification a year and will pay only the concession fee for any subsequent qualification. Apprentices will pay no more than \$2,000 for their full qualification, which is only approximately \$300 more than they pay now for their qualification as a whole. Labor and The Greens suggest we are turning our backs on students with disability. That is quite wrong. To the contrary, the trend for students with a disability has been shifting to longer and higher-level courses. This is a deliberate strategy by the Government and by TAFE. Those students are being supported to achieve higher-quality outcomes. Between 2009 and 2013, there was a 49 per cent increase in students with disabilities enrolled in certificate III level and above qualifications. From 2009 to 2013 there was a 56 per cent increase in students with disability studying at diploma level and above.

Let us examine the composition of courses. The 2015 New South Wales skills list funds 743 qualifications and covers 90 per cent of all government-funded commencements. We are no longer funding courses such as fine arts and ceramics, diplomas in aromatherapy, certificate IV in pet styling and certificate IV in unionism and industrial relations. TAFE NSW will continue to be critical as the public provider of vocational education and training in New South Wales. TAFE institutes will be supported by direct funding that recognises TAFE's higher costs, such as fixed staff costs, and the maintenance of heritage buildings.

TAFE NSW also will be given funding for clearly defined community service obligations to meet the needs of disadvantaged students and delivery in remote locations. We know that TAFE needs to adapt to changing times. This Government is implementing reforms so that institutes can continue to provide high-quality training. I will deal with an amendment to clause 8 of the bill moved by the Labor Party in the Legislative Council. It is an amendment that the Government does not support. Among other things, clause 8 (3) of the bill states:

During the term of the staffing agreement—

that is referred to in clause 8 (1)—

the Minister is to work towards ensuring a minimum permanency ratio for educational employees below the level of Head Teacher of 2 permanent employees to every one casual employee.

There is also a requirement in subclause (1) for the Minister to ensure a three-year staffing agreement for TAFE staff, based on the 2007 TAFE staffing agreement. Let us make no mistake about this. That amendment represents inflexibility and irresponsibility. Casual staff were a feature of the TAFE workforce well before this Government came to office. In fact, it was Labor—I repeat, Labor—that was responsible for introducing casual staff to TAFE. It did that because casual staff are an integral part of TAFE's workforce and give TAFE the ability to respond to industry needs. This is all about the service that TAFE provides.

It is not about providing a closed workforce. TAFE relies on having a large proportion of casual staff to ensure that its teaching is relevant and current to meet industry needs. A staffing agreement in the terms of the amendment would be inflexible and would not meet the business and operational interests of TAFE NSW; it would not allow TAFE to respond to industry and student needs. Such an agreement would ensure that TAFE would fail and that TAFE would not be competitive in today's dynamic training market.

It begs the questions: Why does the Opposition want to trash TAFE's reputation? Why does the Opposition want to tie TAFE down, reduce its competitiveness and reduce flexibility? How is that protecting TAFE? How does that help students in vocational education and training? Let us face it: Any agreement that would return staffing to the arrangement that applied before 2006 would not be relevant in the current policy contexts. In fact, it is doubtful that the amendment would work at all. TAFE staff are now covered by Julia Gillard's Fair Work Australia, so it is doubtful that it is even within the power of this Parliament to make the type of legislative arrangements proposed in the amendment. A point was raised by the member for Balmain about the national partnership agreement and whether funding would be put at risk.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will resume his seat and remain silent.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: By not meeting the agreed reforms under the national partnership agreement, \$211.85 million in structural reform payments over the period 2014-15 to 2016-17 would be put at risk. Furthermore, without reform, New South Wales risks not meeting its growth targets, jeopardising a further \$196.5 million in training outcomes performance target funding. That brings the total funding that Labor and The Greens wish to put at risk to \$408.41 million over the period 2014-15 to 2016-17. Rather than pump more money into TAFE, the Labor Opposition wants to put at risk more than \$400 million in funding. This bill is misconceived. It will conflict with our commitments to the Commonwealth. It potentially could cost the people of New South Wales approximately \$400 million, which is a loss of funding that will have a huge impact on students, local employers and TAFE NSW. This bill would reverse reforms to TAFE NSW—reforms that I support and which will secure a future for TAFE NSW as a public provider. I oppose the bill.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [10.16 a.m.]: I thank the member for Balmain for introducing the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 to the House. I have had multiple discussions with his colleague Dr John Kaye since taking over the shadow portfolio at the end of last year. I want to be clear about a couple of things said by the member for Cronulla about the risk this bill may pose to Federal funding. That is wrong. I am in possession of correspondence from the then Federal Minister, who made it very clear to various stakeholders who had raised that concern that it is not the case that Federal funding is under threat. If it is now under threat, then Government members are keeping something from all of us about what is happening at the Commonwealth level. When the Hon. Chris Evans was the Federal Minister, he made it very clear in correspondence that I am happy to share with the House that that is not the case.

Mr Mark Coure: Table it.

Mr RYAN PARK: Spell that word. If the good friend of the member for Oatley the current Minister, Mr Macfarlane, has changed that position, perhaps the member for Oatley will enlighten the House about the reasons that funding is now under threat. I will discuss why this bill is important and what Labor is doing on behalf of the many people across the community—not just the Labor Party—who have raised concerns about what the Coalition is doing to TAFE. Many Government members, including a remarkable number of Nationals members, signed the pledge, including the Minister. We know what the pledge was about—supporting TAFE, et cetera, et cetera. That has not happened. That is because the Government is going down the path of reducing TAFE's ability to provide a world-class vocational education and training system for the communities it serves. If we want to know what the New South Wales Government is doing, just look at what is being done by our friends south of the border, in Victoria.

Mr Geoff Provest: It's not the same; it's different.

Mr RYAN PARK: It is not the same? The architect of the Victorian model is the architect of this New South Wales model. Do not insult me by claiming that the Smart and Skilled reform is to do with educational outcomes, because it is all about penny pinching and cost saving, and it is driven by Treasury.

Mr Geoff Provest: Absolute rubbish.

Mr RYAN PARK: My very good friend, who is 43 per cent for the Tweed, will understand the little model that floats around every now and again; it is called Treasury. Generally, portfolio Ministers do not like it. They need to ensure they drive their reforms through their portfolios. What will happen if my good friends in Treasury are allowed to drive the Education portfolio? Treasury does not believe in public transport because, it has the hide to say, it does not make money. Of course, public transport does not make money. How unusual that TAFE does not make money! This Government's attitude is that it must make money. Every study around the world has shown that education markets are very thin when it comes to the ability to make a profit.

If the educational focus is shifted towards a profit-driven model, one of two things generally must happen. First, you must reduce the amount of face-to-face time, because that is what takes up most of the money provided for education. We are already seeing huge reductions in face-to-face teaching in key courses such as plumbing and electrotechnology right across the State. Alternatively, you can simply shift the provision of education to the private sector. The private sector then—completely legitimately, because it is in business to make money—will cherry-pick the courses that can make money, and we will be left with an unsustainable TAFE system. As a member from regional New South Wales—I note a few members of The Nationals are still from regional New South Wales—we should join together when it comes to supporting TAFE. That is because we all know TAFE not only provides great education in our local communities, but also is a huge driver in our local communities.

Mr Geoff Provest: With record enrolments this year.

Mr RYAN PARK: Wow! Record enrolments, says the member for Tweed. Funnily, some of the projections I have seen do not mention record enrolments.

Mr Geoff Provest: I am talking actuals.

Mr RYAN PARK: I love a good actual. Careful! My good friend the member for Tweed mentions record enrolments. Enrolments under a similar model in Victoria—

Mr Geoff Provest: We are talking about New South Wales here, not Victoria.

Mr RYAN PARK: Yes, we are. But I ask my good friend the member for Tweed, who is very close to a border—close to my very good friends those world-beaters in Queensland—have we seen one Victorian TAFE college hit the wall? Have we seen three or four hit the wall? No; it is about half a dozen.

Mr Geoff Provest: Ryan, you are in New South Wales.

Mr RYAN PARK: Yes, we are. But your Government is adopting in this State the same model that is in place in Victoria. The model proposed for New South Wales will not work. It is a model that our communities are concerned about. It is a model that is not sustainable. But, most importantly, it is a model that will not deliver the best educational outcomes for our young people. Nor will it help to support regional economies through a good, well-resourced TAFE system. The Labor Opposition proudly stands by TAFE. We understand that TAFE will never be a profitable business. Some on the Government side do not seem to understand that some parts of government just do not make money. I understand their philosophical position, but government is not a private business, and parts of government cannot make money. It would be nice if they could, but they cannot. *[Time expired.]*

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [10.26 a.m.]: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 and to dispel some of the myths that appear to have developed about what this Government is and is not doing and how the changes will impact on TAFE NSW. This bill, if passed, would result in less efficient and innovative provision of government services—exactly the opposite of what we have been doing for nearly four years in making New South Wales number one again. The bill would limit the growth of essential skills in New South Wales, and would limit the capacity of TAFE NSW to transform its services. TAFE was undervalued and not supported for 16 years prior to 2011, and that made TAFE uncompetitive in the world of vocational education and training.

The bill is premised on misunderstandings of Smart and Skilled and risks significant Commonwealth reward funding. Smart and Skilled is a reform suited to the needs of New South Wales and reflects the Government's commitment to high-quality training and the role of TAFE NSW as the public provider. It is informed by lessons elsewhere and avoids the unintended consequences. The New South Wales Government has struck a prudent balance between encouraging competition and ensuring there is no race to the bottom. If this bill passes, it will undermine changes and essential reforms already well advanced within TAFE NSW. I certainly recommend that the bill be opposed.

But let us talk about TAFE and provide some facts. TAFE NSW is universally valued. We have, over the past 3½ to four years, pumped significant capital investment into TAFE, to ensure that it remains viable for the future. Some 96 per cent of New South Wales employers were satisfied with the quality of TAFE NSW; 96 per cent of people said TAFE NSW services are valuable to New South Wales; 90 per cent of TAFE NSW graduates were satisfied with their training; and 88 per cent of TAFE NSW graduates were employed or continuing their studies. TAFE is a valued education provider in our communities.

The Tamworth electorate is the hub of the New England Institute of TAFE, which plays a critical role in vocational education and training and is a significant player in the Smart and Skilled reforms. Page 6 of "Let's Talk About TAFE", a report resulting from a statewide stakeholder consultation conducted by the NSW TAFE Commission Board in August 2013, shows that TAFE NSW is highly recognised and deeply connected. I will show the page to those opposite if they would like to have a crack at it; it has lots of words and not too many pictures, so it may take them a little while. The report states:

There can be no doubt that TAFE NSW is a known entity across the state. An overwhelming majority of Newspoll respondents were aware of TAFE NSW.

Not only is TAFE NSW highly recognised, it is intrinsically connected to the NSW population. A large majority have one or more connections with TAFE NSW. Proof of TAFE NSW's contribution in delivering skills training to the state's workforce can be seen in the finding that over half the adults polled had personally undertaken a TAFE NSW course.

The figures speak for themselves: 78 per cent have had a personal, family or work connection with TAFE NSW and 75 per cent have undertaken a TAFE course or have a family member who has undertaken a TAFE course, including 51 per cent personally studying at TAFE NSW. Those figures continue to drive the reform that we know needs to happen in the vocational education and training sector. Some of the best training facilities are available at TAFE colleges across New South Wales. Registered training organisations [RTOs] have a role to play in providing training and courses—whether short courses, apprenticeships or traineeships—and TAFE is well placed to meet the training needs of the future. There has been significant investment in the Tamworth campus in plumbing and in the Aboriginal early learning centre while many other TAFE sections are being upgraded. The courses are run very well by a number of key directors, senior teaching staff and administration staff who support the students attending New England Institute of TAFE.

Fundamentally, this Government is making changes to ensure that training systems support the State's economic and social goals as set out in "NSW 2021—A Plan to Make NSW Number One". However, in doing so, the Government is not privatising TAFE. The member for Keira constantly runs that scare campaign. No doubt part of Labor's strategy is to talk about the privatisation of TAFE in Victoria and try to compare it to New South Wales. This State is completely different with completely different circumstances and in a completely different situation. We have a strong TAFE organisation that will continue to grow because we are now supporting TAFE colleges and institutes across New South Wales. The previous Labor Government did not support TAFE, did not care for vocational education and training, and did not support teachers. That led to our 2011 election campaign TAFE pledge, which we were very proud to sign.

I support TAFE and the great work of the New England Institute, which I know has been preparing for the Smart and Skilled reforms for the past few years. The New England Institute knew the reforms were coming and prepared for them over the past two years. The survey results have now been published and the New England Institute of TAFE has done very well under the new Smart and Skilled reforms purely because it was prepared. That institute got on the front foot, held strategy meetings and vision planning sessions, and pulled in its directors, teachers and communities to say, "This is coming; it is on the horizon. How do we ensure that we continue to play an important and integral role in vocational education and training into the future?" RTOs are circling and making sure they take an increasing slice of the market. Our New England Institute of TAFE said, "Enough is enough. We've got the facilities, campuses and staff to be able to compete. Let's get out there and meet these changes head on and put ourselves in a competitive, winning position."

I pay tribute to the staff of the New England Institute and its directors. Acting director Lyn Rickard has done an outstanding job guiding the team to be prepared and ready for Smart and Skilled. The proof is in the pudding. The institute has put in the hard yards over the past two years and subsequently has been well rewarded for its preparations with Smart and Skilled. The New England Institute of TAFE is strong, progressive and proactive in the market, providing the courses that employers want. Rather than waiting for employers to approach, the institute goes to them and asks what they need and how services, training and people that suit their businesses can be provided, while remaining flexible and making sure that the current demands of vocational education and training in this day and age are met. There is absolutely no way that I can support this bill. I recommend that it be opposed. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.36 a.m.]: I speak in favour of the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 and strongly support the fantastic work of TAFE NSW institutions, whose accomplishments cannot be overstated. TAFE courses can dramatically improve and transform lives. TAFE is open to all regardless of age, ability, wealth or sexuality. The same cannot be said for fully private colleges that receive exemptions under the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Act. When students line up for TAFE courses, we know they will receive a quality education. TAFE is especially important for students who have been out of the job market or raising children or those seeking retraining in later life. Education can be a pathway out of poverty and can contribute to the lives of many who are disadvantaged. We must ensure that quality education is available to those who can least afford it and those who need it most.

TAFE institutions do more for disabled students than other organisations. Education and training are the most effective ways to break the cycle of discrimination and poverty that people with disabilities often face. The Government must act now to ensure the longevity of TAFE institutions as it implements its Smart and Skilled reforms. Introducing private course providers will seriously risk undermining the foundations of TAFE institutions, reducing their capacity to deliver because there will be a race to the bottom in respect of course fees. If left unprotected, TAFE class sizes will rise, the range of courses will shrink and there will be no time to help individual students, including those with special needs. The TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for

Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 will protect TAFE funding, taking it back to the 2010-11 level, adjusted for inflation. This will guarantee TAFE courses, facilities and services. It will also assure TAFE's position as the principal provider of technical and vocational education.

Sydney Ultimo TAFE in my electorate has turned around the lives of many of my constituents. TAFE has helped mature students overcome personal and health barriers to learning new skills and securing employment through counselling services. TAFE provides top-up courses in literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students and early school leavers, with intensive support for those with a learning disability. One student who failed at several mainstream courses attended a TAFE course that included work experience and ultimately he was offered a job. TAFE courses can inspire a thirst for learning thereby unlocking an individual's creativity and passion for a skill or trade. Many of us have come in contact with TAFE institutions at some point in our lives. It is important that we continue to support the great work of TAFE institutions. I have seen firsthand the great results achieved by students who attend the Sydney campus in my electorate.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: If we care about equity and giving people a fair go then we have to care about TAFE and its services and facilities. We have to care about having sufficient resources to provide for our communities into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [10.40 a.m.]: I oppose the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. This is a strange bill. It seeks to micromanage the operation of technical and further education in New South Wales by instructing the Minister for Education to control staffing levels at TAFE and the amount of funding to provide to different sectors. Ultimately, the bill is about how to run TAFE, which is inappropriate for the legislature. We would not pass legislation in this place that outlines how the police commissioner should deploy his personnel and resources. We would not pass legislation in this place that dictates to the Minister for Health how many orderlies, nurses and doctors should be employed in hospitals. Those are operational decisions. The legislation passed in this place determines policy and government departments are then directed to achieve the policy outcomes.

The philosophy is set in place but we do not seek to micromanage the various departments. Managerial staff are employed for that purpose. No serious aspirant to government in New South Wales would introduce a bill such as this and nobody in government would pass this legislation. It is no surprise that this bill was introduced by The Greens. They want to impose an ideological position on whoever might be in government, knowing that they never will be. They will never have the responsibility of implementing any of this nonsense and they will not have to endure the ideological garbage they present. They simply shout from the sidelines. They know a bill as silly as this could never be considered seriously and accepted by the Legislative Assembly. Sadly, The Greens are using this legislation for pre-election purposes.

Mr Jamie Parker: It just passed the upper House so something went right.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: If it was passed in the other place that is proof, is it not, that no serious governing party would ever support a bill such as this? We have an ideological position statement. It is an attempt by a political party to position itself in an election and to outbid its political opponent on the left so that it gains the support of particular sections of the community. The Greens, the member for Sydney and members of the Labor Party will compete aggressively with each other in supporting the bill, knowing that it is not serious. A bill such as this is unworkable, impractical and undesirable. What is happening in TAFE is quite different. TAFE benefits its students and the people of New South Wales. Governments provide technical and further education because people should have access to skills. Our community should be educated and should have access to life opportunities through education.

This Government's approach to TAFE in all its forms is designed to achieve that; it is not ideologically bound by how to achieve it. In promoting choice and opportunity we know that the range of opportunities available to people in education will grow. By allocating funds to students through an entitlement such as Smart and Skilled, we promote the diversity of choice. The system is more responsive to a student's desires and needs. People will go to the provider and use the entitlement that best meet their need to be educated and skilled and to participate more fully in our society and community. That is the goal, not this narrow ideological objective about maintaining TAFE as the one and only source of knowledge and access to skills in our community.

I support TAFEs; they do wonderful things. There are many examples of great TAFE courses, but it does not mean that other organisations cannot provide great courses as well. We need to focus on the needs of people in our community so that a full range of choice is available to give them the opportunity to fulfil their dreams. This legislation is about being hidebound and locking governments into achieving outcomes in only one way. It will put at risk \$400 million in Commonwealth funding that is allocated for reforms that this Government has undertaken. If we step back in time, as this bill would have us do, that funding will be put at risk. We cannot provide the best range of educational opportunities to our community if we turn our back on \$400 million and limit the range of courses that the private sector can deliver.

Sadly, some courses are not available at every TAFE throughout the State. It is not possible to deliver them; that is the reality. But if the market can provide the incentive for a private provider to meet a need in a location that TAFE cannot, we should not stop that happening. This bill will cut the funding that is available and will penalise private providers who can meet those needs. I do not care which provider meets the needs of the community, as long as they are met. That is our objective—not an ideological obsession about who meets those needs. This is a retrograde bill. I do not think it is a serious bill that was expected to be passed through this House. It is pre-election positioning by the Left to see who can wave the flag the most and cry the loudest about TAFE in the hope of winning a few votes. Any sensible party aspiring to government would take a more holistic approach that focuses on the needs of the students and people in our community rather than on the method of provision. We should be encouraging such an approach.

This Government is ensuring that TAFE is on a strong footing and has allocated \$1.86 billion in funding for TAFE this year. It has allocated \$77 million in capital expenditure for a strategy to ensure that TAFE focuses on courses that will achieve employment outcomes for people in our community, targeting areas that matter. We want people to realise their potential and fulfil their dreams so that they can participate fully in our community, and TAFE already provides the courses that allow them to do that. The broader policy settings in New South Wales are designed so that all people in this State enjoy maximum opportunities. I commend the Minister for his work in ensuring that people can acquire skills that will enable them to achieve in our society and make New South Wales number one in every respect. I oppose the bill.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [10.50 a.m.]: I contribute to debate on the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 and state at the outset that I will be supporting the bill. That does not mean I do not recognise the bill is flawed. Indeed, I concur with the comment by the member for Riverstone that there will be flaws because the system is very complex. The education system in this State is complicated by the agreements we have with the Federal Government and we are required to take up the challenge every so often and deal with contemporary issues. I have no problem with that, but to dismiss this bill as grandstanding because it has emanated from The Greens in the upper House understates what it is about. In this House there are few opportunities for non-government members to initiate debate on important matters. I commend The Greens for bringing this issue to the inner sanctum of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales to be debated seriously.

I am speaking to this bill because I care, as do the vast majority of people in New South Wales, about TAFE. Most people do not want to see this great vocational training institution—which is the envy of many other countries around the world—become a second-rate organisation. The bill aspires to safeguard this important vocational education provider. I have listened to the contributions of those opposite about funding and the wonderful things the Government has been doing through its commitment to TAFE, but we are talking about changes planned for TAFE colleges that will come into effect from 1 January 2015, and associated risks. Demands for new and increased skills in a rapidly changing workforce and economy will always challenge our education system. The changes planned for next year under Smart and Skilled could irrevocably change and reduce our ability to provide training for some of the trades and skills that our community requires irrespective of what may be profitable or desirable for the private sector to offer.

Change in itself is not necessarily a bad thing. If change brings more efficiency, more choice or more relevance to the job market that is to be applauded, but not—I repeat not—if it risks destabilising TAFE institutions by increasing class sizes, reducing the range of courses available and limiting the amount of time that teachers can spend with students. One of the most remarkable things about TAFE is that it has always been an equitable organisation—a provider of educational and vocational training that is accessible to all. The range of courses and high standards in teaching and facilities at these institutions has inspired many in our community to take up further education and develop a thirst for learning.

This bill seeks to ensure that TAFE's position as the principal provider of vocational education is maintained and protected. Teenage apprentices, adults retraining in a bid to change their career path, mothers

seeking skills that will help them re-enter the workforce, the long-term unemployed who are after a new start, professionals looking to update their qualifications, refugees, and young people disengaged from school who find in TAFE a learning environment they respond to are all part of the diverse social mix that is the TAFE student body.

TAFE is inclusive, accessible and a pathway out of poverty for the disadvantaged. TAFE plays an important role in plugging gaps that other educational institutions and training bodies leave open, but it cannot be expected to deliver the same high standard of education if its budget is cut constantly. If the Government maintains the attitude that it can keep squeezing TAFE's funding, then the damage done to TAFE's facilities and reputation will be irreversible. While private organisations undoubtedly have a role in the provision of vocational education and training, their involvement should not come at the cost of dismantling an equitable and far-reaching organisation such as TAFE. Private providers will not offer courses in important but unfashionable fields, which are typically fields that will not provide a return fitting their business model and need for profit; nor do these providers have the reach to offer face-to-face training in non-metropolitan areas to the extent that TAFE does.

There are legitimate concerns that the Smart and Skilled framework, with its emphasis on privatised education and subsidies based on skill shortages, will reduce the choice available to disadvantaged people who cannot afford the fees for unsubsidised courses, and to those in regional and remote areas where private training organisations are few and far between. Cracks are appearing in the Government's much-vaunted Smart and Skilled program before it has begun. Last night I spoke in this place in support of an experienced and highly regarded childcare training provider in my region that has explicitly been cut from the list of approved providers under Smart and Skilled, apparently on the basis of information provided to a rudimentary survey. This college has operated for 15 years and has trained, in partnership with the Government, about 1,200 students for Certificate III and diploma qualifications in early childhood education.

It is the preferred training provider of more than 100 preschools and childcare centres across the Hunter, and currently has more than 300 students on its books. It has won multiple training awards and last year was audited by the Australian Schools Quality Authority—a Federal Government regulator—and achieved 100 per cent compliance, placing it in the top 17 per cent of registered training organisations in Australia. Yet this esteemed training organisation has not received accreditation to continue as an approved provider under Smart and Skilled. It was informed via a short pro forma email that its services would no longer be required by the State after 31 December. I acknowledge that this is something of an aside from the TAFE discussion, but it cannot be extricated from this debate; this process does not inspire confidence in the new vocational education system.

TAFE is already feeling the impact. We have seen the rationalisation of course offerings in the Hunter, with the closure of boilermaking and welding courses at Cessnock, metal fabrications courses at Glendale, ship-building courses at Newcastle, and the loss of classes and a sharp decline in student numbers following the implementation of a \$12,000 fee for a diploma in fine arts some time back. As we have heard, the Higher School Certificate has also been cut from the TAFE syllabus in Newcastle. This bill sets out to protect TAFE and the fantastic work it does. Education and training helps to raise income, improve health and reduce the cycle of poverty. As a final comment in support of this bill, and all TAFE colleges across New South Wales, I will quote the Federal Secretary of the Australian Education Union, Pat Forward—I am sure Government members will be all over this quote—who in April this year said:

The Australian TAFE system plays a crucial role in initial vocational education for young people entering the workplace for the first time, and in providing retraining and career change opportunities for all Australians.

That comment is inarguable. In supporting the bill I do not wish to be seen as denigrating the work of the Minister, his staff or the Government. In fact, I applaud the Minister for Education for some of the great things he has done and the courage he has shown in making improvements in many aspects of education in New South Wales, particularly for Indigenous Australians in far western New South Wales. I support him very much in those areas, but I call on the Minister to take a serious look at this matter. This bill should not be dismissed as an ideologically driven program by The Greens; it goes much deeper than that. This is one of the few opportunities we get to fully debate a serious matter in this place. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [10.58 a.m.]: I speak in opposition to the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. The bill proposes to place a moratorium on TAFE NSW, budget cuts, fee increases and the introduction of a competitive

market for vocational education and training. In essence, the bill is trying to hobble TAFE NSW. It is trying to keep TAFE in the nineteenth century, rather than dragging it into the twenty-first century. It is trying to keep TAFE focused on its buildings, institutions and workers, rather than its students.

TAFE has done a fantastic job over many decades of educating apprentices and employees going into businesses. But what was good in the past is not necessarily good now or for the future. The changes in this bill will put at risk more than \$400 million of Commonwealth funding for New South Wales over the next three years. This bill will stop the very positive changes the Government is attempting to make in all aspects of education in New South Wales—whether it be the fee increases in early childhood education, whether it be the changes in Local Schools, Local Decisions or whether it be the extra funding in the Resource Allocation Model for primary schools and high schools. The member for Lake Macquarie congratulated the Minister for Education and said that these things were good for education in New South Wales. Yet he is questioning the Minister in this area of Smart and Skilled. The changes proposed by the Government are working.

The member for Lake Macquarie spoke about the change in courses being offered in the Hunter. But he did not talk about all the good things happening in the Hunter. For example, this year Hunter TAFE commenced delivery of an Associate Degree in Applied Engineering (Renewable Energy Technologies). That is fantastic and will take those students into the future. That is what we are talking about—not being bogged down in what TAFE has been doing for decades but rather looking at the future and positioning TAFE to be a successful organisation delivering quality education with an employment focus for the future. When speaking about the Hunter the member for Lake Macquarie did not speak about the great things being done by the CSIRO and the National Solar Energy Centre, which are working with TAFE in Newcastle. There are new courses in accounting and in early childhood education and care that were not offered previously. Yes, changes are being made, but the changes are positive for the future of education at TAFE.

TAFE campuses in my electorate at Taree and Great Lakes are part of North Coast TAFE. North Coast TAFE is smart and skilled. The director is very happy that North Coast TAFE has won a contract for "significant business" under the New South Wales Government's new, more competitive approach to training, which begins next year. This approach does not rule out TAFE; it modernises TAFE and makes it commercially relevant to modern-day educational needs in Australia and employment needs in Australia. TAFE is there to educate people in their vocation, and that is what is happening on the North Coast. The contract, part of Smart and Skilled, covers training subsidised by the New South Wales Government from 2015.

The New South Wales Government is changing vocational education in New South Wales through the Smart and Skilled reforms, which commence on 1 January 2015. The reforms are part of a nationwide agreement for consistent skills training throughout Australia. This was agreed to a couple of years ago through the Council of Australian Governments with the Federal Government, which was a Labor Government at that time. Federal incentives are being offered. More than \$400 million would be lost under this bill. The member for Macquarie Fields says that is not true, but it is true. That is what happens if we do not implement the reforms that the Federal Government wants.

As the member for Myall Lakes I am delighted that the North Coast TAFE was successful in its tender. It means that TAFE colleges on the mid North Coast will continue to provide relevant and popular courses. TAFE has always offered an exciting range of programs that help people get the skills they need for the job they want. All tertiary education needs to be relevant to the people attending the colleges and also to potential employers, who need skilled people to work for them. TAFE is in the unique situation of being able to attract and train local students of all ages by offering courses that appeal to those starting off their careers as well as those wanting to retrain in different areas of work.

Elizabeth McGregor is the Director of North Coast TAFE. She said their success in winning this tender means that North Coast TAFE will "continue to be here, thriving, relevant to the North Coast". She said, "The focus of North Coast TAFE continues to be to expand our services here in the North Coast". She also said, "It's all systems go for us as we continue to focus on giving our learners high-quality learning experiences, with further announcements to be made in 2015". So this is something that North Coast TAFE is very pleased about. It shows that TAFE can be competitive. It shows that TAFE can be relevant, and it can go up against non-government organisations and be successful in winning tenders.

The North Coast TAFE is progressively redesigning its student support and learner service areas to enhance the student experience and expand the range and accessibility of services for customers. It is a service that, TAFE understands, has to be focused on students and not focused on the institution, outdated work

practices or the bricks and mortar of the building. It has to focus on the needs of the students. The students' needs are to get an education and, at the end of that, to be able to get a job. It means looking at courses that are relevant today, relevant to employers and relevant to business—not relevant to other associated hangers-on.

The member for Cessnock is being his usual uncivil and negative self. Of all the bills we see in this place, this is the one that shows that marriage between The Greens, that left-wing red party, and Labor. Here they are fused together in support of a retrograde bill that tries to hamstring TAFE education in New South Wales. There they are sitting together on the other side of the Chamber. It is a trifecta—The Greens, Labor and the Independents working together to bring down a system that is good for students, good for New South Wales and good for the future. Our TAFE reforms will bring about jobs and employment.

Labor members and The Greens sit together on the Opposition benches rubbing shoulders. They are opposed to everything. They were opposed to Local Schools, Local Decisions until they worked out it was included in the Gonski reforms. New South Wales was the first State to sign up to Gonski, and then suddenly the Opposition jumped on board again. One of the rudest things in this House, when we are debating something as important as this, is that we have the member for Cessnock, in his usual uneducated way, sniping and being negative in the background with his mentor the doctor from Macquarie Fields.

Dr Andrew McDonald: The evil doctor from Macquarie Fields.

Mr Clayton Barr: Dr Evil!

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: He is Dr Evil. They are being negative.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members will be referred to by their correct titles.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I am talking about the member for Macquarie Fields—Dr Evil. He is against everything this Government has done. This Government has taken this State from the outhouse to the penthouse. We have made New South Wales number one again. We looked at what those opposite did during their 16 years in government. We knew that whatever they did was wrong and that it was bad for New South Wales, particularly their association with The Greens—the most backward party of all.

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

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

TAFE ILLAWARRA HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE COURSE

Debate resumed from 23 October 2014.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.10 a.m.]: I again commend the member for Wollongong for moving this motion. During discussion this morning on the TAFE changes moratorium bill we have continued to hear sentiments from Government members that clearly indicate the Government has no vision for TAFE. Actually, Premier Mike Baird's vision is probably to sell off as many campuses as he can down the track. I think that is the secret agenda of the Baird-Grant Government. So far this Government has increased TAFE fees and cut courses, including the Higher School Certificate [HSC] course at Illawarra TAFE. In the past two weeks I have asked the Minister to clarify whether the HSC course at Bankstown TAFE will continue into 2015 and beyond. Approximately 150 students at Bankstown TAFE rely on that institution to obtain their HSC credentials. We have been given no guarantee that the course will continue and students who wish to undertake the HSC course may have to travel to Granville or other campuses. The Government should be ashamed of that.

There is no doubt that the Government's agenda down the track is to make it almost impossible for young and mature age students, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and recent migrants—people who rely on TAFE as an affordable option—to develop skills and enhance their career opportunities by obtaining a TAFE qualification. TAFE should remain an affordable option. University education is not for everyone and it is becoming more expensive. By increasing the cost of university degrees the Government is undoubtedly in a race to make it almost impossible for the average student from Western Sydney or the

Illawarra, for example, to obtain a university education. As I said, TAFE should be affordable and it should remain affordable. I commend the member for Wollongong for being a strong advocate for the Illawarra community and for moving this motion.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [11.13 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wollongong for bringing this motion relating to TAFE Illawarra to the attention of the House. A bit of mischievous information has been put into the public arena about TAFE.

Ms Noreen Hay: How would you know?

Mr LEE EVANS: I am married to a TAFE teacher so, believe me, I know. She and I both understand the ramifications of the new system. As a Government member I agree with what is happening within the TAFE system. TAFE is all about preparing people for future careers and trades. I understand that the member for Wollongong is concerned about TAFE continuing to offer the Higher School Certificate [HSC] course but that course is regionalised in the system. It is not available at every TAFE campus, but it is available in each region. A TAFE somewhere in the Illawarra and somewhere in the Sutherland Shire runs the course. If people need the HSC as part of their trade they can still obtain it through TAFE. Only some HSC courses have been withdrawn at certain TAFEs. That is not ideal, but we have a limited amount of funds to put towards TAFE and those funds must be targeted efficiently towards getting people into work and trades.

In 2015 TAFE Illawarra will continue to offer a Higher School Certificate program focusing on areas of identified employment opportunities. An annual review of the HSC program has been initiated to strengthen its vocational focus for 2015. Students undertaking their HSC at the Illawarra Institute have the opportunity to complete a vocational qualification to assist them to be job ready at the same time as they complete their HSC. On 1 January 2010 the school leaving age in New South Wales was raised to 17 years. More school-age students are staying at school and there is less demand for the HSC at TAFE. More than 90 students completed the course last year and it is anticipated that a similar number of students will complete the program in 2014. TAFE Illawarra also offers the Tertiary Preparation Certificate [TPC] for those students returning to study whose focus is on entry to higher education.

The Government must keep working hard to contain its expenses so that New South Wales lives within its means. The whole education sector, including TAFE, must operate more efficiently. Under the Smart and Skilled reforms TAFE will continue to play a central role as the State's public vocational education and training provider in strengthening the skills base of New South Wales, particularly in our regions. As the State's public provider, TAFE continues its essential role in setting the benchmark for quality and innovation in vocational education and training services, and delivering skills that are critical for our economy. At the same time TAFE is moving ahead with its transformation agenda and meeting the Government's expectations to bring about a new TAFE NSW. It is vital for TAFE to continue to evolve as a contemporary and agile organisation so that it can respond with even greater flexibility to the needs of students, employers and communities.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [11.17 a.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions to this debate by the member for Kiama, the member for Fairfield, the member for Bankstown, the member for Strathfield and the member for Heathcote. It is a great shame that I once again have to stand in this place after hearing decent members of Parliament—

Mr Andrew Gee: It's always a shame when you have to stand and talk in this place.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I acknowledge the interjection by the member for Orange. I do not know why he hates students. I have asked him time and again to explain, but he will not. The changes to TAFE Illawarra are about what TAFE should be, according to the member for Kiama, as opposed to what TAFE needs to be. As I have said, this Government cut the arts courses at the TAFE campus in Gladstone Avenue, Wollongong, which affected students such as Maureen Stapleton and others. I am a proud product of TAFE. It is sad when people who are seeking a second chance at life through a decent education are denied that by members opposite.

Government members sit in this House and defend that policy. They should be ashamed of themselves. If they have any children, any family and any heart—which I doubt—the lot of them should hang their heads in shame. I agree with the member for Fairfield who, as a teacher, knows that people need the opportunity to complete their Higher School Certificate [HSC] if they have not already done so—for example, if they dropped out of school, for whatever reason. As the member for Fairfield said, not everyone wants to be an electrician.

That takes nothing away from electricians, who are very good and much-needed members of our society. But nonetheless, a Higher School Certificate is definitely a much-needed certificate, and people should be able to have a second chance.

Why do Government members not want people to become educated? It is because they want to create cannon fodder that they can use and abuse in years to come. They are a disgrace. The member for Strathfield said, "Well, they will choose what particular course can be had", and the Government will decide who can have which course. There will be no choices for young people who want to have a second go. Who do Government members think they are? They should get out and have a second go at educating themselves. As I said earlier, they are a disgrace.

Mr Ray Williams: Point of order: I have listened to the member's contribution. I understand that she is passionate about this topic, but she has criticised us about our children and about not having a heart. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I ask that you direct the member to show just a modicum of decency as she debates this motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard the comments, which are unparliamentary. The member is replying to debate on the TAFE Illawarra Higher School Certificate course motion. I direct her to confine her remarks to the leave of the motion.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Thank you, Mr Deputy-Speaker. I thank the member for Bankstown, who is a great supporter of TAFE and students; the member for Heathcote, who I am sure had his arm twisted to make his comments; and the member for Hawkesbury, who I am sure took a point of order to use up the time allotted for my speech so that Government members would not have to listen to the truth. Government members should not now try to justify cuts that before the 2011 election they denied they would make. This Government has changed its position since winning government.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 21

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

Noes, 37

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Ms Gibbons	Mr Rohan
Mr Ayres	Mr Grant	Mr Sidoti
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mrs Skinner
Ms Berejiklian	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Souris
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Speakman
Mr Conolly	Mr Issa	Mr Toole
Mr Coure	Mr Maguire	Mr Ward
Mrs Davies	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	
Mr Evans	Mr Page	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Flowers	Ms Parker	Mr Patterson
Mr Fraser	Mr Perrottet	Mr J. D. Williams

Pairs

Ms Burton	Mr Baird
Mr Lalich	Mr Constance
Mr Rees	Ms Goward
Mr Robertson	Mr O'Farrell
Ms Watson	Mr Rowell

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

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

MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY COMMEMORATIONS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [11.30 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all the RSL, soldiers and memorial clubs in the Myall Lakes electorate on successfully holding commemorations for Anzac Day 2014.
- (1) Acknowledges that for many clubs the morning marches and dawn services were conducted in torrential rain, which made for very difficult conditions, without dampening the enthusiasm of those marching or watching.
- (2) Congratulates the Bulahdelah Memorial Hall Committee on preparing a wonderful display of photographs and other items that commemorated the men from the area who fought in the Australian armed services during the First World War.
- (3) Recognises the dedication and tireless efforts of the Minister for Veterans Affairs, whose support and funding made many ceremonies in the Myall Lakes electorate possible.

Anzac Day this year was certainly a tumultuous day: The heavens opened in the early hours of the morning and there was torrential rain. In Bulahdelah roofs were blown off houses, and hail blocked gutters and driveways. Notwithstanding the adverse weather, which by then had calmed down somewhat, people went out to march and commemorate Anzac Day. It was the same in Taree and other places throughout the Myall Lakes electorate: There was torrential rain. Those who marched and attended commemorative events demonstrated the respect that communities have today for those who served in the First World War and other wars, and demonstrated also their knowledge that the things we enjoy today are due to the sacrifices made by previous generations—whether they served in military forces overseas, whether they were persons who went without and made sacrifices at home to ensure that our service men and women were properly fed and resourced, or whether they were families whose sacrifice was the loss of relatives and other loved ones.

I had the pleasure of attending the Anzac Day dawn service at Forster. Luckily for those of us there, the storms had passed and held off until the dawn service concluded. As the service finished, the rains started once more. From the Forster dawn service I went to the Taree morning service. Because of the inclement weather, it was held in the car park beneath the Greater Taree City Council building. Hundreds of people crammed into the car park to take part in a wonderful service conducted by the RSL sub-branch as well as students from a number of schools in the Manning Valley. I then went to Old Bar, where hundreds of people had gathered to commemorate and acknowledge the sacrifices of past generations and to see the veterans march and hear people recognised at the service. I had the opportunity to speak at the commemorative service. At the commencement of my talk, I asked all past and serving members to stand so that the crowd and community would recognise and acknowledge them. There were tumultuous accolades and acclamations for those past and serving members.

The night before the dawn service at Bulahdelah I went to the Bulahdelah Memorial Hall, where a wonderful display of photographs and other memorabilia from the First World War and the Second World War had been prepared. It was great to see so many people looking at that exhibition. I thank the Bulahdelah Memorial Hall Committee, Art Brown and other men and women for putting that exhibition together and for playing ukuleles and providing other forms of entertain for those who gathered there that night. I was asked, "Will you come to our dawn service in the morning?" I said, "I can't because I have committed to the dawn service at Forster." As I have said, Bulahdelah had one of the biggest storms ever to go through that area. You have to take your hat off to the State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service and other emergency service personnel who came out that evening and worked on the houses that had lost their roofs or been damaged by trees, hail and rain.

The Bulahdelah Memorial Hall had been in the doldrums for a number of years, as had so many other community halls in various areas in regional New South Wales. The committee that got up and running a few years ago has enlivened the hall. With Community Building Partnership grants, it has put a men's shed at the back of the hall, and installed toilets, including toilets for the disabled, and have really made something of the

hall. It has great plans for its future. That committee has also been involved in the showground memorial gates project. The gates were placed at the showground many years ago to commemorate the First World War. Over the years they had fallen into disrepair, and eventually were removed and stored at the back of the showground, where they remained for many years.

That committee and the local RSL sub-branch got Community Building Partnership funding, as well as some funding provided by the Minister for Veterans Affairs, Victor Dominello, and the gates have been fully restored and reinstalled. The official opening of those gates will take place in a couple of weeks, on the same day as the Bulahdelah Show, one of the great shows in regional New South Wales. I look forward to attending the opening of the gates. The community of Bulahdelah are wonderful people; they are very resilient and they have been able to turn that situation around. I commend the motion to the House.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I welcome to the gallery the Mayor of Richmond Valley, Councillor Ernie Bennett, and the General Manager of Richmond Valley Council, John Walker, who are guests of the member for Clarence. It is good to see you here.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.37 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes. The motion, which relates to Anzac Day commemorations in the Myall Lakes electorate, has four key points, which I will read, elaborating on each particular point. I speak on behalf of the New South Wales Labor Opposition and in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Citizenship and Communities. All members in this House have stories about our particular Anzac Day commemorations, but I am sure they interlink with one another, including stories regarding torrential rain and the organisations involved in those commemorations. I will touch on those matters for the next few minutes. The first part of the motion states:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all the RSL, soldiers and memorial clubs in the Myall Lakes electorate on successfully holding commemorations for Anzac Day 2014.

I note the comments made by the member for Myall Lakes about trying to get to as many commemoration venues as possible. I am sure that, in an electorate such as Myall Lakes, which is quite large geographically, the member did his utmost to traverse the electorate in order to pay due respect to his constituents but especially to the fallen soldiers from the Myall Lakes electorate. The second part of the motion is:

- (2) Acknowledges that for many clubs the morning marches and dawn services were conducted in torrential rain which made for very difficult conditions, without dampening the enthusiasm of those marching or watching.

Last year, particularly in Fairfield, the heavy torrential rain caused the sub-branch parade to march to the Sapphire Room in the RSL club for the commemoration to take place. I am sure that all RSL clubs have contingency plans in place to ensure that no-one's spirits are dampened by torrential rain. Paragraph (3) of the motion states:

Congratulates the Bulahdelah Memorial Hall Committee on preparing a wonderful display of photographs and other items which commemorated the men from the area who fought in the Australian armed services during the First World War.

In my electorate Fairfield RSL, about which I have spoken already, Smithfield RSL, Cabra-Vale Diggers, Chester Hill-Carramar RSL, and other clubs, such as Guildford Leagues Club and Mounties, not only hold memorial services but also provide special tributes, floral arrangements and photographs to commemorate the brave men and women who fought for us. We stand here today because of the wonderful efforts of those brave men and women. Paragraph (4) of the motion states:

Recognises the dedication and tireless efforts of the Minister for Veterans Affairs whose support and funding made many ceremonies in the Myall Lakes electorate possible.

This is a particularly bipartisan ticket in the motion. I give credit where it is due because the Minister for Veterans Affairs provided funding to my electorate in addition to Community Building Partnership funding for the restoration of Honour Avenue, which runs right through Fairfield, with the placement of new pavers, including commemorative pavers dedicated to specific campaigns in which our brave men and women served overseas. Over the past few years, through the Community Building Partnership program, Honour Avenue has received beautiful additional landscaping and sandstone bollards along both sides of the street leading to the Lone Pine tree at the end. We were all delighted the day the Minister addressed the Fairfield RSL Club sub-branch. I acknowledge the entire motion of the member for Myall Lakes.

Earlier, I spoke about the fact that we all share common stories. One particular story is about the attendance of locals at Anzac Day dawn service commemorations. I am sure the member for Myall Lakes will agree, as will other members, that more community members are participating in this special service, which is good to see. I do not believe that increasing attendance is only because of the approaching centenary of the Anzac landing. The heartfelt emotion for Anzac Day is evident throughout our communities, particularly when we see schoolchildren attending with their mums, dads, and particularly grandpas and grandmothers who served. It is a wonderful sight to behold. Intra-clubs also get involved with their commemorations along with, as the member for Myall Lakes mentioned, our State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service, local area commands, and Fire and Rescue.

The story is common across all electorates and one about which we can be very proud, particularly when we see our local cadets paying their respects and getting involved in the commemorations. On behalf of the New South Wales Labor Opposition I thank those in the Myall Lakes electorate for their efforts in the commemorations. For my electorate of Fairfield, I thank particularly the Fairfield sub-branch and its president, Ken Young, and Paul Angus Bryant for their efforts in ensuring respectful and solemn annual commemorations to those brave men and women who served our country so well and those who continue to do so to afford us our freedom. I fully support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [11.44 a.m.]: I join members in supporting this motion of the hardworking member for Myall Lakes. I commend him for his support of his local RSL, soldiers and memorial clubs in his electorate, particularly the Bulahdelah Memorial Hall Committee, which does so much for the community, as he outlined. The member for Myall Lakes often speaks effusively about that committee's enthusiasm for the Bulahdelah community. So it is fitting that he should recognise that hardworking committee in this House today. As the member for Fairfield pointed out, Anzac Day commemorations are supported throughout the electorates of the New South Wales Parliament, and are something on which we can all agree. Indeed, the member for Myall Lakes and I have something in common: Australia's first Victoria Cross recipient, Sir Neville Howse.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Came from the Manning.

Mr ANDREW GEE: At one time Sir Neville lived in the Manning Valley, but then went on to serve not only as mayor of Orange, but also as the member for Calare, a soldier, surgeon and statesman. He was awarded Australia's first Victoria Cross in the Boer War when he charged his horse through a hail of enemy gunfire to rescue a wounded trumpeter on the field of battle. The horse was shot out from underneath Sir Neville, yet he managed to reach the wounded soldier and carry him back to safe lines. Sir Neville has a history of residing in the Manning Valley. Indeed, in a speech to this House a few weeks ago I thought for a moment that the member for Myall Lakes was trying to claim Sir Neville for the Manning Valley. I am sure I was mistaken. As we examined the history we saw that just prior to embarking on his service in the Boer War Sir Neville indeed was a resident of Orange. However, the history of Anzac and the men and women who have served Australia, like Sir Neville, are a part of this country's history that we can all share and be proud of.

I mention particularly the directors of the Orange Ex-Services Club: Peter Single; Graham Gentles; Graeme Scott; Roslyn Davidson, who is an old friend of mine; Terry Flood; Peter Irwin; Russell Jones; Les McGaw; Lindsay Wright; chief executive officer Cameron Provost; chief operating officer Guy Chapman; finance manager Joanna Hoskins; sub-branch president Lindsay Wright; secretary Les McGaw; and senior vice-president Chris Colvin; and committee members Graeme Scott, Ros Davidson, Tony Gosper, Kevin Lenaghan, Warren Willis, piper Don Peck, who attends events all around Orange every year, and Brian Merchant for all their work and support for current and former service men and women.

Thousands of people turn up for the Anzac Day march in Orange every year. The community takes particular pride in supporting the memory of our service men and women who are no longer with us and those currently defending Australia on our behalf. I note also that four students from Canobalas high school were successful in the recent ballot to travel to attend the Centenary of Gallipoli commemoration in April 2015. It was a privilege to be on the judging panel to select the students to represent Orange and New South Wales at that very important ceremony. I congratulate the member for Myall Lakes on bringing this very important motion to the House.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [11.48 a.m.]: I also congratulate the member for Myall Lakes on moving this motion.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: This is a first in four years.

Ms NOREEN HAY: It will probably be the last. I also congratulate the RSL, soldiers and memorial clubs in the Wollongong-Illawarra area. I pay homage also to all services involved, including nurses, support staff, and the RSL wives and auxiliaries. As we know, one sacrifice begets another. The service that these people gave on our behalf and that of future generations should be acknowledged, respected and remembered regularly so that we do not forget the sacrifices that were made. Sometimes we forget about the nurses and others on the front line who helped the wounded and stayed with the dying to make their last moments more comfortable. Now many members of the defence forces are female and they are supported by males who are experiencing the same trauma, loss and sacrifice.

I congratulate all the RSL clubs in the Wollongong area on the effort and organisation that goes into making the marches and dawn services successful occasions. They are also successful on the South Coast. I acknowledge the communities who turn out in their thousands. Every year increasing numbers of people attend the march and dawn service in Wollongong. It is wonderful to know that we are remembering the fallen and acknowledging their sacrifice and contribution. I am proud that a greater number of people are paying their respect every year. Veterans' Affairs staff and support services are dedicated to this cause and members on both sides of the House would agree we could always have more funding. I support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [11.52 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Fairfield, the member for Wollongong and the member for Orange for their contributions to this debate. I cannot let the contribution by the member for Orange pass without comment. Ordinarily I agree 100 per cent with everything he says because he is an intelligent person, an articulate speaker and a great champion of the people of Orange. However, Sir Neville Reginald Howse, VC, moved to Orange after the Boer War, so he was a resident of the Manning Valley until the Boer War. The member for Orange spoke about his gallantry when he received his Victoria Cross [VC], but there were many occasions when he acted courageously to help others in need.

The evidence he was a Manning Valley resident at the time of the Boer War is the fact that the State Government put money towards a Neville Howse VC memorial on the memorial drive from Wingham to Comboyne. At Elands, near the Ellenborough Falls—the longest single drop waterfall in the Southern Hemisphere and one of the top sites in the Destination NSW tour book—a memorial to Neville Howse was opened only a few weeks ago and his grandson, who is a captain in the naval reserve, was present at the opening.

At the commencement of the First World War Sir Neville Howse was part of the Australian contingent that went to New Guinea where a ship sank and a couple of sailors lost their lives. He returned to Australia and left on the ships for Gallipoli. He later gave evidence that the lack of preparation in moving the injured soldiers from the beach onto ships was so bad that it bordered on being criminal negligence. Sir Neville Howse was knighted in 1917, during the First World War. After the war he moved to Orange, where he served as mayor on two occasions. He later became the member for Calare. He was a great member of Federal Parliament and the National Party. Tragically, he died from cancer some years later.

There were many Anzac Day commemorations across Myall Lakes. The electorate consists of two major commercial centres and 30 villages, unlike the electorate of Coffs Harbour, which is a city-based electorate. Each of those villages has a war memorial in its schools or community halls and they have commemorations on Anzac Day at which they remember those who fought for Australia so that we can live today with democracy and freedom in a country without all the problems that other countries suffer from. I commend the motion to the House.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I advise the House that Sir Neville Howse was born in Stogursey, Somerset, England, and educated at Freeland School, Taunton. He studied medicine at London Hospital before migrating to New South Wales, largely for health reasons, and established his first practice in Newcastle, then another in Taree. After undertaking postgraduate work in England, Howse returned to Australia in 1899 and settled in Orange. I trust that will end any argument or discourse across the Chamber about Sir Neville Howse.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Postponement of Business**

General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 2996 [Respite Centre Services] postponed on motion by Ms Noreen Hay.

NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL RATES AND CHARGES

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.57 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that Newcastle City Council has voted to endorse a bundle of financial documents, including a 100-page register announcing 40 new charges for council services.
- (2) Notes that the vote was held before any community consultation and without documents being made available for public comment.
- (3) Urges the Minister for Local Government to take steps to address community concerns about the lack of consultation over these increased fees.

I wish that the member for Newcastle and the member for Charlestown had been able to give their inaugural speeches and then they could have taken part in this debate. The member for Newcastle, who is also a Newcastle city councillor, was eager to take part in this discussion. Before the quick actions of Labor councillors prevented it—

[*Interruption*]

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

Ms SONIA HORNERY: —the free entry policy to Newcastle's art gallery and museum was set to end without any community consultation. Prior to his resignation, former Lord Mayor Jeff McCloy and his coalition of Liberal and conservative Independents oversaw a vote that resulted in council endorsing a bundle of financial documents. These documents included a 100-page register announcing 40 new charges for council services to unsuspecting Newcastle City Council ratepayers. At the time Labor councillors opposed the idea, as reported in the *Newcastle Herald*, of the council "endorsing" detailed financial plans before the community had a chance to comment on them. Labor councillor Stephanie Posniak said:

This year's operational plan originally included a plan for the art gallery and museum ... The fee was included without consultation or prior warning to councillors. Labor sought to have the item removed ... but [instead] the item was deferred to allow research and consultation, all of which should have been done before the item was put in the budget.

This issue has less to do with the fee increases themselves—though I will not agree with fee increases because it is within a council's power to moot fee increases for the services they charge—rather, I stand opposed to the blatant disregard for the public's right to have a say. Newcastle City Council ratepayers will have to pay increased fees. It is cause for alarm that the floated increases included charging a fee for entry to the art gallery. Recently, there has been an ongoing battle between the former lord mayor and his allies and the gallery patrons, friends and management.

Despite repeated promises, former member for Newcastle Tim Owen was unable to secure his committed share of the \$21 million needed for a gallery upgrade. Former Federal Labor member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson got her \$7 million from the Federal Government and even the council at the time was ready to pony up the dough. The reticence of this State Government, and Mr Owen's failure to secure the necessary funding, meant that Newcastle City Council saw the opportunity to provide a wonderful extension to the art gallery for Newcastle ratepayers slip through its fingers. Many of the arguments against the upgrade pointed to a supposed lack of interest in Newcastle, with the gallery's attendance rate often touted as evidence. Councillor Posniak said:

Evidence suggests that the introduction of fees to cultural institutions [such as the museum and gallery] has been disastrous to attendance numbers ... If attendance numbers are so important, why make it less financially viable for people to attend the art gallery? Why oppose an expansion and rejuvenation that would have greatly increased the gallery's size and cachet?

As shadow Minister for the Arts and a lifelong lover of art, I agree with the Novocastrian commenter on the *Newcastle Herald* website who wrote:

The art gallery has a place in every civilised society ... using visitor numbers as *the* determining factor in the need for an art gallery at all is becoming a bit tiring. We cannot use reason and utility as a trump card against the creative arts. Well, we could I suppose, but that would leave us looking pretty stupid, wouldn't it?

Just weeks ago Labor committed \$14 million to fund the long-overdue upgrade. I applaud this decision, just as I thank the Labor councillors for acting so decisively to oppose this unfair fee. Though the worst-case scenario regarding the museum and gallery fee increases was avoided, it points to the underlying problem of lack of community consultation. If councillors were not aware of the proposal, as Ms Posniak said, how could the community be expected to know what the Newcastle City Council was doing about rates? A Novocastrian who did not want to be named said:

I'm deeply concerned about this ... It just seems very unfair. Why does the Lord Mayor or a council staffer or whoever just get to set the fee increases without talking to the community? Without even putting their proposals on display?

Given what has been revealed about conservative politics in Newcastle and the Hunter in recent months, this issue takes on an added dimension of concern. It is incumbent upon the Minister for Local Government, who is at the table, and the Government to take immediate steps to address community concerns about the lack of consultation about that has occurred with Newcastle City Council.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [12.04 p.m.]: The motion moved by the member for Wallsend is very interesting. What was her motive? Did it have something to do with Tim Owen being a member of this House when notice of this motion was given? I cannot quite get my head around it. It has nothing to do with the Newcastle City Council's decision to lift charges; it is about the inability of Labor councillors to influence council in caucus. The Labor councillors have not been able to put up a valid argument and the member for Wallsend is attempting to defend them. I might be wrong, but is the new member for Newcastle not a councillor? I find it very odd that he is not in the Chamber for the debate on this motion. The member for Wallsend has spoken at length in this place about local government. What did local government mean to the previous Labor Government? It was an opportunity to shift every cost it possibly could to local government. In 16 years those opposite shifted more costs to local government than any other government in New South Wales history.

The member for Wallsend said the council had to increase its fees for services. What is she telling us? Newcastle City Council is running a business, unlike those Labor councillors who got the member for Wallsend to move this motion attacking Tim Owen, who is no longer in this place, because they are too weak to get their voices heard in council. This motion is about having a crack at Tim Owen. It is a joke that we are dealing with a matter in the backyard of the newly elected member for Newcastle yet he is not in the Chamber. What is his future in this place? He has no future. I do not think he even realises what goes on in here. He is probably talking to his Labor councillors about the strategy they are going to take to the next council meeting; he is not interested in this place. This motion is a lame duck. The man whom the member for Wallsend wanted to get has since left this place, the council is running a business and she is trying to interfere in that on behalf of Labor councillors.

I have been asked to provide the following information. It is important that all members understand the framework under which our system of local government in New South Wales works. As members well know, New South Wales has in place a system of rate pegging, whereby the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal is responsible for setting the maximum amount by which councils can increase their rates. The New South Wales local government framework is much more than just rate pegging. All councils in New South Wales are required to operate in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. A key element of this legislation is the integrated planning and reporting framework. The core elements of the integrated planning and reporting framework are a long-term community strategic plan, a four-year delivery program, a one-year operational plan, and a resourcing strategy.

The annual operational plan must include the council's statement of revenue policy. This statement of revenue policy must include: details of estimated income and expenditure, ordinary rates and special rates, proposed fees and charges, council's proposed pricing methodology, and proposed borrowings. When developing their operational plan, councils are required to place a draft of the plan on public exhibition for at least 28 days. During this 28-day period members of the public can make submissions on the draft plan. This includes submissions relating to the council's revenue policy. Councils must accept and consider any submissions made on the draft operational plan before adopting the plan.

I understand that Newcastle City Council commenced public consultation on its 2014-15 Integrated Planning and Reporting documents in March 2014. I am also advised that the council placed on public exhibition proposed changes to the Summerhill Waste Management Centre fees and charges for 2014-15. The proposed changes included: the proposed fees and charges structure for the 2014-15 financial year, criteria for the waiver or reduction of fees and charges for Summerhill, and a delegation to the general manager to determine appropriate waivers or reductions according to certain criteria. I understand that the council is transitioning the Summerhill facility from a "business as usual" landfill-based activity to a resource recovery and recycling activity with landfill capacity. I am advised that, in doing so, the fees and charges applying to the facility required a significant reassessment to support the centre's transition.

I understand that, as part of its consultation on this change, the council wrote to all commercial customers notifying them of the amended fees, displayed a notice at Summerhill detailing the fees and implementation date, and incorporated the adopted fees into the resident's waste calendar along with other educational items regarding recycling and waste management. In May 2014 the council undertook further public consultations on its draft 2014-15 operational plan, including its draft revenue policy. The council resolved to adopt its plans in June 2014, following this consultation period. I am advised that the Office of Local Government has reviewed the process followed by the council in setting its fees and charges for 2014-15, and it is satisfied that the council has complied with the requirements of the legislation.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.11 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Wallsend regarding Newcastle City Council fee increases. I note that the Minister for Local Government is in the Chamber, and I have a challenge to put to him. As somebody who has taken an active interest in local councils and who regularly reviews the fees and charges documents, changes to local environmental plans, and council business and operational plans, I have a lengthy and detailed history in this area. Just before coming to this place I worked at Port Stephens Council and I was partially responsible for putting together documents such as the fees and charges document that is distributed publicly.

With that in mind, I say the following to the Minister at the table: There needs to be a simpler, better way for the community and ratepayers to engage with their councils, and for councils to engage with their community, about proposed changes. The reality is that most of the increases in fees and charges that are made annually at any given council are within the realm of the consumer price index. I would say that covers 99 per cent of increases. Sometimes there are extraordinary, unusual or unique changes to fees and charges. I will use the case of the Newcastle Art Gallery fees as an example. The city of Newcastle has been established for 200 years, and for at least 100 of those it has had an art gallery. There has never been a charge to enter the gallery. But, all of a sudden, somewhere in this 100-page document was listed a new charge to enter the gallery. I do not think that is due diligence. I do not think it shows good community engagement. I do not think the council understood the implications of its proposal.

The Government must cringe every time something to do with Newcastle City Council comes before this House. The recently dethroned Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Jeff McCloy—who was essentially a Liberal Party stooge—has brought the dealings of Newcastle City Council to light in the worst possible way. Certainly the history of Mr McCloy's rise to high office on Newcastle City Council is interesting. The Liberal Party originally endorsed a Liberal candidate to run for lord mayor, but he was told to withdraw his nomination so that the party could support Mr McCloy. Indeed, I started referring to Mr McCloy as the "member for Newcastle"—even though Mr Tim Owen was in this Chamber—as Mr McCloy was essentially making all the big announcements and proactively pursuing his own agenda in Newcastle.

A terrible thing I heard recently about the operations of Newcastle City Council, apart from its voting to increase fees and charges, was that in ward 4—an area I have the great privilege to represent in this place—there is a certain recently elected councillor who has told the community that he does not read the business papers. He does not care about the content and detail of the business papers; he simply stands up when Jeff stands up. That is the level of representation we have on Newcastle City Council from those stooges at the moment. My challenge to the Minister is to find a way for councils to engage better with the community when making significant changes.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [12.15 p.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for moving this motion because it clearly shows that Labor hates councils. Why do those opposite hate councils? Or is it just conservative councils they hate—the councils that they cannot control? The member for Cessnock talked about someone standing up when Jeff stood up. But how many people opposite stood up when Eddie Obeid stood up? We know how Labor elects its leaders. We know who installed John Robertson as leader of the Labor Party—it was Eddie Obeid. We know that he is Eddie's boy.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 76. I ask that the member for Clarence be drawn back to the leave of the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member for Cessnock that during his contribution he made some very disparaging remarks about people who are not members of this Chamber. Eddie Obeid was a member of this Parliament, as are others referred to by the member for Clarence. There is no point of order.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: I return to my earlier question: Why does Labor hate councils? Or is it just some councils they hate—the conservative councils? Let us consider what Labor did to councils when it was in power. The member said there were no forced amalgamations. What a load of rubbish. What did Bob Carr do to the Clarence Valley councils? He forced them to amalgamate. Despite saying he loved councils and making all sorts of promises about looking after councils, what did he do? He forced them to amalgamate. The only time I have associated with unions was when I joined the United Services Union in the "Bugger off, Bob" campaign. It took Bob a while to bugger off. That is why we now see a rump of the Labor Party in this place—because for 16 years Labor members were an embarrassment to the people of New South Wales.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 76. Unions have nothing to do with the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: The member for Wallsend fails to realise that councils in New South Wales are required under the Local Government Act 1993 to place on exhibition each year a draft operational plan to be adopted before the beginning of each financial year, and I am sure that is what Newcastle City Council did. It might not suit those opposite, but it certainly suited the people of Newcastle. The draft operational plan must be publicly exhibited for at least 28 days and public submissions can be made to the council during that period. The operational plan will include a statement of revenue policy.

Have those opposite got that? That is exactly what has happened in this instance. Unfortunately, because it does not suit Labor councillors on Newcastle City Council, they are arcing up. This motion has absolutely nothing to do with the fees and charges that were introduced by Newcastle City Council; it has everything to do with the fact that Newcastle City Council is a conservative council and is not controlled by the Labor Party. The new member for Newcastle is not even here for this debate—that is how much interest he shows in this matter. The Act also states that a council must not determine the amount of a fee until it has given public notice of the fee. I am advised that Newcastle City Council—

[Interruption]

I welcome the new member for Newcastle to the Chamber. It is great to see him here to listen to this debate on a matter of interest to the people of Newcastle.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I call the member for Wallsend in reply.

Mr Paul Toole: The member for Newcastle has been given the advice to turn up. He's been told, "Quick. Get down there. Let us say you were there."

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [12.19 p.m.], in reply: I appreciate the mature comments of the Minister for Local Government.

Mr Paul Toole: He turned up right at the end. We found him! We found him!

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Please continue, Minister; it is very mature of you. I thank the member for Murray-Darling, the member for Cessnock and the member for Clarence for their contributions to the debate. I find it hilarious but also sad that, as usual, the member for Murray-Darling did not attempt to address the content of this important motion. That clearly shows to the Hunter and Newcastle communities the member's complete lack of knowledge about or interest in their issues. The member for Murray-Darling was not even interested in talking about community consultation with ratepayers—which speaks volumes about him.

The member for Murray-Darling questioned my motives for bringing this motion to the House. I moved this motion because my constituents in Wallsend, who reside in the Newcastle City Council area, are

concerned about the lack of community consultation, and I can understand why. I do not need to defend them for being concerned. The community is not being consulted as it should be. Interestingly, the member for Murray-Darling also mentioned cost shifting, so let us talk about libraries. The Coonamble library has had to sack its professional librarian because of cost cutting. The de-professionalisation of New South Wales libraries due to budget constraints is a matter of real concern to librarians. Why are libraries shutting their doors and sacking staff? It is because they are not receiving the funding they need from the State Government. If members want to address cost shifting let us start with libraries and the Liberal Government's lack of—

Mr John Williams: Point of order: The member for Wallsend is misleading the House. Library funding declined under the Labor Government.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order. However, I remind the member for Wallsend that in replying to the debate she should address the substance of the motion and the arguments raised during debate. Libraries were not part of the debate. The member for Wallsend will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms SONIA HORNER: The member for Murray-Darling spoke about cost shifting during his contribution, which is what I was addressing. The member for Cessnock outlined his long involvement and interest in council processes. He said that we need a better way of undertaking community consultation. He asked the Minister for Local Government, who is in the Chamber, to consider the question of how we can increase and improve community consultation. I am sure the Minister is very interested in ensuring that is done because it is important. Like the member for Murray-Darling, the member for Clarence did not attempt to address the questions raised. That speaks volumes about the Liberal Government: It is not interested in discussing the importance of ensuring that we represent our communities. Labor councils have always attempted to engage in community consultation because it is of the utmost importance to the people of the Hunter. I urge members to support this motion in the interests of promoting community consultation.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 22

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	
Mr Furolo	Mr Park	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Greenwich	Mr Parker	Mr Amery
Ms Harrison	Mrs Perry	Ms Hay

Noes, 50

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

Pairs

Ms Burton	Mr Constance
Mr Lalich	Mr Humphries
Mr Rees	Mr O'Farrell
Ms Watson	Mr Rowell

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Postponement of Business**

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notice) No. 2996 [Workers Compensation Scheme Support] postponed on motion by Ms Noreen Hay.

INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.34 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the commitment, compassion and professionalism of the nurses caring for patients in the public health system.
- (2) Recognises that International Nurses Day is celebrated on 12 May each year, the birthday of the world's most famous nurse, Florence Nightingale.
- (3) Notes that the theme of Nurses Day this year is "Nurses: A Force for Change—A Vital Resource for Health".
- (4) Notes that International Nurses Day is a time to reflect on the round-the-clock care and support nurses give to more than 1.5 million patients in New South Wales public hospitals, at home or in the community.
- (5) Expresses its thanks that the Government has increased the number of nurses working in the Hunter New England Local Health District by 250 since 2011.
- (6) Congratulates the Minister for Health on increasing the number of new nurse and midwife positions across the State by 4,100 recruited to the workforce since the last election, surpassing the pre-election commitment of 2,475 additional nurses over four years.
- (7) Condemns the former Government for allowing health and nursing to fall to a low priority.

It gives me great pleasure to move this motion. I state for the record that I have a conflict of interest: I am a third generation registered nurse and my wife is a registered nurse. Notwithstanding that conflict, what a fantastic contribution nurses make to our community. Nursing began in the late 1800s when nurses were almost part of the paramilitary forces. Florence Nightingale played a big part in that by being the first to show the important role played by nurses in the care of patients, and to introduce the uniforms and education of nurses. Nurses have played an important role in all overseas conflicts in which Australia has been involved.

Today's nurses form part of a modern and professional organisation. They are highly skilled and highly educated. When we discuss nurses and the contribution they make, we should also recognise the dangerous circumstances in which they work. It is interesting that Australia recognises front-line emergency workers by conferring a National Service Medal for 15 years of service. The medal is presented to members of the armed forces, the police, ambulance officers, paramedics, State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service personnel, Marine Rescue NSW officers, and to jailers, but it is not presented to nurses. An examination of the number of deaths and injuries in those professions over the past 10 years shows that more nurses have been injured while on duty or killed than participants in any other emergency service. In fact, the injury rate for nurses is at least four times higher than the next highest-ranking category of emergency service personnel who receive the National Service Medal.

It is time that this Government, members of this House and our Federal colleagues consider recognising nurses for their contribution. We recognise the contribution of all the other services, and I do not take anything

away from all the other emergency services personnel who deserve recognition for their service. But nurses work shift work on the front line, and often put their health and safety as well as their lives at risk. We cannot protect against the unknown. Various hospitals and emergency departments across the State are described as war zones, yet the nurses are there, treating the patients and looking after them—as only nurses can. Nurses put their patients first, no matter what the issues may be. That is one of the reasons why the injury rate of nurses is so high.

I thank the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, for her commitment to public health and for her commitment to the nurses and doctors in this great State of ours. Since she became Minister on the election of the Coalition to office, we have increased not only the number of nurses but also the number of doctors working in our health system. In my electorate's major hospital, the Manning Base Hospital, clinical services have been improved, and the number of nurses and midwives has been increased. What a fantastic job they do in the Manning Base Hospital. Since we came to government, we have increased clinical services with two new anaesthetists, two new intensive care specialists, a new oncologist, a new general surgeon, a new cardiac surgeon, and a new ear, nose and throat specialist.

For the first time, the hospital has an oncologist, who is overworked because of the demand for those services. The hospital has gone from having no oncology services, to having an oncology unit and an oncologist. We have new neurologists and a new stroke unit in the Manning Valley. We now have a magnetic resonance imaging [MRI] unit and a cardiac catheterisation laboratory. All these things have happened in the past 3½ years. In anyone's language, that is a phenomenal result for a regional hospital. The nurses do a fantastic job, and they have also driven a number of reforms within the hospital. Nurses have driven the doctors to meet the standards required of a modern hospital. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.41 p.m.]: First, I commend the member for moving a motion about International Nurses Day. One would think that such an admirable subject, talking about an honourable profession, would be deserving of a motion that could be encapsulated by what is contained in paragraphs (1) to (5) of the member's motion. For instance, paragraph (1) states:

Acknowledges the commitment, compassion and professionalism of the nurses caring for patients in the public health system.

Who could disagree with that? Any of us who has family members or friends, or who has been in a public hospital could not come away thinking anything other than that which is expressed in the first paragraph—the caring and professional manner in which nurses treat patients. They could even teach many of our doctors a thing or two. Paragraph (2) of the motion states:

Recognises that International Nurses Day is celebrated on 12 May each year, the birthday of the world's most famous nurse, Florence Nightingale.

That is something we should always recognise, not only because Florence Nightingale is probably best known as the lady with the lamp—given that name as the nurse who used to go through the camps during the Crimean War—but also because she introduced a better form of caring for patients and challenged the lack of recognition of hygiene as a major contributor to infection, particularly with war wounds and the like. Florence Nightingale came from a privileged background. Her family was horrified when she told them that she wanted to pursue the profession of nursing. One publication relating to her talked about nursing being held in such low esteem that people from aristocratic families in Britain thought it was one of the lowest-class jobs a woman could have. How absurd it is that that could be the status of a nurse in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Florence Nightingale was more than just a nurse who came from an aristocratic background and challenged that widespread view of nursing in the nineteenth century. She also challenged how the medical profession treated those with war wounds and so on. She returned to England where, because of her aristocratic background, she was able to meet with people as high as the Prime Minister. She did a lot for the administration of the nursing profession. To this day, nurses not only talk about Florence Nightingale or know her as a person who symbolises the profession but also recognise that she brought about the greatest improvement in the status of the profession of nursing that has ever occurred. I will close on that point. I think we could talk all day about that woman's contribution to medical advancement and to the care of patients in the most extreme circumstances. Later in life she was an administrator and was involved in the formation of more practical administrative arrangements relating to the nursing profession.

Australian nurses, particularly New South Wales nurses, are sought after the world over. When medical organisations and health authorities, particularly in the United Kingdom and Europe, are seeking to recruit

nurses, a nurse with an Australian qualification has an inside run. That is because those organisations, authorities and countries know that the level of training and professionalism that goes into the making of a nurse in this country is world's best, if not exceeding world's best. When overseas organisations are looking to hire nurses from overseas, they try to get them from Australia and of course New South Wales. Who would not be aware of the crises in the various countries of the African continent and the overseas aid provided by Australia?

Australian-qualified nurses are working in those countries, not only risking contracting infectious disease but also being confronted by the savagery of many extreme organisations that would kill our nurses, even though they are trying to do their bit in providing humanitarian aid. I am very disappointed that a motion that commemorates such a noble occasion as International Nurses Day, and such a noble profession, concludes with the comment that is made in paragraph (7). Paragraph (6) congratulates the Minister for Health. I do not care too much about a Government member congratulating his own Minister—I do not think that is something to die in a ditch on—but the last paragraph states:

Condemns the former Government for allowing health and nursing to fall to a low priority.

Why would someone joke at the end of a serious motion? The nursing profession has changed a lot, even in my time in this Parliament. When I came to this Parliament, nurses were taught on the job. A nurse applied to the health Department, was allocated to a hospital and was trained on the job, doing external studies and so on. There was some disquiet when the Labor Government of the 1980s was very much a part of the national move to make nursing a university qualification. That did not come about because of this New South Wales Government, and it is certainly not something for which any Labor government should be condemned. The fact that nursing is now a university qualification has the fingerprints of Labor governments all over it. To attack the former Labor Government, which had a record spend on health Department facilities and hospitals right throughout New South Wales, and virtually refurbished every major hospital and made nurses a major beneficiary, unfortunately makes this otherwise admirable motion an absolute joke. For that reason, I oppose the motion.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.48 p.m.]: I support the seven-point motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes, Mr Stephen Bromhead, recognising and acknowledging nurses. I will make one comment in response to the contribution of the member for Mount Druitt, who talked about the past and about one particular nurse.

Mr Richard Amery: I mostly talked about Florence Nightingale.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: He knows a lot about the past and talked about Florence Nightingale. She is held in high esteem by the nursing fraternity to this day for her exemplary work and standards. The member for Mount Druitt said that she was the lamp of the nursing fraternity way back then. I think the United Hospital Auxiliaries' motto refers to Florence Nightingale because it states:

Let us Hold High the Lamp of Service for the Welfare of our Hospitals.

I believe the connection between United Hospital Auxiliaries serving our fine hospital staff and providing much-needed equipment for our hospitals through its fundraising and holding high the lamp of service relates to Florence Nightingale, one of the great nurses of our time. The member for Myall Lakes shares the Hunter New England Local Health District with me: Hospitals and executive staff serve not only his area but also my electorate of Tamworth. When I was the Business Development Manager for New England Health—before it transitioned into Hunter New England Health—I got to know the hospitals and their staff quite well. Walking through the wards I saw the outstanding work of many of the staff and nurses looking after patients suffering from a range of illnesses, from elderly patients in smaller multipurpose services who basically just need some love, care and attention, all the way through to those requiring acute intensive care and round-the-clock service.

Nurses deliver a wide range of skills and services. I certainly advocate that nurse training should focus more on in-hospital training. Time on the ward gives them the opportunity to develop a bedside manner and a rapport within the hospital system. I am proud to pay tribute to and acknowledge nurses. My sister has been a nurse for about 35 years; she does a wonderful job. She probably will not like me saying she has been in the profession that long. I thank nurses right across the State.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [12.52 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the debate. I support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes in its entirety. The member for Mount Druitt, also known as the

Mount Druitt maunder, has refused to support paragraph (7) of the motion, which is a shame. Those on that side of the Chamber should stand condemned for their record on rural and regional health. However, it is true that rural and regional health received some positive advancements, for example, people generally were happy and grateful for the new Orange and Bathurst hospitals. However, this goes back to the time of the member of Parliament formerly known as Reba, and there were a few teething problems. For example, in the Bathurst hospital the doors were too small, so that when patients got into the hospital the beds could not be moved around. It was a bit like the *Hotel California*: once they checked in they could not check out because they could not get the beds through the doors.

Of course, as one travelled around the regions more problems emerged—for example, the closure of Gulgong Hospital. We all remember that fateful day when 4,000 members of the Gulgong community protested in the streets because those opposite closed the hospital. They shut it down and moved it to a shopfront in Mayne Street, Gulgong. It was an absolute disgrace. If we travel around the rest of country New South Wales, the litany of shame continues: Wagga Wagga was neglected for so long, Forbes was left to fall apart, Parkes was falling apart and understaffed, and Dubbo, Tamworth and Lismore were the same. All around New South Wales it was a litany of shame. Whilst the Labor Government did a couple of jobs here and there, even though it could not quite get it all right, it neglected regional New South Wales and left our country hospitals to rot.

We had to put up with a second-class service. Country New South Wales and its citizens were treated as second class under the reign of the Labor Government. I support the motion of the member for Myall Lakes in its entirety. As a former nurse he knows their value in our community, as do I, but he also has seen the shabby treatment of rural and regional residents under those opposite. The member for Mount Druitt should stop trying to rewrite history and accept the fact that Labor let down country New South Wales.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.55 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Tamworth and the member for Orange for their contributions to the debate. As the member for Orange said, the final paragraph of the motion condemns the former Government for allowing health and nursing to fall to a low priority. In my opening remarks I spoke about clinical services that have been enhanced at the Manning Base Hospital since the last election. Why were all those doctors and clinical services needed? The simple truth is that under Labor hospital and clinical services were allowed to run down to the point where, technically, the hospital did not comply with required accreditation due to the lack of clinical services. It took this Government to reprioritise regional and rural hospitals, and put more money into the budget to enhance clinical services across regional New South Wales.

That is why new hospitals are being built at Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and other places. That is why under this State budget Restart NSW has provided \$50 million to fast-track six hospital redevelopments in regional New South Wales, including the important Manning Base Hospital—something we missed out on for so long. We have employed these extra nurses because the former Labor Government allowed the numbers to drop to a critical point. The Coalition was elected to government and is now employing more nurses and doctors so that hospitals can do the job we expect of them—unlike the expectations of those opposite. The member for Mount Druitt is a member of Labor, which is city- and Sydney-centric. Those opposite have no idea of what happens on the other side of the sandstone curtain. They have no idea of the stress suffered by country people, hospitals and nurses because of neglect for all those years.

Labor members turned their backs on regional New South Wales. They took this State from the penthouse to the outhouse in their 16 years because they forgot about regional New South Wales, which drives this State's and Australia's economies. This Government has been able to turn all that around in 3½ years. The Liberal-Nationals Government is looking after nurses. We are the ones who look after the front-line workers in New South Wales. The Coalition is the party of the workers. We are the ones who look after the blue-collar people. We are the ones who look after the farmers, truck drivers, nurses, teachers and police officers. That is why they tell me all the time that we are doing a fantastic job for nurses, hospitals and police. We are the ones who increase the numbers, not those on the other side. Those on the other side neglected services, neglected hospitals and neglected nurses. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 42

Mr Anderson	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Ayres	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Holstein	Mr Speakman
Mr Bromhead	Mr Issa	Mr Spence
Mr Brookes	Mr Maguire	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Toole
Mrs Davies	Mr O'Dea	Ms Upton
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	Mr Ward
Mr Edwards	Ms Parker	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Flowers	Mr Perrottet	
Mr Fraser	Mr Piccoli	
Mr Gee	Mr Provest	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr George	Mr Roberts	Mr Coure
Ms Gibbons	Mr Rohan	Mr Patterson

Noes, 20

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

Pairs

Mr Baird	Ms Burton
Mr Dominello	Mr Daley
Ms Goward	Mr Lalich
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Rees
Mr Rowell	Ms Watson

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

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

NURSE-TO-PATIENT RATIO**Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons**

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) [1.08 p.m.]: I respond to the petition signed by 10,000 persons regarding nurse numbers. The Government acknowledges the work that nurses and midwives do in providing safe, quality care for patients across New South Wales. This year the Government is investing a record recurrent Health budget of \$18.7 billion—a 5.2 per cent increase on last year's budget and 20 per cent higher than it was when I became the Minister in 2010-11 when the budget was \$15.5 billion. The nursing and midwifery workforce continues to be a critical part of our increasing investment.

Before the 2011 election, we made a commitment to employ an additional 2,475 nurses and midwives in our Government's first term. I was proud to make that commitment. These extra nurses included the 1,400 full-time equivalent nurses that the former Labor Government committed to provide as part of its agreement with the union about nursing hours per patient per day. This was articulated in a press release dated 9 March 2011 headed "Labor recruiting up to 1,400 new nurses for NSW", which was issued by then Premier Kristina Keneally. The number was confirmed by Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, in an ABC interview with Linda Mottram in March 2012.

The Keneally Government was defeated before the new agreement came into effect, but the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals supported the agreement in opposition, and we have implemented it in government. In fact, we have surpassed the commitment by increasing the nursing and midwifery workforce by more than 4,600 full-time equivalents, which is an increase of more than 3,400 in the nursing and midwifery workforce. This too has been acknowledged by Brett Holmes. When talking about the number of new nurses on the *7.30 Report* only two weeks ago, he said, "Yes, that is a great improvement to where we were. We were able to negotiate at least 1,800"—which is a slight increase on what he did negotiate—"of those additional positions into the health system as part of our nurse to patient ratios"—which is wrong; it is nursing hours per patient per day—"claimed with the previous Government. And Jillian Skinner and her Government have delivered on that promise and they have delivered some more nurses."

Additionally, the Government has enhanced the workforce with additional clinical nurse and midwifery educators and specialists, supernumerary nurses in charge in various emergency departments and clinical support officers in community health and community mental health services. In the New South Wales public health system, patient need determines nursing staff levels which is why, as did the former Labor Government, we have adopted a more flexible nursing-hours-per-day approach rather than an inflexible nursing-ratio approach, which allocates an average number of nursing hours in a ward over the course of a week.

The new method gives nurse managers the flexibility to allocate nursing staff in a way that matches the busiest times and patient needs. The nursing hours are not rationed out on a daily basis to each patient. A patient with greater needs might receive more of a nurse's time than a patient who is not as sick. The degree of care provided or the number of nurses in relation to the number of patients is therefore flexible shift by shift. All nurses will tell you there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to complex medical and clinical situations and different patients have different care needs.

The facility, not its geographic location, determines which patients a facility will care for and which patients it will refer to other services for more specialist care and treatment. Patients in large complex facilities require high levels of intensive care and complex specialist treatment. Patients in smaller, less complex facilities do not generally require the same high level specialist treatment. It does not mean a patient having a knee replacement is allocated less care in a small hospital or in a rural area. Patients having a knee replacement are given the care they need wherever they may be. While staffing methods like nursing hours per patient day have been developed for certain wards and units, in every facility across New South Wales nursing and health service managers make an assessment of staffing requirements, using their professional judgement based on a range of factors, including specific patient safety, patient needs, previous experience and safe systems of work. We value the work of all nurses across the State and we remain committed to providing the workplaces that are right for nurses. I am the proud daughter of a nurse.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.13 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to acknowledge the nurses who are present in the gallery. There are 48,000 nurses and midwives in New South Wales. It is undoubtedly a profession that is held in high regard by the broader community. Nurses in New South Wales work within the boundaries of a government structure that has many restrictions and complexities. The Opposition is committed to working with the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association to address the needs of its members in managing patient care in New South Wales. Nurses are, of course, at the coalface of our health system and the Opposition recognises their tremendous contribution in patient care. We believe it is the role of government to invest in the State's health system and we have a proud history of supporting our hardworking nurses. We should listen to their voices when determining the level of staff needed to provide safe and efficient care to patients.

In 2010 the New South Wales Labor Government negotiated an industrial award, which has progressively resulted in an increase in the number of nurses employed in the State, but the Liberal-Nationals Coalition has not taken the opportunity to advance this cause. The combined cuts of Mike Baird and Tony Abbott have stripped \$18 billion from our health system. We all know these shameful cuts will have an impact in New South Wales hospitals by substantially increasing the workload of nurses and jeopardising the safe delivery of efficient health care to patients across the State.

The Labor Government began the process of introducing nurse-to-patient ratios. This process has been abruptly dismantled by those opposite. The New South Wales Opposition has committed to a staged rollout of nurse-to-patient ratios that is sustainable and prioritises areas where they are needed first. Unlike Tony Abbott and Mike Baird, who have simply ripped billions of dollars from our health budget, the New South Wales Opposition will commit to measures that will improve the workload of nurses and health professionals, with an

emphasis on improving health outcomes for patients and bringing value for taxpayers. I take this opportunity to acknowledge that the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association began this strong campaign in April. It put the Government on notice that it would be addressing this issue and would be testing the support for nurses across the State. In a media release in April 2014 Brett Holmes stated:

Nurses will fight to win these ratios with everything they have because they know it is the difference between being able to care for patients properly, professionally and safely or not being able to do so. And that's the reason our members chose nursing and midwifery as their professions in the first place—to care for people.

I acknowledge the effort of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association in informing not only its members but also the public of the precise difficulties that the health system faces currently and will continue to face under two conservative draconian governments. It is important that the public is aware of what is happening. Yesterday, New South Wales Labor and the shadow Minister for Health, the Hon. Walt Secord, successfully moved a motion to secure the release of papers relating to the business case and the public-private partnership arrangements for the provision of surgical services for the Northern Beaches Hospital.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: What's that got to do with this?

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: It is significant because people are concerned about the cloak of secrecy that has surrounded the northern beaches project. People are concerned that this will commence the privatisation of the New South Wales health system. Nurses are concerned, as are members on this side of the House, about the hidden agenda of Mike Baird and members on the other side of the Chamber. I acknowledge the efforts of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association and all the nursing staff who work tirelessly to provide quality health care in New South Wales.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.18 p.m.]: The member for Bankstown lives in a fantasy world. The truth hurts. She ignores record New South Wales Government spending on health, record nursing and midwifery numbers, and what the then health Minister, the member for Marrickville, said in 2010, namely:

I have made it very clear that the Government does have concerns about a blunt nurse-to-patient ratio tool because it does not provide the flexibility that is needed to staff the modern hospital.

The need for flexibility which she identified has not changed nor has how highly the New South Wales Government values and appreciates the tremendous contribution our hardworking nurses and midwives make to our health system. This year the Government is investing a record amount in health, with a recurrent budget of \$18.7 billion. That is an increase of \$929 million, or 5.2 per cent, on last year.

We have met and surpassed our election commitment to employ an additional 2,475 nurses and midwives in our first term of government. We have increased the nursing and midwifery workforce by more than 4,600. In full-time equivalent terms that is more than 3,400. This is the fourth year of our commitment to increase clinical nursing and midwifery educators and specialists. We will have created 315 extra positions across the State by the end of 2014-15. Over the past 12 months we have delivered on our commitments to fund a supernumerary nurse in charge on the two busiest shifts each day in all level four emergency departments and a supernumerary nurse in charge on their busiest shift each day for the busiest level three emergency departments.

Additionally, for the first time a significant investment has been made in clinical support officers for community health and community mental health services, with funding for 60 clinical support officers to relieve nurses and clinical teams of non-clinical work and to allow them to spend more time with their patients. We have recently announced more support for nursing and midwifery staff, focusing on the hardworking and dedicated staff in the busiest small to medium hospitals and in community health services. That includes 30 new clinical support officers for smaller acute hospitals and mental health units to relieve nurses and midwives of non-clinical duties such as paperwork, freeing them to focus on patient care.

It includes 30 new facility nurses for smaller acute inpatient facilities who will be an additional nursing resource to be deployed across the facility to help manage unplanned spikes in activity. It includes more enhancements to the role and number of nurse practitioners. These are registered nurses who are qualified to function autonomously in an extended clinical role, providing access to services for patients in rural and remote communities. We have provided 1,000 tablet devices for community nurses, giving them access to real-time patient-specific clinical information and freeing up more time to spend with their patients.

Patient need determines nursing staff levels in the New South Wales public health system. The type of facility, not its geographic location, determines which kinds of patients a facility will care for and which patients it will refer to other services for more specialist care and treatment. Some staffing methods, such as nursing hours per patient day, have been developed for some kinds of wards and units. However, in every facility across the State, nursing and health service management use their professional judgement to make an assessment of staffing requirements based on factors such as specific patient needs, previous experience and safe systems of work.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [1.21 p.m.]: I support this petition which demands nurse-to-patient ratios in all hospitals in New South Wales. Nurses are one of the most widely respected groups of people in our community. In fact, the New South Wales Nurses Association has more credibility than any other professional group in our State, in my view. When these highly respected individuals say that they need nurse-to-patient ratios in order to deliver the best possible standard of health care why does the New South Wales Government not listen? New South Wales is home to 48,000 registered nurses and midwives. Labor has a strong record of supporting nurses and we believe in investing in the health workforce, not cutting hospital budgets. Sadly, though, our Liberal Premier and Liberal Prime Minister do not seem to place the same value on our health system. These two leaders have hit us with billions of dollars in cuts to our hospitals.

No doubt our nurses—those who are on the front line—will face the brunt of these cuts. I am proud to say that Labor supports nurse-to-patient ratios in our hospitals. We commit to working with the Nurses Association on a nurse-to-patient ratio that is sustainable and prioritises the areas that need it first. It is a no-brainer. When one asks which party has the best track record for investing in our world-class health and hospital system one has only to look at the facts: Labor is the party of Medicare. Labor is the party of the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS]. Labor negotiated the industrial award with the New South Wales Nurses Association that has led to an increase in the number of nurses employed in our State.

On the other hand, the Liberals have cut \$3 billion from our hospitals. The Liberals have made waiting times in New South Wales hospitals the longest in five years. The Liberals want to introduce a GP co-payment. Need I say more? Nurses are at the forefront of our health system. We must support them so they may continue to deliver the highest level of care to patients. Further, we must not forget our country hospitals. The level of attention one receives should not be related to one's postcode. Nurses in country hospitals are under the same pressure as nurses in metropolitan hospitals. It is unacceptable that country hospitals are left understaffed and underresourced, increasing the strain on some of our most hardworking citizens. Nurses undertake backbreaking work. The nurses on the ground every day know what they need to provide safe and efficient health care. I am proud to support this petition, and I thank the nurses in New South Wales for bringing it to the attention of the Parliament.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [1.24 p.m.]: I seek leave to make a contribution to this debate.

Leave not granted.

Discussion concluded.

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 64/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.26 p.m.]: I thank members for the opportunity to update the House on comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in its recent digest, which was tabled on 4 November. This was the sixty-fourth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of this, the Fifty-fifth Parliament. A total of 10 bills were introduced in the sitting week commencing 21 October, and the committee commented on eight of them. The committee also reported on three regulations. Given the number of bills introduced and the short amount of time allocated to take-note speeches, I will discuss only the provisions in bills in relation to which the committee referred matters to Parliament. The Biosecurity Bill 2014 was the first bill for consideration. The committee referred a total of 10 matters to Parliament.

These included the following: a provision that allows for extraterritoriality which may subject residents of New South Wales located out of the State to laws in two separate jurisdictions; a provision in which information obtained as a result of information furnished or an answer given in compliance with the Act is not inadmissible on the grounds that the information furnished or answer given might incriminate the person; an oppressive official power in which the secretary may reverse his or her decision regarding a compensation payout within five years of making it, possibly creating a financial burden for the affected parties; allowing for the regulations to create offences punishable by a penalty not exceeding \$11,000, a matter which the committee considers should be included in primary, not subordinate, legislation to facilitate appropriate parliamentary scrutiny; and by providing that the regulations may amend parts of the proposed Act, otherwise known as a Henry VIII clause. Discussion of all the other matters raised in this bill can be found in the digest.

I turn to the Criminal Procedure Amendment (Domestic Violence Complainants) Bill 2014. The committee noted provisions that allow hearsay and opinion evidence to be admissible and used as evidence of representations made in a recorded statement by a domestic violence complainant. As such, the bill may prejudice the accused's right to a fair trial. Given its concerns, the committee referred this matter to Parliament for further consideration. The committee also referred to Parliament provisions that ensure that the validity of proceedings will not be affected by failures of complainants or police to comply with procedural provisions relating to recorded statements. In this respect, the bill may affect a defendant's right to procedural fairness.

For the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2014, the committee noted the provision that required individuals to provide documentation and answer questions that may impact on that individual's right to silence and right against self-incrimination. The committee also noted that this bill provides for offences to be included in the regulations. The committee has always considered that it is more appropriate that provisions for offences be included in the principal legislation. For the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Amendment Bill 2014, the committee noted the inter-jurisdictional approach to the support of individuals who sustain catastrophic injuries following a motor accident. The committee discussed and referred to Parliament the question as to whether the legislation ought to clarify that New South Wales legislation would prevail in relation to the functions of a New South Wales agency in circumstances where the New South Wales legislation is inconsistent with the legislation of another jurisdiction.

I turn now to the Pesticides Amendment Bill 2014. The bill provides that the owner of agricultural produce must pay for the costs of analysing the produce for a prohibited residue, even if the findings are that there was no such prohibited residue. The committee expressed its concern that this may be an unfair financial burden on innocent individuals. On the Responsible Mining (Protecting Land, Water and Communities) Bill 2014, the committee commented on a provision that would require individuals to answer questions and provide information and records that may impact on their right to silence and their right against self-incrimination. Again, the committee seeks the Parliament's indulgence on reconsidering matters that infringe upon the right to silence. Lastly, the committee reviewed the Surveillance Devices Amendment (Police Body-Worn Video) Bill 2014. The bill excepts police use of body-worn video from offences that prohibit the use of surveillance devices to record private conversations and to record the carrying-on of activities.

The bill also provides that material obtained through body-worn video can be used, published or communicated for any purpose prescribed in the regulations. The committee reminds Parliament that to ensure proper parliamentary oversight and, given the far-reaching privacy implications of this bill, rules regarding the acceptable use, publication or communication of material obtained through use of a police body-worn video should be clearly set out in primary legislation, not delegated to subordinate legislation. I thank the committee staff for their work, given the short turnaround and the significant number of bills.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.30 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I speak to Legislation Review Digest No. 64 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. This week's committee meeting was particularly interesting. I begin by addressing my comments to the Crown Lands (Public Ownership of Beaches and Coastal Lands) Bill 2014, which was withdrawn the day after the committee deliberated on it. Surprisingly, the digest does not contain any commentary regarding section 8A, trespasses on personal rights and legal rights, and that is particularly peculiar as the bill would have had the effect of voiding all Aboriginal land claims on beaches and coastal land, thus extinguishing valuable and longstanding personal legal rights. Mr Shoebridge moved an amendment, which I seconded, to add the following:

That the bill voids longstanding legal entitlements to claim under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. The bill proposes continuing the 226 years of Aboriginal dispossession in this country. The Committee refers this matter to Parliament."

The Coalition members voted against the amendment and it was lost. I reiterate my concern that the digest contains no commentary in this regard. Clearly, many stakeholders had raised concerns about the legislation and this may have led to the responsible Minister withdrawing it. The committee considered the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2014, which the Opposition did not oppose on the grounds that the other bill had been withdrawn. The digest contains a couple of commentaries on this, which I will quote. Firstly, the commentary on access to justice:

Providing the Registrar with the power not to refer a claim for land by the Aboriginal Land Council to the Crown Lands Minister may be a barrier to the Council's access to justice. However, given that the Council would have a statutory right to appeal this decision to the Court, the Committee makes no further comment on this issue.

Secondly, the commentary on double punishment:

The Committee notes the general principle that an individual is entitled to be treated equally before the law after he or she has served a judicial punishment. However, given the nature of the work of Local Aboriginal Land Councils, and that the prohibition relates to a narrow and clearly defined class of people, the Committee makes no further comment on this.

It is the usual practice of this committee, where concerns are raised about trespasses on personal rights and liberties under section 8A, to address them in the digest. The above commentaries are typical examples. The committee also reviewed the Biosecurity Bill 2014, Criminal Procedure Amendment (Domestic Violence Complainants) Bill 2014, Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2014, Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Amendment Bill 2014, Surveillance Devices Amendment (Police Body-Worn Video) Bill 2014, Responsible Mining (Protecting Land, Water and Communities) Bill 2014 and a number of other bills. I commend this digest to the House.

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

Report noted.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

Report: Speed Zoning and Its Impact on the Demerit Points Scheme

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

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [1.34 p.m.]: This report completes the fourth and final inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, or Staysafe committee, in the Fifty-fifth Parliament, having previously conducted extensive investigations into school zone safety, driver and road user distraction and non-registered vehicles. It is gratifying that the Government has adopted most of the committee's previous recommendations, resulting in improvements to road safety across New South Wales. This is a testament to the effective scrutiny of road safety policy undertaken by members of the committee and builds on the solid work of Staysafe since its inception in 1982. Since its establishment, Staysafe has completed 94 reports dealing with all aspects of road safety, including roads, vehicles, drivers and vulnerable road users.

In its latest inquiry, Staysafe has reviewed the speed zoning system and the operation of the demerit points scheme in New South Wales. The inquiry was undertaken in response to identified concerns from drivers about the perceived inconsistencies in the current demarcation of speed limits, their appropriateness and whether mechanisms for review reflected expressed concerns. The committee also examined the use and effectiveness of sanctions for exceeding the speed limit, with particular reference to demerit points. Speed is a major factor in vehicle crashes and a significant contributor to road trauma and fatality. It is recognised internationally as one of the key elements in the safe system philosophy of road safety and is a major priority in all road safety education programs and awareness campaigns.

As part of this inquiry, the committee received 32 submissions and conducted two days of public hearings in Sydney, to gather evidence from a range of government and non-government agencies, researchers, road safety practitioners and individuals. I thank all those who shared their knowledge and experiences with the committee and who contributed to the evidence contained in this report. A current shortcoming in accurately identifying the contribution speed makes to the road toll is the absence of reliable data about its precise role in crashes. Although identified as a significant factor, it is currently difficult to isolate from other causes such as fatigue, distraction and drink-driving. The committee has recommended that more work be carried out to improve the evidence base and to conduct further research in this area. Of particular importance is the need to identify the triggers for speeding, especially in rural and regional areas where fatality rates are very high.

The committee also examined the operation of existing speed limits in New South Wales and compared these to limits applying in other jurisdictions. There appears to be a prevailing attitude in New South Wales that low-level speeding above the posted limit is not a major concern. Indeed, there appears to be an entrenched culture which does not respect speed signs. This is despite the fact that low-level speeding is significantly represented in crash statistics. Research indicates that minor speeding represents an overall greater danger to the community than excessive speeding. Drivers need to ask: What is the appropriate speed for the circumstances? The battle over road speed, in saving lives and preventing serious injury, has its next front line in the mind. The report recommends increasing awareness of the consequences of low-level speeding by way of increased fines and additional driver education and training programs.

The committee found that drivers respond to immediate feedback—the visible cue is important. The committee recommends greater use of electronic variable message boards to let drivers know why they should adjust their speed, be it due to weather, hidden or increased hazard, road condition or otherwise. Immediate feedback and improved driver education can help us change our views on speed and bring greater credibility to road speed advisory signage. In the area of enforcement of speed limits and the use of demerit points, Staysafe has recommended the greater use of point-to-point cameras in order to create greater awareness of the consequences of speeding and to change driver behaviour. At the same time, the committee does not want to unduly penalise drivers for inadvertently exceeding the speed limit in isolated instances, and is conscious of the requirement to weigh the nature of the offence against the imposition of appropriate penalties. The committee therefore calls for a review of double demerit points in order to examine its objective fairness. In this way I think the report balances the need for sanctions against the severity of the penalty.

The committee considers that more can be done to raise awareness of speeding and to change current community tolerance of speed. The report emphasises the importance of a collaborative approach to public education and raising awareness, and supports the greater involvement of local council road safety officers in developing and delivering community-based strategies to achieve greater compliance with speed limits. The tabling of this report makes a significant contribution to the policy debate in this important area of road safety and the committee trusts that the Government will respond positively to its recommendations. Finally, I thank my fellow Staysafe members and the committee staff for their valued contributions and assistance on this inquiry and throughout the past four years.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.40 p.m.]: I have had a brief opportunity to look at the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, which is otherwise known as Staysafe, and I thank the Chair, the member for Albury, for his excellent performance in his role. This extensive report made 26 recommendations relating to a number of areas. The member for Albury emphasised the relative lack of data and detailed information about speeding and said that the causes of crashes, in particular, are lumped into the speeding category. From my experience with the Public Accounts Committee I believe the system is not nearly as sophisticated as the system that is used in the United Kingdom. The committee with which I am involved made some comments about this in the past. I concur with the statement by the member for Albury that we need to drill down to better understand the true causes of crashes and fatalities rather than rely on the grab-all category of speeding.

I have drawn to the attention of the chair the fact that double demerit points should not apply to motorists during school holidays when school speed zones continue to apply. One of my constituents experienced an inconsistency when a speed zone of 40 kilometres was applied on a gazetted school day—a day on which the Government also applied double demerit points on the basis that schoolchildren and others were on holiday. I have raised this matter with the chair. I do not think there is an easy solution but I believe that circumstance should never arise again.

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

Report noted.

LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Report: Debt recovery in New South Wales

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

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

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE VALUER-GENERAL**Report: Report on the Ninth General Meeting with the Valuer-General on 5 November 2014****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [1.42 p.m.]: I speak in my capacity as Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer-General concerning its report entitled "Ninth General Meeting with the Valuer-General on 5 November 2014." Some of the committee's functions are to monitor and review the exercise of the Valuer-General's functions with respect to land valuations under the Valuation of Land Act 1916 and the Land Tax Management Act 1956 and, in particular, to monitor the methodologies employed for the purpose of conducting such valuations, to monitor the arrangements under which valuation service contracts are negotiated and entered into and to monitor the standard of valuation services provided under such contracts. These functions were kept front of mind when considering the information from the Valuer-General.

This report, which is now before the House, reviewed the Valuer-General's Annual Report 2012-2013 and followed up on issues raised at the eighth general meeting and during the inquiry into the land valuation system. In particular, the committee examined the progress made by the Valuer-General in implementing the recommendations which were made by the committee to improve the valuation system in New South Wales. Overall, the committee is pleased that the Valuer-General has commenced executing reforms to strengthen valuation integrity and to enhance the fairness of the valuation system in New South Wales.

The committee is also satisfied that the Valuer-General has implemented the committee's recommendation to design a financial report that provides automated activity-based costing information and has thereby improved financial reporting by, and accountability of, his office. There remains an area of concern to the committee—namely, the fact that the Valuer-General will not publish a separate annual report for the 2013-14 reporting period. The committee appreciates that the new Valuer-General will consider the form of future annual reports. The committee will monitor and report on the progress the Valuer-General makes in this regard in future reports.

Members may have heard me mention that there will soon be a new Valuer-General. I know our committee looks forward to a positive working relationship with the new person once this position is filled. This is an important position as, for the first time, the total land value of New South Wales exceeds the trillion dollar mark. We need to ensure that those valuations are being undertaken transparently with an opportunity for review. I take this opportunity to thank Mr Philip Western, Valuer-General until 31 August 2014.

This committee has been in the capable hands of several members of Parliament, but none more so than the former chair, Mr Matt Kean, the member for Hornsby. I publicly record my thanks to him for his work on the committee. I also thank previous and current committee members for their participation in the general meetings: Mr Clayton Barr, the member for Cessnock who is present in the Chamber; Ms Leslie Williams, the member for Port Macquarie; Mr Chris Gulaptis, the member for Clarence; and from the Legislative Council Mr Scot MacDonald, the Hon. Adam Searle, the Hon. Ernest Wong and the Hon. Charlie Lynn who I thank for taking care of this report in the other place.

In Parliament thanks are often given to committee staff who are deserving of that recognition. Their guidance and professional advice is invaluable. I mention by name Helen Minnican, Clerk-Assistant; Jonathan Elliott, Acting Director; Carly Maxwell, Director; and John Miller, inquiry manager, who have provided procedural advice and overall guidance. I thank Vedrana Trisic, acting inquiry manager, who wrote and compiled the report and who assisted me in this process, and Millie Yeah, assistant committee officer who provided administrative support. I hope that our combined efforts provide New South Wales landowners with a sense of confidence in the process so they know it is transparent, accountable and relevant. I commend the report to the House.

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

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.45 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery today captains, vice captains, School Representative Council representatives and teachers from Northern Beaches Secondary College Mackellar Girls Campus,

Northern Beaches Secondary College Balgowlah Boys Campus, Stella Maris College, St Luke's Grammar School, Manly Selective Campus, Freshwater Senior Campus and St Paul's Catholic College, guests of the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Western Sydney and member for Manly. I welcome also to the gallery the Getting to Know You Group from Our Lady Help of Christians, guests of the member for Campbelltown. Welcome everybody to question time.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I advise members that the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.18 p.m.]

MEMBER FOR SWANSEA

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Last week the member for Swansea, Garry Edwards, confirmed on ABC radio that he is still the Liberal candidate for Swansea despite the revelations of illegal developer donations at the Independent Commission Against Corruption. How can the people of New South Wales trust the Premier to clean up politics when he cannot even clean up his own party?

The SPEAKER: Order! It is an argumentative question but I will allow it. I call the Premier.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This man opposite comes into the Chamber and raises issues of probity. He wants to lecture us when he is a man who did not disclose bribes. We all know he loves to go skiing. Who is his favourite skiing partner? It is his old mate Eddie. Now that winter is over he cannot go skiing. Maybe Eddie has a chalet somewhere else—maybe he has one by the beach and he could spend some time there. I am not going to take up the time of this House by giving any credibility whatsoever to the question from the Leader of the Opposition. We have taken action to ensure that our house is in order.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has a point of order. I did caution him that it was an argumentative question so I caution him on taking a point of order if it is spurious.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129 which relates to relevance. The Premier has chosen to answer the question therefore he must remain relevant to it.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is my decision as to whether to caution the Premier on that, and he is entitled to make some introductory remarks.

Mr John Robertson: The Premier has chosen to answer the question and he is required to answer it and to remain relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is entitled to make some introductory remarks, and he is doing so. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I take this opportunity to welcome the great school captains and student representatives from my electorate. It is great to see them here today. I am sorry about what they are witnessing today. We get this every day from the Opposition. I am sorry that this is what the member for Charlestown and the member for Newcastle get. I told them that this is what they would get. This is it; this is the best those opposite have. Coming back to the issue of trust, we on this side have restored trust. I think the people of New South Wales have every right to question whether or not to trust those opposite. I would be pleased to share a document which has come to my attention.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields has a point of order. If this is about the document, it will be shared.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. The question was about the member for Swansea.

The SPEAKER: Order! It was, but we do not know what the Premier is about to say. We will wait to see if he remains relevant. We might be surprised.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The thrust of the question was about trust. It was also about regional New South Wales—the electorate of Swansea is in regional New South Wales.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What came to my attention recently was a document from a Country Labor Party conference. It is fascinating reading.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. The member for Maroubra will come to order. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will come to order.

Mr Clayton Barr: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. Earlier we were unable to pre-empt what the Premier would say. It is now clear that he is not speaking about the member for Swansea. I ask you to bring him back to the leave of the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! Let us see if the Premier will become relevant to the question he was asked. The Premier has been talking about trust and that is how he has made this issue relevant.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Cessnock was a guest speaker at the conference. Actually, he was the only speaker. At the conference a motion was put forward saying that the country conference called on the next Australian Labor Party government to reintroduce the Solar Bonus Scheme. Hello, hello.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. This has nothing to do with the member for Swansea. I ask you to bring him back to the leave of the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I indicated that I was concerned the question was argumentative in the first place. The Premier has the call at this stage, but I ask him to return to the leave of the question he was asked.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In terms of trust, we know how much Captain Solar loves solar bonus schemes. If Labor gets into power people can expect the Solar Bonus Scheme to come back. It was supposed to cost about \$350 million. Under the stewardship of the great Leader of the Opposition—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Premier has gone nowhere near answering the question. I am not sure whether he is hiding from the fact that—

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not need a diatribe from the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier's time has expired.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government delivering better services to the people of New South Wales?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Wagga Wagga is an outstanding member who is loved in his electorate for the amazing work he does. The school captains in the public gallery should note that the member for Wagga Wagga has demonstrated how to ask a sensible and relevant question in the Chamber. I thank him for that.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Since 2011 many good things have happened in this great State. We remember the significant mess that Labor left behind. We also remember—

Ms Linda Burney: That's your mess over there on the crossbench.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Opposition members do not like good news. They remember that they left behind the potential loss of the triple-A credit rating and the slowest rate of jobs growth in the country. Today as a result of the work of the Government and the Treasurer New South Wales is leading on jobs yet again. News has come out today that the Government has created more than 131,000 jobs including 17,000 new jobs last month. That is what a good government delivers to the economy.

We remember the backlog Labor left behind and what it did to services. As the Minister for Transport can attest, Labor cut bus, ferry and train services at every opportunity. We remember its desire to implement something very special—electronic ticketing. Labor spent \$100 million on the Tcard and what did it deliver? Absolutely nothing. What has the Minister for Transport delivered? This little beauty I am holding—the Opal card. It is what electronic ticketing looks like.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: They all use it.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They all use it and they love it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fairfield and the member for Cessnock will cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have also invested in services and improved them across this State. We are proud that since the election we have boosted staffing on the front line. There are more than 3,000 additional nurses in our hospitals, more than 700 additional teachers in our schools and 590 additional police officers on the beat. We know how much the member for Maroubra loved middle management but we decided to put those resources into the front line because that is where they should be.

Have we delivered more transport services? Of course we have. The question is have we delivered 500, 1,000 or 2,000 services? We could not possibly have delivered more than 5,000 services, could we? We have delivered an additional 10,500 weekly transport services. The Minister for Transport is on fire. We have delivered more than 9,000 extra weekly bus services, more than 1,000 extra weekly train services and more than 2,000 extra ferry services. We have also established Service NSW and received great feedback about it from across the State. It is a wonderful service for the people of New South Wales. How many phone numbers did Labor think people needed to get a job done? Eight thousand. We have reduced them to one phone number. At the same time we have rolled out new one-stop shops to communities across the State. I will read the list of them.

There are one-stop shops in Kiama, Tweed Heads, Haymarket, Wynyard, Parramatta, Chatswood, Wollongong—hang on, why did we go to Wollongong? Only joking. We love Wollongong. There are also one-stop shops in Queanbeyan, Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, Dubbo, Tamworth, Port Macquarie, Gosford, Lismore and Liverpool. There is even one in Blacktown in the electorate of the Leader of the Opposition and there are one-stop shops in Penrith, Armidale, Albury, Bankstown and Bathurst. We are delivering Service NSW centres across the State. They are making it fun to deal with government because we have introduced a new thing called customer service. Members opposite have not heard of customer service but we love it. I also note that the Minister for Health is doing an amazing job in our hospitals, unlike when Labor was in charge.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There are four key initiatives that have resulted in improvements in the health system, such as the percentage of people leaving the emergency department within four hours. What did Labor achieve when it was in government? Sixty per cent. What has been achieved under Minister Skinner? Seventy-two per cent, and that deserved a big tick. For urgent elective surgery, it was 91 per cent for Labor—which, for Labor, is quite a good result, and under Minister Skinner it is 100 per cent. For semi-urgent surgery, it is 86 per cent under Labor and 97 per cent under this Government. For non-elective surgery, it is 85 per cent under Labor and 95 per cent under this Government.

Wherever we turn, this Government is improving services on the ground for the people of this great State. We need to do that and will continue to do that because that is what the people of New South Wales deserve. Whether it is the economy, growing; investment, growing; and economic development, growing—it is

all growing in this great State. We have New South Wales on the move again. We are delivering more and better services for the people of this State and that is what a responsible government does. That is how it is done. We are very proud to be delivering for the people of New South Wales.

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

MEMBER FOR SWANSEA AND MEMBER FOR PORT STEPHENS

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. As the Leader of the Liberal Party why has he taken no action to remove the member for Swansea and the member for Port Stephens as Liberal candidates, given the serious allegations revealed in the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is a Labor tactics team. Maybe the member for Charlestown and the member for Newcastle can join in and add some direction to what is going on in Labor. Just so they know, ICAC had an inquiry but has not brought down its final report yet.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! It is too early to take a point of order if it relates to relevance.

Mr John Robertson: My point of order relates to relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! So far the Premier's answer has been relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr John Robertson: The Premier cannot have it both ways.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition cannot, either, and he will resume his seat.

Mr John Robertson: He cannot say that we cannot pre-empt ICAC and then pre-empt ICAC.

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

Mr John Robertson: He cannot have it both ways—pre-empt ICAC, or not.

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

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: What happened to your chief of staff?

Ms Linda Burney: Oh Gladys, for God's sake, pull your head in.

The SPEAKER: Order! The type of comment made by the member for Canterbury will result in three calls to order and removal from the Chamber the next time it happens. It is unparliamentary.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Government's position on this is clear: We will wait for ICAC to bring down its report and then we will have a clear position.

Mr John Robertson: But you are not.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Of course we are. To be truthful to the people of New South Wales—and the member for Charlestown and the member for Newcastle should be aware of this—there is a policy position that is yet to be taken away.

Mr John Robertson: He has not got over the fact of ICAC.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I just think it is important to point out the policy position to the member for Charlestown and the member for Newcastle. They have joined the team so they need to understand the policy position. The other document that has been released is the NSW Labor Policy Forum.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is no-one really who is important on that forum, except for the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer! What is Labor's policy? The document says that Labor's policy, its secret plan, would be that it wants an increased overall tax take—so it wants taxes to go up—and it wants more debt.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the point of order relates to relevance, I point out that the Premier answered the question within the first minute.

Dr Andrew McDonald: The question was about the member for Swansea and the member for Port Stephens.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier answered the question. Did the member for Macquarie Fields not listen? That would be a surprise!

Dr Andrew McDonald: Well then, this is a surprise. The Premier is now talking about matters unrelated to the member for Swansea and the member for Port Stephens.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier answered the question. He is entitled to use the remaining time for his answer as he sees fit.

Dr Andrew McDonald: No.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. He should check the precedents and previous rulings before he dictates to the Chair.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is right. The member for Macquarie Fields is leaving Parliament because he does not like the fact that Labor will put up taxes all over the place. He hates Labor putting up taxes, and that is why he is leaving. But this is news to the member for Newcastle and the member for Charlestown. They did not know about the policy work that goes on in Parliament House in the morning, but that is it. I am sorry.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I trust the Leader of the Opposition's point of order does not relate to relevance.

Mr John Robertson: My point of order relates to relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he already is on three calls to order. I anticipate he will continue to shout into the microphone, in which case he will be removed from the Chamber. What is the Leader of the Opposition's point of order?

Mr John Robertson: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Premier is required, regardless—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled on that point of order.

Mr John Robertson: I am sorry, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is not required to answer in the manner the Leader of the Opposition wishes the question to be answered.

Mr John Robertson: But he is required to remain generally relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I ruled on this point of order earlier. The Premier has the call.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: This reveals a little bit of frustration.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Yes. It is no wonder the member for Newcastle and the member for Charlestown are a bit sensitive about this. But they have not been told this other bit, either, which is that Labor wants to replace stamp duty with a progressive broad-based land tax. Land tax everywhere! It is in Labor's policy, which was formulated by the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer. Did they not tell that to the member for Newcastle and the member for Charlestown? I am sure they did not. The last one is a little ripper. Labor wants to replace vehicle taxes with a Sydney congestion charge. That is not a document I made up. The Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer are on the committee. The document states on its front page, "NSW Labor Policy Forum". I think the Leader of the Opposition has a lot that he needs to tell the people of New South Wales. We are a Government that is delivering improved services, better infrastructure and putting downward pressure on taxes, the cost of living and debt—the hallmark of a good government.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Four minutes have elapsed for the Premier's answer and he cannot explain why people who have been dragged through ICAC are still endorsed Liberal candidates.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has answered the question. The member for Maroubra may not like the answer, but the Premier has answered the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The last point I make in relation to this is that this Government has done a lot to restore trust in politics in New South Wales. We have taken the required actions, such as lobbying reform and donations reform, and we have been cleaning up our own backyard. We will continue to do that because the people of New South Wales demand it. But the Leader of the Opposition has a lot to explain to the people of New South Wales because he has hidden taxes. He wants to increase debt. He wants to introduce solar bonus schemes, which will be of great interest to every household across the State.

ROAD AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SAFETY

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney. What reforms has the Government undertaken to improve road and public transport safety?

Mr STUART AYRES: I thank the member for Strathfield for his question because he is someone who is incredibly dedicated to his community of Strathfield. He knows it very well and he is someone who has lived in it for a very long time.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber. The Minister is answering the question and should be heard in silence. Government members should cease interjecting.

Mr STUART AYRES: The Government continues to support and work very closely with the NSW Police Force to ensure that the people of New South Wales feel safe on their streets, on our public transport, on our roads and in their homes. Two examples of actions taken by the New South Wales Government and the NSW Police Force to improve levels of safety are support for the Police Transport Command and the stand-alone Highway Traffic Patrol that were established when this Government came to power in 2011. The Police Transport Command was established through police transport infrastructure to ensure that the police continue to do a fantastic job in transport, particularly across our trains, buses and ferries.

The authorised strength of the Police Transport Command currently is 520 and that was increased by the police attestation in August by 40. This aligns with the Government's commitment to continue to increase authorised strength out to 610 officers by December 2014. We continue to ensure that our public transport options are as safe as they possibly can be for all commuters. The performance of this command is nothing short of outstanding. Since its inception it has made over 5,500 arrests, laid over 10,500 charges and issued almost 104,000 infringements. The numbers for this command speak for themselves. It has established sectors and satellites across the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong areas.

It has established a dedicated bike unit in each Police Transport Command sector. It has established a joint intelligence model with Sydney Trains. It has conducted more than 470 structured operations to ensure that people see uniform police officers on our transport network, and it targets crime hotspots right across our network. The Police Transport Command also employs intelligence-based tasking to those hotspot locations to

ensure that we have high-visibility operations and structured joint operations right across transport to ensure that we have the maximum level of public safety. This multifaceted approach to commuter safety is proving to be incredibly successful.

I am also pleased that over the past few months no crime whatsoever has been recorded at many train stations. This is an outstanding result and a reflection of the intelligence-based tasking of the Police Force. On top of the work that has been done by the Police Transport Command, the stand-alone Traffic and Highway Patrol Command has also done an outstanding job. The Government has supported the new command by providing an extra 100 new Highway Patrol officers, an extra 50 new vehicles and installed more than 100 mobile automatic numberplate recognition units over and above those that had already been rolled out. In fact, 370 mobile automatic numberplate recognition units have been fitted across the Highway Patrol. We have invested in new technology, including breath-testing devices that have been rolled out across the field. These also are having a profound impact on making our streets safer.

We have also used software enhancements to enable police to capture and download data electronically—saving them time, and ensuring they do not have to go back to the office to fill out paperwork but spend more time on the streets to make sure our communities are safer. In roadside breath testing, disposable mouthpieces have also improved hygiene for motorists and our police. These are benefits running right through the number one economy in the nation. It gives us the ability to provide our police with the tools to do the job more effectively. The new structures provide greater efficiency and better forward planning. I know that some of these concepts are foreign to those on the other side of the Chamber, such as the ability to forward plan and the ability to deploy resources where we know they are needed most.

That is ensuring we are driving down death rates on our roads, as well as making our transport network safer, with people seeing police out on the street and on our transport networks. This is a continuation of the Government's incredibly strong support of the NSW Police Force, whose authorised strength is now at a record high of 16,396 officers. We are committed to raising that to 16,665 officers by August 2015. This is a massive 590 additional positions brought forward since December 2011. Local officers are also supported by specialist commands. A good example of those is Operation Talon and Strike Force Raptor.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr STUART AYRES: We should be talking about Raptor and Talon because they also have done an amazing job of making our streets safer. Those operations have led to the arrest of more than 3,000 offenders, seizing and getting more than 800 firearms off our streets. This is taking the most hostile and volatile weapons off our streets, making them safer. That is why we have seen a significant reduction in shootings in our community. We have also beefed up the powers available to police with firearm prohibition orders. More than 390 of these new orders have been put in place, and a further 100 orders have been approved. Legislation brought into this place by this Government has ensured that our community is safer by giving the police the resources and the laws that they need to do their job. It is what the community asked for when they elected us in 2011, and it is exactly what we have delivered over the course of this term. It is exactly what we will continue to deliver if the people of New South Wales allow us to continue to do our job.

This is the result of hard work. Make no mistake about it: If you are a police officer and you dress in your blue uniform and go out onto the street every day, you risk encountering an incredibly hostile situation. We are proud of the NSW Police Force and the work it does, whether in the Highway Patrol on our highways and our streets; whether in the Police Transport Command, which is doing an outstanding job across our transport networks; or whether through specialised operations such as Strike Force Raptor and Operation Talon that are taking firearms off our streets. The NSW Police Force has the laws that it needs. It has the resources, it has the cops on the ground, and it has a Government that has its back.

COASTAL CROWN LANDS

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Premier. Yesterday, when asked about the Crown Lands Amendment (Public Ownership of Beaches and Coastal Lands) Bill 2014, the Minister for Lands maintained his support for the bill. Will the Premier put his Minister in his place and guarantee this divisive piece of legislation will never be reintroduced?

The SPEAKER: Order! The question could be ruled out of order as it contains an assertion that is not factual. However, I will allow the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The question contains a number of false assumptions. What the Minister did yesterday was respond to the community. We understand there needs to be more consultation, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are consulting with the Aboriginal land council and with other Aboriginal groups. We will listen to their concerns, and we will respond once we have done that.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

Mr ANDREW FRASER: My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. How is the Government reforming the local government sector to improve services for New South Wales residents?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question, and commend him for his care and concern for his local community and for ensuring that New South Wales has a strong local government sector that is able to deliver the essential services our communities deserve. Reform of local government is important to every community and every individual in New South Wales. However, any reform has to start with a strong relationship—and we have been working on that over the past few years. We have developed a strong relationship; we have consulted, we have listened and we are now acting. We have invested strongly in local government. We are building solid relationships and we have worked with the local government sector in this partnership for reform.

A few years ago an audit of councils showed that councils had an infrastructure backlog of \$7.4 billion. We did not ignore that. We worked alongside and partnered with councils, and we have now reduced that backlog to \$6.2 billion. So in just over three years we have put \$1 billion worth of infrastructure back into local councils across New South Wales. We have introduced our \$1 billion Fit for the Future package—a record investment, the likes of which had not been seen, to support local government. We are providing financial incentives and removing barriers that have in the past been put in the way of local government.

TCorp provided a report that showed councils needed to consider changes. The report noted that 25 per cent of councils were in either weak or very weak financial positions, and that if nothing happened in three years 50 per cent of councils would be in weak or very weak positions. We are partnering with councils to ensure that we have a strong local government sector in New South Wales. We have also introduced red tape reduction legislation, to make it easier for councils to function and service their communities. Labor is in favour of red tape; it opposed that legislation when it was brought into this House. We also reformed voting in the City of Sydney, to allow disenfranchised non-residential voters to be automatically put on the electoral roll, just as residential voters are. We are making it easier and simpler for eligible voters to participate in the democratic process.

Through the local government elections legislation, introduced by this Government, we are reducing the cost of elections and increasing the number of voters who will turn up at local government elections. The Opposition opposed that: It wants an increase in the cost of elections and to have fewer people turning up and being involved in the democratic process. We are partnering with the local government sector to deal with dangerous dog reforms that allow council officers to act quickly to protect the public. This Government has also partnered with the sector to bring in swimming pools compliance reform, which has seen 317,000 pools registered in New South Wales, to protect and safeguard the young and most vulnerable in our communities by partnering with Royal Life Saving New South Wales.

These are reforms that Labor could not deliver. It did nothing for the local government sector. It neglected that sector—sat back and let infrastructure crumble. When the Labor Government felt threatened, it would sack the council and appoint an administrator. Those opposite did not want to work with councils at all. We are investing in New South Wales and in councils through the policies that we have on the table. The Premier and I went to the Coffs Harbour conference only a couple of weeks ago.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Minister. Members will come to order.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: When the Labor Opposition member got up and made a statement, there was a roar of laughter.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: They roared with laughter when they heard the policies that Labor would introduce, because they did not forget that 10 years ago Labor had a policy.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: And 10 years ago that policy was not kept and Labor put through amalgamations.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Those opposite forced and botched amalgamations. We on this side of the House are working with councils and partnering with local government. We are rewriting the Local Government Act. We also released our templates to help councils become fit for the future. We are planning with the local government sector to ensure that councils have a sustainable future. We are partnering with them to ensure that they are fit for the future.

ILLAWARRA CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

Ms NOREEN HAY: My question is directed to the Premier.

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

Mr Brad Hazzard: You want two convention centres?

Ms NOREEN HAY: And a set of lifts.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney General will come to order. The member will be heard in silence.

Ms NOREEN HAY: My question is directed to the Premier. Why is he cutting 10 child protection caseworkers from Coniston in June 2015 when only one in five children at risk in the Illawarra receives face-to-face assessment?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong will resume her seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for her question and I acknowledge what the Minister for Education said.

Ms Noreen Hay: Of course you do; you haven't got an answer.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is not true. It is not going to surprise the member to know that I do not know the specifics requested in the question. But if she is asking whether we are concerned about delivering better childcare protection, yes we are. Are we ensuring and trying to get more people on the ground? Yes, we are. Are we helping our caseworkers? In the last budget we invested \$500 million to increase our support for caseworkers. We are committed to it—I will tell the member why—because some vulnerable children and families in this State are being looked after by these workers and we are doing everything possible to support them. I am happy for the Minister to respond to the member about the individual cases to which she referred. The overall approach we are taking is as I have stated. We are proud of that because it is important and should not be about politics. It should be about supporting the most vulnerable families in this State.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: My question is addressed to the Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Regional Tourism. How is the Government reforming relationships between local government and the small business sector?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I thank the member for Drummoyne—a bloke who actually understands small business; someone who has lived and breathed small business. It is in his and his family's DNA. This morning I had the opportunity to walk the streets of his great electorate with the member and talk to a number of small business owners. It was like walking down the street with a rock star: The cafe owners came out—including those lovely Italian nonnas—to greet this great member. They made us feel at home.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will cease interjecting. The member for Drummoyne will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This member knows his community and constituents—and where to get a great coffee and cannoli. Off the back of today's good news, 17,300 new jobs were created in October in this State because of the policy settings of this Government under the leadership of the Premier, Deputy Premier and all the Ministers. That is fantastic news. The 131,000 new jobs created since we came to government in 2011 shows the confidence of the small business sector—the mums and dads who mortgaged their homes.

Mr John Robertson: Slow down.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. Those members who are not interested in small business will leave the Chamber. The Minister for Small Business has the call.

Mr John Robertson: I'm asking him to slow down.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition was not listening, so why would he ask the Minister to slow down? The Minister has the call.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Those opposite should calm down and listen about small business. Let us look at their past Ministers for small business: political staffer, union hack, political staffer, union hack. That is what those opposite know about small business. Let us just take a moment and learn from those on this side who understand small business.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: When we came to government in 2011 we said we were going to cut through red tape. New South Wales had 1,257 Acts of Parliament.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: It was the highest number in the country. Of course, since 2011 we have repealed 205 legislative instruments. We are cutting through the red tape. Those opposite spent 16 years confusing small business for Christmas presents, wrapping them up in red tape. Of course, we understand small business and since coming to government we have established the Office of the Small Business Commissioner—a strong advocate on behalf of the sector. We saved the community and the business sector more than \$500 million by cutting red tape. Of course, we introduced the 30-days-to-pay rule for government agencies because we understand that cash flow is the lifeblood of small business.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I am having difficulty hearing the Minister.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Our latest initiative is the envy of our interstate colleagues. Recently I attended the small business Ministers forum in Western Australia, where we all talked about initiatives and programs in our States. We talked about a brand-new initiative: the Small Business Friendly Council program, developed in partnership with the NSW Business Chamber and supported, of course, by local government. The program is the first of its kind in Australia. Our Western Australian, Victorian and Queensland colleagues loved it so much they are going to borrow the idea and initiative. Even our good friend the Lord Mayor of Sydney has signed up the City of Sydney to the program—given that small businesses represent 85 per cent of the 22,000 businesses in the City of Sydney's local government area. That is a great result. It is about time the City of Sydney acknowledged the important role that small business plays in underpinning the local economy.

Since the program was introduced in September, 41 local councils across the State have joined. The program consists of a number of commitments, including reporting on business improvement processes, regular reporting for on-time payment policies, establishing a business advisory board with the local community, and streamlining procurement processes. Through the Small Business Friendly Council program our Government is working closely with councils so that they are better placed to support a very important sector and promote small businesses in their communities. When I talk to people I hear about how local government has a greater impact on small business than do State or Federal governments. However, by partnering with councils the New South Wales Government will make sure that it creates an environment for small business. After only eight weeks in operation, the Small Business Family Council program is working.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members who are not interested in the answer will leave the Chamber.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Just this morning I was told about a small business owner with unpaid invoices totalling \$50,000—a huge amount of money for a small business. Since her local council signed up to the Small Business Friendly Council program all those invoices have been settled. That is a fantastic outcome for that small business, resulting from good work on behalf of the council. As I said earlier, this side of the House understands small business and its important role in our economy, especially in regional and rural communities. That is no surprise when we consider the Coalition membership: We are surrounded by people who have skin in the game. The Minister for Primary Industries was once a small business operator, the member for Murray-Darling was once a small business owner, as was the member for Clarence, the member for Lismore, the member for Wagga Wagga, the member for Drummoyne, the member for Strathfield and the member for Granville.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Members on this side of the House clearly understand small business. It is in our DNA.

Mr Ryan Park: Is this all you have to do to become a Minister?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: You can't talk. You have no idea about small business, and you know how important it is in your area. You have to start supporting small business, my friend. Stand tall. Of course, we on this side of the House acknowledge that more needs to be done. As the new Minister for Small Business, my job is to engage and make sure we deliver a framework and policy setting that allows the small business sector to thrive—to benefit the mums and dads who are prepared to take the risk and have the courage to create jobs for the people of New South Wales. That is why I am proud to be the Minister who represents the 680,000 small businesses across New South Wales.

SMART AND SKILLED TENDER PROCESS

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Following the failure of Newcastle's International Child Care College to gain accreditation as a subsidised training provider under Smart and Skilled, will the Minister review the contract process to ensure that reputable providers with a history of compliance and teaching excellence are not cut out of the new vocational education framework?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The training places were offered after a competitive tender process was conducted at arm's length through the State Government's procurement process, which was covered by the necessary governance and probity regulations. Those decisions were not made by my office. Governments have to be careful about competitive tenderers. I inform the House that throughout the tender process more than eight million bids for training places were made but only 165,000 places were available. It was overprescribed by 14 times. Inevitably, not all applicants were successful.

In New South Wales, there are more than 2,000 registered training organisations, including the 10 TAFE institutes. Out of the 750 that applied through the tender process, 330 were successful. Some good providers did not receive a contract at all, but this is a contestable market. For whatever reason, they may not have been as competitive as some other providers. I urge members to visit the Smart and Skilled website. It is easy to navigate. Any location such as Griffith, Newcastle or Lismore can be entered and the successful training providers in and around that community will be listed.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Courses can also be entered. For example, I searched for early childhood providers in the Newcastle area and a number of them were listed. If an individual wishes to complete a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care, there are 22 providers in and around the Newcastle area and 54 providers offer a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. The business to which the member for Lake Macquarie referred offers those courses and it is disappointed at not receiving a State-subsidised placement under Smart and Skilled, but we are addressing the training issue from the students' perspective. Funding allocated to the vocational education and training budget has increased by 11 per cent since the 2011 election.

Prospective students can type in their preferred course for the area in which they live and the relevant providers will be listed. Each provider will show the courses for which they have subsidised places. I know that a number of providers are disappointed because they were not successful. The tender process was highly competitive. Members can also find successful providers in their communities and the different courses that are offered. We have been cautious throughout the process. People are concerned about TAFE. *Tamworth Country Life* has published an article that TAFE New England has won a substantial contract to deliver training through Smart and Skilled, as has North Coast TAFE. There were many successful providers but, unfortunately, some were unsuccessful. As I have said, we have designed Smart and Skilled to support students, and Smart and Skilled will deliver for them.

ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

Mr LEE EVANS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Central Coast and Assistant Minister for Planning. What reform has the Government undertaken to deliver better environmental services and access for people in our State?

Mr ROB STOKES: I thank the magnificent member for Heathcote for the opportunity to share some good news about our parks with the people of New South Wales and members of the Opposition. The electorate of the member for Heathcote includes the world's second-oldest national park, the Royal National Park, which opened on a fine day in 1879.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who are not interested in this subject will leave the Chamber. The member for Mount Druitt will come to order.

Mr ROB STOKES: I have some great news. This year the New South Wales Government invested almost \$1 million to upgrade the royal Coast Track, which is an iconic track through the Royal National Park. The Government has also reformed the National Parks and Wildlife Service to provide better services to the community, such as improving access for people with disabilities, new infrastructure, new opportunities and enhanced community education. Since this Government came to office it has provided the National Parks and Wildlife Service with an additional \$40 million to maintain national parks, enhance education and improve access opportunities. The former Labor Government left a legacy of locking up national parks, leaving them to languish. Our Government understands that we can only create a social licence to preserve these places if people can access and enjoy them, and understand their values. We have invested in online booking upgrades to encourage access and visitation, which has led to a 25 per cent increase in accommodation reservations.

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

Mr ROB STOKES: The member for Maroubra may benefit from visiting one of our national parks. He could relax and unwind and let go of some of his anger. There are beautiful places in which to breathe and enjoy the serenity. There are some "clothes optional" bathing opportunities—perhaps he does not want to avail himself of that. The member for Blue Mountains advocated successfully for a \$1.5 million investment in the iconic Three Sisters Walk, which is perhaps the most walked trail in Australia's most visited national park. Access will be improved not only for the more than 600,000 people who walk this track every year but also for people with disabilities.

We have reformed the National Parks and Wildlife Service to protect lives and property by providing an additional \$62.5 million to increase hazard reduction efforts, including the employment of an additional 94 firefighters. This year we celebrate 40 years since my Liberal Party predecessor the Hon. Jack Beale, member of Parliament—Australia's first environment Minister—introduced the National Parks and Wildlife Act in 1974. In recognition of this milestone, I am proud to announce that on 15 and 16 November we are opening all national parks for free. Members of this House will be able to frolic and enjoy the opportunities that our parks provide.

We also acknowledge the once-in-a-decade World Parks Congress will take place in Sydney next week. We will welcome 5,000 people, most of them from overseas, to this incredibly significant event that our Government has brought to Sydney. We have also reformed our urban parks and gardens. Through the amalgamation of back office operations we will save \$7 million each year across the Botanic Gardens, the Domain and Centennial Park. This money will be reinvested in new science and education programs, and better customer services, all of which will improve accessibility and opportunity for the community. Western Sydney

has been a focus for this Government in delivering parks and green spaces. At the Australian Botanic Gardens, Mount Annan near Camden and at Mount Tomah in the Blue Mountains we have abolished entry fees. This has attracted an additional 330,000 people. Work has begun to create a 200-hectare \$15 million super park at Bungaribee in Western Sydney— [*Time expired.*]

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Reports

Mr Jonathan O'Dea, as Chair, tabled the following reports:

- (1) "Follow-up of Repeat Recommendations from the Auditor-General's 2013 Financial Audit Reports", Report 18/55, dated November 2014.
- (2) "Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audit Reports May 2013-July 2013", Report 19/55, dated November 2014.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Jonathan O'Dea.

PETITIONS

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

Sutherland Shire to Kogarah Railway Station

Petition requesting the restoration of direct rail services from the Sutherland Shire to Kogarah railway station, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Edgecliff Interchange

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

GyMEA College of TAFE

Petition opposing cuts to courses and increased fees for students at GyMEA College of TAFE, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Renewable Energy

Petition supporting renewable energy systems and requesting retention of the 20 per cent Renewable Energy Target in New South Wales, received from **Mrs Leslie Williams**.

Same-sex Marriage

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

Public Housing Sale

Petition opposing the sale of public housing in Millers Point, Dawes Point and The Rocks, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

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

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

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

Container Deposit Levy

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

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

Repeat Offender Sentencing

Petition calling for harsher sentences for repeat offenders, particularly those who commit crimes while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, received from **Mr Thomas George**.

FORESTRY ACT: REVOCATION OF DEDICATION

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries) [3.13 p.m.]: I move:

That:

- (1) Pursuant and subject to the conditions of the Forestry Act 2012, this House agrees to the revocation of the dedication of that part of Bingara State Forest No. 859 No. 2 Extension dedicated by proclamation published in the *Government Gazette* of 4 May 1984, comprising of part of Lot 118 DP 754851 situated in the Gwydir Shire Council Area, Parish of Molroy, County of Murchison, and for the lands to become Crown land and shall remain part of Crown Lease 1951/2 as defined within the meaning of the *Crown Lands Act*.
- (2) The foregoing resolution be communicated by Address to His Excellency the Governor.

The sensible revocation is seeking to realign the Bingara State Forest boundary so that it better reflects the distinction between forested land and land that has been held in tenure by the Groth family since 1932. Mr Robert Neil Groth, who currently holds the land in the form of Crown lease 1951/2, applied to the former Department of Lands to convert the Crown lease to freehold. The boundary realignment will reduce complexities for Mr Groth by removing arcane leasehold regulation and management practices. Mr Groth has offered to relinquish other leases he holds over the Bingara State Forest once the boundary realignment is complete. This will see a positive outcome for the people of New South Wales with the NSW Forestry Corporation no longer needing to share the profits from the timber milled on those portions of land. To allow this boundary realignment to take place I support this motion to have the State Forest dedication revoked. The Crown leasehold land will then be converted to freehold title, which will result in a common-sense outcome for Mr Groth and the people of New South Wales.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [3.14 p.m.]: The shadow Minister for Resources and Primary Industries in the other place, the Hon. Steve Whan, has considered the matter and considers that the Opposition should support the motion. The Opposition does not oppose the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

Address forwarded to the Governor communicating the resolution.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**Financial Year 2014-15****Debate resumed from 4 November 2014.**

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [3.15 p.m.]: It is with much pleasure that I share with the House some of the good news for Campbelltown in this budget debate. For the people of Campbelltown the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government has been an absolute success story, and it has been my honour to be part of the revitalisation of Campbelltown. For 16 years the people of Campbelltown were largely delivered nothing by the former Labor Government. But community infrastructure is not the only success story of this Government; essential services across Campbelltown have also benefited from record funding and allocation models introduced by this Government.

The jewel in this Government's crowning achievements is the \$139 million stage one Campbelltown Hospital redevelopment, which is on time and under budget. This is a testament to this Government's commitment to providing the people of Campbelltown and the greater Macarthur with the infrastructure and services needed to support a growing population. This upgrade will include an additional 90 inpatient beds, with an overflow capacity for a further 30; an expanded emergency department; a paediatric outpatient unit; four additional birthing rooms; a co-located and expanded floor, comprising ambulatory care, outpatient, antenatal, allied health consulting rooms and treatment spaces; and relocation and expansion of supporting space for pathology and clinical information.

The refurbishment and expansion of the birthing/maternity units has also begun, as has work on the paediatric outpatient precinct. We have an additional 248 car spaces, including 37 new spaces serving ambulatory care and cancer therapy services, and 110 spaces in the south-west corner of the campus bringing the total number of car spaces to 1,225. Further to this immense achievement, planning for stage two of the Campbelltown Hospital upgrade is underway and we are looking forward to announcements about this in the near future. This hospital services the wider Macarthur region and forms part of the local health district. In partnership with the medical school of the University of Western Sydney, Campbelltown Campus, the Government and the university will each contribute \$9 million for an \$18 million training facility at Campbelltown for new doctors. This partnership between the Government and the University of Western Sydney has done a great deal to lift the profile of Western Sydney.

I was present at the opening of the new pathology unit, one of the first of these services. The Minister for Health was also there to inspect the new facilities, which are progressively coming on line and providing great service to the people of Campbelltown. This is in contrast to what those on the other side had planned for the area. In the last health budget of the Labor Government, Campbelltown was not even mentioned. It had no intention of doing anything at Campbelltown. I am pleased that this Government is delivering a wonderful new hospital for the people of Campbelltown. Roads infrastructure and travel are also major issues. Narellan Road represents a major transport corridor, linking Campbelltown, that emerging great regional city for the Macarthur, with Camden, the south-west growth centre and the wider Sydney metropolitan area. It will also provide a link to the future airport for Sydney, which may well be known as the Bradfield airport.

Under this Government Narellan Road is receiving a \$114 million multistage upgrade, which will link it with wider transport infrastructure developments throughout the south-west including the widening of the M5, which is now 90 per cent complete. I know the member for Menai would be very pleased about that. If you drive on that road at 10 o'clock at night, you will see it lit up like a Christmas tree with lights flashing as they close down city-bound lanes for some very intensive work. The new and improved wider M5 is coming on line. I know the homeward-bound journey is already faster than it was, with 100-kilometre zones already in place. If the member for Cessnock travelled around Sydney, he would know the great improvements being made to transport infrastructure in Campbelltown.

The widening of Narellan Road is a vitally needed infrastructure upgrade. It will include an upgrade to a six-lane divided road, generally with three lanes in each direction and a central median strip. There will be new traffic lights at the Kenny Hill Road and M31 Hume Motorway southbound interchange intersection. There will be a three-metre-wide, off-road, shared pedestrian and cyclist path, including a pedestrian bridge over the Hume Motorway. I am an avid cyclist, and I know how important it is to separate cyclists from busy roads. I engage in a tour de Rosemeadow every morning where I ride about 20 or 30 kilometres around the great hills of Glen Alpine, Rosemeadow and Ambarvale at Campbelltown—that great opal of the south-west, and the very best part of the Macarthur. It is a wonderful way to start the day.

The improvements to Narellan Road will include designated turning lanes, and bicycle and pedestrian crossing provisions at traffic lights. There will be wider southbound exit ramps from the Hume Motorway to Narellan Road—there will be three lanes coming off the M5 onto Narellan Road to a signalised, controlled set of lights. This will help to improve the flow of traffic off the M5. The improvements will include a widening of the bridge over the Hume Motorway to allow for the widening of Narellan Road. This will also allow for signalised traffic for traffic turning right from Narellan Road and heading south on the Hume Motorway. I recently had the privilege of attending the official sod turning with the Prime Minister, the Hon. Tony Abbott, MP; the Federal Treasurer, the Hon. Joe Hockey, MP; Mr Russell Matheson, the Federal member for Macarthur and my good mate; and my State parliamentary colleagues Chris Patterson, the member for Camden, and the Hon. Jai Rowell, the member for Wollondilly.

Campbelltown Road represents one of the main road transport corridors to service the South West Growth Centre. As part of this Government's commitment to avoiding the past mistakes of building infrastructure after the population grows, Campbelltown Road will also be subject to a major upgrade to accommodate the projected population growth and support the South West Rail Link. This will include upgrading the road from what is generally a two-lane road to a four-lane divided road, with a wide median lane to allow for a future expansion to six lanes.

It is sometimes the little things that make the biggest difference. I am very pleased that the Government has provided \$2.4 million for the building of acoustic barriers along the Moore-Oxley bypass. This is to insulate Beverley Park School, Campbelltown North Public School and Lomandra School from vehicle noise. Beverley Park School does an amazing job educating disadvantaged kids in our community. One of the special features of the school is a sensory room, which is where teachers can quieten the kids down. There is an array of lights and sounds. Unfortunately, due to the heavy truck noise from the Moore-Oxley bypass this room became very difficult to use.

In 2009 a car ran off the road and ended up in the car park of Beverley Park School. It was deplorable that nothing was done at that stage to resolve these issues. I raised the issue with the Hon. Duncan Gay, the Minister for Roads and Freight. I brought him out to the electorate and showed him the school. I said, "This is somewhere we can make a difference." He is a great man and he understood the importance of these things. It was an issue that Principal Carmel Seeto raised with me at my annual principals lunch, where I invite the principals from all the local schools—Catholic, public, Anglican, Callithumpian; both junior and secondary schools—to Parliament House. One of the issues Principal Carmel Seeto raised with me was the need for acoustic protection.

I know that the principal at Campbelltown North Public School had to shut her office windows to answer her phone because the road noise was so intrusive. If you drive along the Moore-Oxley bypass now, you can see that these acoustic barriers have been erected; however there is some finishing work going on. This will make a huge difference for those three schools. It will improve the amenity and the security of those schools. I am very proud to be a local member and part of a Government that is delivering things that are bringing about real improvements for our community.

Before I was elected to this place, Ingleburn railway station had been waiting decades for easy-access lifts, which are so important for many people in our community. I took up the issue with the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian. She came out and inspected Ingleburn railway station. I am so proud that those lifts, which commuters have waited so long for, are under construction. The project began in April this year and is projected to be completed in 2015. The station upgrade will include three new commuter lifts; covered walkways from the lifts to the platforms; reconfigured station entries; new customer amenities; and improvements to the bus stop and canopy, the taxi zone, bicycle storage and accessible parking; and a formalised kiss 'n ride zone. A famous bunya pine stands outside the entrance to Ingleburn station on the site of the old post office that burnt down. It has been accommodated in the station design.

Labor never had any intention of providing lifts for the station. In fact at the previous election Labor allegedly organised a petition saying that it was going to fight to get lifts at the station. Like all Labor promises, it came to nothing—in fact the petition never eventuated and has never been sighted off Nobby's. I know the people of Ingleburn who use wheelchairs and prams are excited by the fact that they will be able to access Ingleburn railway station thanks to these lifts. The upgrade gives Campbelltown City Council the ability to deliver the greater Ingleburn central business district area and make it an even better place to live.

Another great addition to services at Campbelltown has been the air-conditioned train services, which have been rolled out as part of the successful transition to Waratah train carriages. This means that 100 per cent

of timetabled services on the T5 Cumberland line servicing my electorate are now air-conditioned. This is a major rail link that connects Campbelltown to Parramatta and Blacktown. We have about 220 additional weekly services every half hour that run directly between Campbelltown and Parramatta. As part of the \$33 million statewide Refresh Program, Campbelltown station will receive a number of improvements, including upgraded toilet facilities, new station furniture, repainting, landscaping and energy efficient lighting.

I know from my contact with schools and principals forums that everyone is delighted with the improvements being made through the Local Schools, Local Decisions program, which has given schools across Campbelltown the authority to make decisions about how they use and allocate financial resources. This policy breaks the one-size-fits-all approach that in the past made it hard for schools to adequately fund and support initiatives and infrastructure projects. Many schools have now taken advantage of the resources that they were not able to access under the former Government. Sarah Redfern High School received more than \$1 million in extra funding and Leumeah Public School received an extra \$300,000. Ingleburn High School received an additional \$242,000, Campbelltown Performing Arts High School received an additional \$411,000 and Briar Road Public School received an additional \$598,000.

Under this Government major improvements have been made across areas such as Airs Bradbury and Claymore, where existing public housing estates are being transformed into new communities with a mix of private and social housing residences. I am pleased that the New South Wales Government has committed \$6 million for an amenity improvement plan to improve the streetscape and revitalise existing properties around Claymore. The project at Airs Bradbury will transform that suburb and community. The Minto revitalisation project has proved that this type of work can help to build better futures for everyone involved. These achievements are just some examples of the great work the Government has championed in Campbelltown. I am proud to be part of a Government that remains committed to the people of my electorate and New South Wales.

Dharawal National Park is one example of this Government delivering for the people of Campbelltown and the greater Macarthur region. It had been promised for 20 years and never delivered. In its first year this Government declared Dharawal as a national park. The lifting of the entrance fee for the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan is another success story of this Government. In fact, former Premier Barry O'Farrell was the last person to pay for entry to the garden. They did not want to charge him, but the Premier insisted that he be their last paying customer. We have opened that beautiful botanic garden to all the people of Campbelltown and the greater Macarthur region; they have been flocking to it in droves. It is a wonderful facility where families can enjoy nature and a wonderful landscape. It is also home to the biggest seed bank in the Southern Hemisphere, which gives scientists access to the best and latest that science has to offer.

As I said in my inaugural speech, Campbelltown—that great opal of the south-west and the very best part of the Macarthur—is one of the best places in the world to live because of its great people. This Government is building up my community through initiatives including the roads and infrastructure package being designed to service the new airport. I look forward to the day that Campbelltown is recognised as a regional city within the greater Sydney area. I am pleased with the rail corridor planning that is underway for the South West Rail Link. This morning together with the Minister for Transport and members representing the electorates of Menai, Wollondilly and Camden I caught the first train on the South West Rail Link as the drivers and staff prepare to bring that great asset on line.

As I pointed out when we were discussing transport flows during our journey, in future with the rail corridor extension to the airport, transport will not just flow into Campbelltown, the airport, Sydney and Parramatta; it will head further into the south-west as greater employment opportunities are achieved in the Macarthur region. This Government is delivering for the people of Campbelltown and the greater Macarthur area, and making a difference for the better. I am proud and humble to be the member for Campbelltown and to represent the greatest people in this State. I am pleased to support the budget.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [3.35 p.m.]: This Government has done the hard work to repair the budget over the past three years while getting on with rebuilding New South Wales. I am pleased that New South Wales is able to say that it is number one again. Each year when the budget comes out we take the time during this debate to look over where we were at this time the year before. Each year I am proud to reflect on the work that we have done and how far we have come. I am proud to say that I am a part of this Government. I am proud of the work we have done since inheriting office from the Labor Government, and to be part of the team that has turned this great State around and is rebuilding New South Wales.

Our Treasurer, the Hon. Andrew Constance, has spent a great deal of time analysing, investigating and searching for ways to make our balance healthier. He and the former Treasurer, now the Premier, have ensured

that New South Wales is set up to be back in the game. The Menai electorate is diverse and in a sense is divided by Heathcote Road. The electorate has two distinct parts and is represented by two separate councils, Sutherland Shire Council and Liverpool City Council. When meeting with local constituents it is clear that there is a divide between the two sides and that they see themselves as having differing needs, so it is pleasing to note that all of the electorate is receiving money in this budget.

The residents of my electorate have certainly not missed out. Some of the significant investments that will benefit the Menai electorate include \$24.5 million to start construction of five new super ambulance stations, including one in Liverpool, and more than \$103 million to complete the South West Rail Link from Glenfield to Leppington. That project has been delivered ahead of time and under budget. Other investments that will benefit my electorate include \$398 million for the WestConnex motorway—the largest road project in the country; \$400 million for continuation of works on the M5 West widening; \$11.75 million for the continued upgrade of Liverpool police station; and \$109 million for road upgrades to support Sydney's second airport at Badgerys Creek.

The budget also includes an additional \$13 million for the widening of Deadmans Creek Bridge on Heathcote Road and \$2 million to widen Alford's Point Road southbound to provide a dual left turn into Menai Road, Menai. Stage one of the Sutherland Hospital redevelopment will increase the number of adult acute inpatient beds and expand the emergency department. That project has received funding of \$2.2 million. In addition, \$26 million has been allocated to progress planning and pre-construction for future links on the Sydney motorway network, including developing a feasibility study for the Princes Motorway or F6 corridor between Loftus and St Peters.

Major action has taken place in my electorate in the past couple of weeks. Work has started on the much talked about widening of Deadmans Creek Bridge on Heathcote Road, which is a major arterial road providing access from Liverpool to Wollongong, and services local and commercial traffic including Department of Defence vehicles at Holsworthy. The current bridge, which was built during World War II, no longer meets design standards and is starting to show major wear and tear. It has also been subject to flooding that has made the road impassable at times. It is a bridge that makes you almost want to close your eyes when you drive across it if there is a truck coming in the other direction. It just does not seem wide enough, although it has been doing the job for a long time now.

The Government has undertaken planning for the replacement of the bridge and now the building work is about to take place. Recently the Treasurer met with me on Heathcote Road to announce that \$19 million has been included in the budget to replace the Deadmans Creek Bridge to improve safety for all road users, including heavy vehicles. I recently met the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, at the site office. After an all-encompassing safety check we were able to head down to the worksite to see the excavation and works taking place to prepare the section of ground for the new bridge.

I thank the staff who are building the new bridge. It is incredible to see the construction taking place. They are trying their hardest not to adversely impact upon motorists as they go about their daily commute and they are doing a fine and fast job. I am also really excited that part of the upgrade includes a change to the entrance to Sandy Point with dedicated left and right turning lanes being built southbound from St George Crescent and a raised median and two left-turn islands installed to improve turning safety into Heathcote Road. You can only enter and exit Sandy Point via Heathcote Road. The entrance is on a steep hill with a blind corner where cars and numerous B-doubles travel at 80 kilometres an hour. This makes it extremely hard to turn out of Sandy Point during peak hour and makes it a very dangerous spot at night or when the roads are wet from rain. Changing the entrance to Sandy Point not only will make it easier for residents but also will make Heathcote Road a safer place for all who drive along it.

The need for this upgrade became only too obvious again last Friday when a bus and a motorbike collided at this corner. Thankfully, there were no major injuries but it goes to show that this corner can be dangerous due to visibility issues and high speeds. The accident took place, despite the fact that traffic had been slowed down to 60 kilometres an hour due to the roadworks. The accident also caused issues along the rest of Heathcote Road. I know firsthand that vehicles were backed up almost to the entrance of the M5, which is a distance of eight kilometres. Thankfully, the motorists caught in the traffic jam were patient and respectful of what had happened, even if it meant that the start of their weekend was slightly delayed.

We also announced that \$100,000 has been provided to complete a study on the potential duplication of Heathcote Road between Pleasure Point and the Moorebank Sports Club. This is something that has been

spoken about and asked for frequently in my electorate. I am pleased to be able to make it happen. This includes the potential duplication of three existing bridges across Williams Creek, Harris Creek and the railway line and will improve bike and pedestrian access. This duplication would support the current upgrade of Deadmans Creek bridge and the intersection at Sandy Point. Currently we have traffic jams that cause delays of up to 40 minutes, particularly when the Army closes a lot of its entrances. The upgrade is greatly needed, but we must ensure that it is done properly. We also need to decide whether existing roundabouts should be replaced with traffic lights. Bike paths and pedestrian access points need to be located correctly. This study is certainly needed and obviously is the responsible course to take before moving on to the community consultation period and construction.

Speaking of Heathcote Road and Sandy Point, I have previously spoken in this House about the Sandy Point Quarry and the application that has been submitted for a glass recycling plant to be put on the site. Recently I met with the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and personally delivered to him letters from local residents who are concerned that, if this application is approved, their quality of life will be compromised. The residents are understandably concerned about silica dust entering their homes and the impact it will have on their health as a result. I believe this facility already has caused extensive environmental damage. Concerns have been raised about the construction of the bund walls, which are alleged to be made out of recycled materials from the proponent's other building material recycling facility that is located in nearby Moorebank. As I have mentioned previously, approximately 900 trees have already been removed from the site, which has resulted in a court case. Thankfully, Sutherland Shire Council, the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water are looking into this matter. I hope to be able to bring an update to this House, and to the residents, shortly.

Earlier this year I met with the Premier, the Minister for Transport and local members to announce the early completion of the South West Rail Link from Glenfield to Leppington. I stress that this project has been delivered ahead of time and under budget, which is a great outcome and a demonstration of how this Government is committed to making New South Wales number one again. In fact, as the member for Campbelltown mentioned, we were with the Minister for Transport just this morning at the brand-new Edmondson Park station where I had the opportunity to travel to the new Leppington station by train on the new tracks as part of the train testing and staff training process, ahead of Sydney Trains services starting early next year. I spent a wonderful morning with the Minister, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Camden and the Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health, who is also the member for Wollondilly, experiencing this new infrastructure. We know the benefit that it will bring to our electorates.

When we came to Government, we found that Labor had not laid a centimetre of track, and yet there we stood, looking at a project that has been finished a year early and \$300 million under budget. Minister Berejiklian has kept a close eye on this project to deliver those positive outcomes. I know my community will thank her as they are doing their daily commutes. I hope that the pressure of trying to find a car parking space at Holsworthy station is reduced with the opening of these stations, and that our commuters, particularly from nearby Prestons, have an easier time commuting and benefit from less commuting and more time with their families. I am incredibly excited that we are building 150 more car-parking spaces at Holsworthy station to further take pressure off commuters trying to park there. It is very hard to find parking at this station after 7.30 in the morning. With the Army base on one side and housing on the other, there is no spare parking space, and parking is at a premium. I thank the Minister for hearing my call and ensuring that Holsworthy was given the priority it needs. I look forward to the provision of additional parking space early in the new year.

Along with the additional parking we will also be installing better lighting and new closed-circuit television [CCTV], which will help to ensure the safety of commuters and to make their journey that little bit safer and, with the introduction of the Opal card, that little bit easier and hassle-free. Before the introduction of the Opal card, particularly on Monday morning, there were queues from the ticket booth all the way down the stairs at Holsworthy station. It was quite dangerous to have people queuing on the station's steps. Now, if there are three people in a queue, that is a busy queue. The change to people's daily commutes brought about by the Opal card is impressive.

Talking about train stations, a couple of months ago I joined the member for Heathcote, who is in the chair, the Premier and the Minister for Transport at Sutherland station to inspect progress on accessibility upgrades taking place at the station. I was pleased to be able to again join the Minister and Mr Acting-Speaker and member for Heathcote as well as the Liberal candidate for Miranda, Eleni Petinos, at the station to be the very first passengers on the new accessibility lift. What a difference this lift will make to commuters.

Previously, to get onto the platform for city-bound trains, they had to go past the station office and then tackle a steep decline to get to their train. This improvement will make it much easier for people who have accessibility issues. It will make it a far easier trip to the station and to passengers' destinations.

I note also that work has commenced on a 340-space multistorey commuter car park near the station just behind the Sutherland United Service Club, which is known as the SUS Club. Mr Acting-Speaker, as you know, Sutherland station is a major key interchange station for locals and commuters from the Illawarra. I have seen many people coming up from the Wollongong area, in particular. It is great to see additional parking being provided, which will take away some of the morning stress for commuters and help them to get to work on time as well as clear local streets and give people the chance to park outside their own homes.

While discussing transport, I mention that I was lucky enough to join the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Freight to announce the completion of the first stage of the M5 West widening project, which will save commuters time by not being stuck in traffic and will enable them to spend more time at home. The M5 West widening project is now 80 to 90 per cent complete, and is well on the way to delivering the full 22 kilometre route by December this year, which will save time and frustration for motorists. What a Christmas present!

I am pleased to announce that the section of the M5 between the old toll plaza and Camden Valley Way is complete and that some parts of the road are back to the 100 kilometres an hour speed limit. I have driven over it a couple of times, and it is fabulous to have three to four lanes in that section of the motorway. It will make such a difference. This week I joined the Prime Minister, the Premier, the Minister for Roads and Freight and some of my colleagues—such as the member for Oatley and the member for Rockdale—to announce the main tunnels for the WestConnex project. These new tunnels will be built to a higher standard than tunnels in the existing M5 East and will include higher vehicle clearance of 5.3 metres compared to the current 4.6 metres.

Carriageways will be built to accommodate the three-lane operation. Ventilation systems will ensure visibly clean air as well as more efficient and modern tunnel ventilation. This takes the M5 tunnel from four lanes to 10 lanes, and that will make a massive difference to our bumper-to-bumper commute home. The Government has also announced \$1 million to develop a feasibility study on the F6 extension, with an additional \$10 million in Restart NSW funding to help advance the feasibility study for the Princes Motorway, or F6, corridor between Loftus and St Peters, also called the southern Sydney access to the F6. So this is a total commitment of \$11 million.

Another road development that I am delighted to see in this year's budget is the \$2 million to widen Alfords Point Road southbound by providing a dual left turn into Menai Road, Menai. Presently this is a single turning lane on a busy road and as such traffic can back up for kilometres on a red light, making it hard to have a smooth trip and causing major delays and frustrations for motorists. It is great to see that while this Government is committed to building the major arterial roads it is also looking at traffic congestion and blockages on roads that are travelled every day. The true duplication of the Alfords Point Bridge and its approaches is one of my proudest achievements as a State member. The former Labor member for Menai liked to claim she duplicated the bridge; while, yes, the second bridge was built, local residents were able to benefit from only one additional lane. Now we have the approaches, and the bridge has three lanes in each direction.

I was also delighted to see that money has been set aside to progress planning and preconstruction for future links on the Sydney motorway network, including developing a feasibility study for the F6 corridor between Loftus and St Peters. This is something that I have been working on with some of my colleagues, including the member for Heathcote, who is now in the chair as Acting-Speaker, the member for Oatley, the member for Rockdale, the member for Cronulla, the member for South Coast and the member for Kiama. I think we make a somewhat formidable team, and I am glad that money is being put toward this study.

Our emergency services were not forgotten in this budget. Two new fire stations are set to be built in Western Sydney. My office team recently had the opportunity to be a "fireman for a day". They went off excited and a little scared and returned with a newfound respect for the work that our firefighters carry out. The team got to cut up old cars, rescue people from a smoke-filled room, and go up in a crane to see how high fires or fires in factories are extinguished. They were also shown through a couple of the trucks, including the HazMat truck, and were able to see a fire dog hard at work sniffing out the cause of a blaze.

A bit of trivia for you, Mr Acting-Speaker: Did you know that one of the worst things that can be involved in an environmental disaster is not oil—although the results of an oil spill can be disastrous—but milk.

It makes sense when you think about what happens when you pour milk into your cup of tea or coffee. The milk does not sink to the bottom or rise to the top; instead it mixes and is impossible to separate. What you do not see though is that it sucks all the oxygen out of the water. This is what makes it dangerous to our plant and animal life. I have a strong respect for our firefighters, and I think my office staff have come back with even more respect for them now; they continually talk about their time at the fire station.

I am also pleased to announce that Menai Rural Fire Service as well as Bundeena, Grays Point, Illawong and Kurnell will all be receiving new state-of-the-art, prime front-line category 1 fire trucks this financial year. These new trucks will replace vehicles that are nearly 10 years old, and will allow volunteers to have the latest technology and equipment. This will be the first year the trucks will have automatic transmission, a significant upgrade in capability. Across the State the Government is investing \$30 million in the Rural Fire Service vehicle fleet this year to deliver an additional 119 new trucks.

I am also looking forward to the relocation of the Menai Rural Fire Service from its current site. Their trucks do not quite fit into the fire station; they have had to etch a little section for the nose of the truck to fit in. So they need a purpose-built facility, and I look forward to helping them get it. We are looking at a site in Barden Ridge at the moment. I cannot wait for that to happen. The sum of \$24.5 million is being spent to commence the construction of five new ambulance stations, one of which will be built at Liverpool. The site for the Liverpool ambulance station is where the old council chambers used to be before they were lost in a fire. This land has been vacant for a while and it is good to see it being transformed into something that will benefit the whole community and surrounding areas. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Liverpool Police Station has also received money in this budget with \$11.75 million allocated to the continued upgrade of the station. I have been pleased to see that work start, and have been trying to organise additional parking so that police can park their cars securely whilst the construction is underway; they are currently parking on the site of the old station. Sutherland Hospital also has received money in this budget with a major expansion of adult acute inpatient beds and the emergency department as part of stage one of the Sutherland Hospital Master Plan. In August I met with the Premier and the Minister for Health, as well as you, Mr Acting-Speaker, and the member for Cronulla to open a new car park at Sutherland Hospital providing an additional 300 spaces for patients, visitors and staff. This car park went from announcement to opening in under a year, testament to the great work that this Government is doing for the State.

A brand new recycling centre was opened in Liverpool in early July. This was a great boost to the area, which already recycles a lot of its rubbish. It now has an even better centre that will enable so much more to be done for the local environment. I was delighted to be joined at the opening by not only the local Mayor, Councillor Ned Mannoun, but also the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Rob Stokes. I have already taken some recyclable material to the centre, which handles it fantastically. The Minister for the Environment has done a great deal of work to rid the Kareela area of bats, around Sylvanvale Disability Services but particularly around the Mikarie Child Care Centre.

My godson Joshua Benecos and his big sister Ava attend that centre. I know that the son of the member for Heathcote works there. We knew, through a great deal of community representation, that this problem needed to be fixed. Bats are certainly not wanted in the same vicinity where children with disabilities are playing. This is a fabulous childcare centre—one where children with and without disabilities spend each day. It is just a regular time for them; they do not notice wheelchairs by the time they grow up. But even more beautifully, they learn sign language while they are there. So I think they will be brilliant citizens and great advocates to assist people with disabilities later in their lives.

Recently the electorate was also visited by the Hon. Kevin Humphries, who announced that more than \$220,000 will be committed to assist with vital pest and weed control in the Sutherland shire. Happily, a portion of this money will be spent in the Menai electorate. I must admit one of the things I love best about this job is when you are able to do something that benefits children and helps to improve their quality of life. In a recent visit by the Minister for Disability, the Hon. John Ajaka, MLC, I got to do just that. I was fortunate enough to attend the opening of the Liverpool Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children [RIDBC], again with the Minister for Disability. Having this organisation in Liverpool means that parents no longer have to find a way to travel to North Rocks with their young children to receive treatment.

At the opening of the centre we got to hear from a father who himself had hearing issues. This father told us about the difference that he was already seeing in his one-year-old daughter since she had been receiving treatment at the institute. She needed to see two therapists—one for sight and one for hearing—and her mother

was unable to drive as she suffered from severe epilepsy. The other great thing I learnt about the RIDBC is how they include the parents in all the treatment they do and how the parents become a major part of the solution. Technology is also used so that parents are able to dial into a session if they are unable to be there in person or the session can be recorded and watched at home. This is a very exciting addition to the Liverpool central business district.

Jobs are being created in the Liverpool CBD. We have announced that more government jobs will be coming to the CBD, with the Community Relations Commission, now called Multicultural NSW, to be relocated to Liverpool shortly. Jobs from sections of the Department of Community Services are also coming to Liverpool. Since the Coalition came to government 37,000 additional jobs have been created in Western Sydney. This equates to 3.2 per cent more jobs in Western Sydney since 2011. This is a fantastic achievement and one that I know will keep on growing under the Liberal-Nationals Government.

Another fantastic number is that 1,443 applications have been received in the Liverpool local government area as at June 2014 to take up the Jobs Action Plan. That is nearly 1,500 jobs in Liverpool created under this Government. This is a fantastic initiative of this Government. More jobs are coming through the new home grants program, which since its inception has supported more than 10,000 new homes in Western Sydney, with home approvals increasing by about 50,000 since 2011. Liverpool is a happening place at the moment. We are excited to see the infrastructure and development.

I mention briefly the rolling out of the flashing lights system for our schools. Recently, Woronora school had a set of flashing lights installed, and other schools across my electorate will have those installations completed shortly. I was pleased also to see the Minister for Education deliver on the kitchen for Holsworthy High School so that students can undertake their vocational education and training. This high school benefited also from new disability facilities through the provision of a lift that is getting great use. In closing, I commend the New South Wales Treasurer again; he has a tough job to repair and restore the State's finances. I commend the work of the Premier and my ministerial colleagues. We are a team doing right by all our electorates. We have a long way to go, but I am pleased to see so many important areas in my electorate are receiving much-needed funding boosts. I believe our finances are in good hands and that we now know we are on the right track to making New South Wales number one again.

[Business interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Tabling of Papers

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [4.00 p.m.]: I move:

That for the remainder of the 2014 sittings standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide:

- (1) The tabling of papers by Ministers may be effected by an announcement in the House without handing up copies of such papers.
- (2) Any papers tabled by announcement shall be lodged with the Table Office prior to their announcement in the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.01 p.m.]: I thank the Leader of the House for advising the Opposition of his intention to move this motion, which outlines that the traditional procedure of a Minister reading the title of the report being tabled and lodging it in the Parliament will be dispensed with for the remainder of this sitting and will be replaced by the Minister just advising the House that he or she has tabled such a report without such report being in the Chamber. I understand that this might be considered a minor procedural change although, of course, it is a change to the traditional Chamber practice rather than to the Parliament. The Opposition will not oppose that aspect of the motion. I recognise that the Government has a last-minute rush to get matters through the Parliament as business has been affected by the large number of members making valedictory speeches. Of course, additionally, as a result of the recent by-election, two maiden speeches must be made next week. Therefore, I understand that a few minutes saved with this particular process may be helpful. The second paragraph of the motion states:

- (2) Any papers tabled by announcement shall be lodged with the Table Office prior to their announcement in the House.

It is only a subtle difference but, of course, it is a change to the tradition of the Chamber. I am always concerned with the lodging of documents—for example, written questions. I encourage other members to lodge such documents or questions in the Chamber rather than in the Table Office on the eighth floor. I hope this particular change will not continue, but I acknowledge that the Government's time pressures and the few matters to which I have referred are putting pressure on the remaining time of this parliamentary session. I trust this will not be a common practice in the years ahead.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [4.03 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for his contribution. I can assure him that we will continue to push openness and transparency. Indeed, I hope to return to this House some of the traditional practices. I thank him for his contribution once again and add that this will be a lesser place with his leaving.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2014-15

[Business resumed.]

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [4.04 p.m.]: Having read the budget documents thoroughly, as I have in previous years, I must say that of the various documents printed and produced each year my favourite is Budget Paper No. 3. It is a thick and weighty document but its contents really hold the truth about exactly what is going on in New South Wales. I commence by acknowledging the many comments in this House that this Coalition Government is getting the budget back on track and reforming the State to do this and that. I shall completely debunk that myth. The reality is that in this Government's first three years of office the State debt doubled from \$7 billion to \$14 billion, and was at 25 per cent of gross domestic product [GDP]. The recent asset sales have been used to pay down some of that debt.

Mr John Sidoti: You're kidding.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: It is in the budget, member for Drummoyne. For this purpose I use the analogy of a household budget. If one is not able to stay within one's household budget in the first year and has to sell the caravan, that is one thing; if one is not able to stay within the budget in the second year and has to sell the car, that is another thing; but if one is not able to stay inside the budget in the third year, perhaps one then has to start selling the kids or something—I do not know.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: Over 16 years there was \$20 billion worth of not staying within the budget.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! What is the member's point of order? The member for Davidson will resume his seat.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Seriously, if the three Government members in the Chamber could just hold their tongues for a few minutes while I make my contribution, it would be greatly appreciated. We are now getting to the point where we are running out of things to sell and the time is coming when we must recognise the budget trajectory on which we are putting this State. I appreciate the significant investment in some infrastructure projects—for example, the North West Rail Link. Certainly there was in the early stages, and indeed there is even now, an absence of detail around that and other projects. For example, how much will they cost? What is the cost-benefit analysis? How long will they take? What are the projected transport numbers?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Riverstone will come to order.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: One might want to know these details in the early stages of projects. Frankly, significant changes are being made to how money is spent across New South Wales to fund the North West Rail Link. For example, money is being taken out of health, education, justice and courts, mental health—all these different areas—to fund that project. Unfortunately, particularly for me as the member for Cessnock in a

regional area, The Nationals members have not been smart enough to realise exactly what is happening. They defend in this Chamber that, for example, a prison had to close and 500 jobs were lost in their patch, or that hospital wards have been closed.

Mr Kevin Conolly: That's not true. Stick to some facts.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Go to Bathurst and tell the nurses, midwives and the mental health team out there that beds and wards have not closed. Ask the member for Bathurst, Mr Paul Toole. Until you do that, I would appreciate some quiet in the House. These things are happening across the State and The Nationals have not picked up on them. Future budgets of this State will be drawn narrowly and succinctly into the Sydney central business district to fund some of these really big projects. The Government that is elected in 2015 will be able to do little about it. We must realise that we need to live within our means—I know that term normally comes from those on the other side of the House.

The Labor Government handed down 14 budget surpluses in its 16 years of service. It handed over a triple-A credit rating and a State debt that had been paid down to \$7 billion after receiving a State debt in excess of \$17 billion from the previous Coalition Government. We have to make decisions about what we can afford. Regional New South Wales is struggling under the cuts being made to fund the North West Rail Link. For example, in my electorate the number of teachers' aides has been reduced. Community mental health service workers such as psychologists and counsellors who used to service the Hunter New England Local Health District have disappeared, leaving our most vulnerable exposed.

Cessnock TAFE has had its courses reduced significantly to the point where only one course will be offered. Hospitality is no longer offered at Cessnock TAFE. Cessnock is the State's second-largest tourism destination. It attracts 1.8 million visitor nights per year, but hospitality courses are no longer offered at the local TAFE. As only one course will be offered at Cessnock TAFE next year, the front desk and reception desk staff will disappear, the student council and support teams will disappear, canteen staff will lose their jobs and library staff will lose their jobs. These are specific examples of the cuts that have resulted from this Government's decision to invest in the North West Rail Link. It is fine for us to enter into argy-bargy and philosophical banter back and forth, but I am talking specifically about the people who genuinely need to access resources but who will be unable to do so because of the North West Rail Link.

I draw to the attention of the House the fact that over the past three budgets judicial and justice services have been downgraded and cut back. I am talking specifically about the number of cases that will be brought before the courts, the number of courts that will remain open and functioning, the number of judges who will be employed to hear cases, the support staff and services that will be employed during court proceedings, the transport and housing of individuals charged with criminal activity, the money that will be withdrawn from the investigation of crime, and the number of investigations that will be followed through to the point of prosecution. I am talking specifically about targets that can be seen clearly in Budget Paper No. 3. Over three successive years there have been cutbacks in all the areas I have mentioned. Listed in the same chapter are topics such as how safe people feel when they are walking or jogging at night and how satisfied people are with the timeliness of police responses. Interestingly, these measures that reflect the community's feeling of safety have disappeared. Why would those measures be removed from the budget paper?

I will speak now about education targets. It is timely that my contribution today is about budget papers. During question time on Tuesday of this week the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs was asked specifically about educational outcomes for our Aboriginal community. I will explain what happened when the Coalition Government came to office in 2011. Aboriginal students in year 7 and year 9 were meeting or exceeding the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy outcomes by 86 per cent. Targets above 86 per cent should have been set for successive years. If the level is already at 86 per cent then the Government that comes to office should set targets up to 87 per cent, 88 per cent or 89 per cent. Heaven forbid that we talk about 100 per cent.

The budget papers clearly show that the Government's expectation was dumbed down to 85 per cent. When the Coalition Government came to office the level was at 86 per cent and its expectation for the following years was reduced to 85 per cent. An aspirational target was not set for Aboriginal education because the national standard was deemed to be 85 per cent. The Government took control of a State whose students were doing better than the national standard but it decided to fall back to the national standard—which is meant to be a minimum standard, not a maximum.

I turn now to water catchment management authorities. When the Government came to office in 2011, the water catchment management authorities of New South Wales were being funded in excess of \$180 million. Over the Coalition's first three budgets that number was reduced to \$120 million. I make it clear for members of The Nationals who tell people in their communities that they are getting a good deal. The budget for the water catchment management authorities—probably the most crucial service in country and regional New South Wales—was cut by \$60 million, or 33 per cent. Members of The Nationals come in here, beating their chests, waving their hands and tell their communities what a wonderful job they are doing. But when their Minister oversaw those cuts, they sat silently.

It did not end there. It was not enough that those opposite cut \$60 million from that budget. Changes were then made to local land services and another \$7 million disappeared. We now have a situation where 35 per cent of the funding that historically, under a Labor government, would go to the water catchment management authorities has disappeared. That is the legacy that The Nationals, who are in coalition with the Liberal Party, will have to explain to their communities. The member for Clarence has just walked into the Chamber. He knows all too well that the changes being made under this Government are closing jails and shutting down services in the regional communities.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: Creating jobs in Clarence—112.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I acknowledge the interjection by the member for Clarence. He said that 112 jobs have been created in his electorate.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: Public service jobs.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: They are public service jobs because 500 were lost when the local jail was closed. Let us do the maths—that is net minus 388. The member for Clarence stands there, beats his chest and tells the community he is working hard for them, but he is a mouse in a lion's cage in this Chamber. He does not stand up for or achieve anything for this community. Quite frankly, people in his community have not forgotten the statement the member made when all the jobs disappeared and the jail shut down—that this was all about bread and milk. I turn now to the disappearance of jobs in agronomy. Agronomy is important in regional and rural New South Wales for those hoping to establish and run a successful agricultural business. Fifty agronomist jobs have disappeared from regional New South Wales.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): Order! Members will come to order.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Finally, I turn to the needs of the people of Cessnock that have not been addressed in this budget.

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

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Unfortunately, the Cessnock region has the lowest number of people completing year 12 and the lowest number of people attending university. Cessnock has a proud and long history of trade qualifications, with more than 25 per cent of people in the electorate having a trade qualification. However, you can bet that changes to TAFE will affect my community, despite the fact that we need to help regional communities reach their further education aspirations. We need to do this by providing access to education. The University of Newcastle is about an hour's drive from the electorate of Cessnock, where there is a proud working-class tradition; people are yet to take the step of aspiring to tertiary education. As the member for Cessnock I will continue to work on this important issue, although it is very difficult to do so when manufacturing and other traditional jobs are disappearing from our region—jobs that put food on the tables and roofs over the heads of the people of Cessnock.

The Government has made procurement decisions not to invest in buses and trains. That means people in my electorate and across the Hunter are losing their jobs. The Government needs to be aware that every time there are job losses it is another blow to a regional community that is trying to lift itself up from the education floor and make inroads into gaining tertiary qualifications. There is nothing in the budget to address the educational shortcomings of the people of Cessnock. That needs to be addressed in future budgets. As I said, TAFE must be accessible to the people of Cessnock. However, Smart and Skilled—which will be rolled out on 1 January next year—will not do that.

We also need to acknowledge that regional training organisations [RTOs] and training providers offering qualifications that have missed out on the Smart and Skilled funding because they have not jumped through the hoops will no longer be able to employ people, and this will add to regional unemployment. Education is important to the future of the people of Cessnock, yet nothing in this year's budget addresses that need. However, the North West Rail Link is being built and people in regional New South Wales will pay, pay and pay for that.

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

COMMSEC STATE OF THE STATES 2014 REPORT

Debate resumed from 5 November 2014.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.25 p.m.]: I am very pleased to speak on the report released by CommSec on State and Territory economic performance. The report entitled "State of the States 2014" compares the performance of each State and Territory by analysing eight key indicators. These indicators are: economic growth, retail spending, equipment investment, unemployment, construction work done, population growth, housing finance and dwelling commencements. I am pleased to report that New South Wales has topped the charts as the country's strongest-performing economy. The report is prepared by the independent Commonwealth Bank, and it is worth noting that this is the first time New South Wales has topped the quarterly report since 2011. It has taken this Government nearly four years to bring New South Wales into economic prosperity after 16 disastrous years under Labor.

New South Wales is still playing catch-up after years of underbuilding, when demand for homes exceeded supply and rental vacancies were pushed to record lows. But the tide has turned and New South Wales is currently enjoying the strongest population growth and housing construction, plus the second-best retail trade, business investment and unemployment rate. What this means long term is that New South Wales will continue to be a hotspot for commercial lending and other corporate activity because of the strength of its economy, as is highlighted in this report. Construction is considered to be a key economic indicator and one of the most important components. As a result of the Government's policies, the State will welcome the news that new home starts are 36 per cent higher than the decade average.

Bringing confidence back into the economy was a primary aim of this Government when it came to office in March 2011. The report prompted one CommSec economist to observe that the New South Wales economy would become even stronger over the next 12 months. He added that it had been more than a decade since New South Wales was as strong as it is today. It is appropriate for this House to recognise the efforts of the Government to put the New South Wales economy back where it should be. The whole State has been pulled out of the ruins after 16 years of neglect by those opposite. When the Government took office New South Wales was at the bottom of the Australian economic pile. It was plagued by bad roads, lack of housing, inefficient public transport and zero jobs growth.

There was no plan to improve the State, and that is why this Government has made it a top priority to reverse those years of neglect. The Government has gone about restoring the economy and investing in key economic drivers. In a further vote of confidence, since the release of the report international ratings agency Standard and Poor's has upgraded the outlook for the State's triple-A credit rating. The triple-A credit rating has been one of our priorities. When the current Premier was Treasurer he talked about the importance of the triple-A credit rating. This upgrade is good news after all the hard decisions we have had to make to be where we are today. The CommSec report shows that low interest rates have become a positive for the State's heavily indebted households. There has been a significant increase in the number of jobs, and this has been due largely to the big spend on infrastructure projects.

We all remember the infrastructure projects under those opposite. In my electorate we had very limited infrastructure, and what was delivered was questionable. The Rozelle Metro is another example—\$500 million went into that project and absolutely nothing was delivered. The State's unemployment rate is now well below the national average. The report showed that retail spending is 15.4 per cent above the decade average. There are many reasons why the people of this State and potential investors should have great confidence in the New South Wales economy. Although it has taken more than a decade, the New South Wales economy has re-emerged as the nation's strongest economy.

This Government has acted in a responsible way in reversing the negative trend instigated by the Labor Government. In 2012 the Fiscal Responsibility Bill was introduced, which I will talk about later, and is now enshrined in law. Under that legislation the Government had the ability to maintain a triple-A credit rating. That was a milestone in Australian law-making. It was the first time an Australian Government had legislated to protect its credit rating.

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

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

GREAT LAKES ARTS SOCIETY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.30 p.m.]: I inform the House that the Great Lakes Art Society recently held its annual awards and exhibition in Forster. It was an outstanding success. Sue and I were pleased to be able to attend. The total prize money for the award winners was in excess of \$5,000, which is a remarkable sum. The major prize winner of \$1,000 was Graham Cox for his beautiful painting entitled *Approaching Narrow Neck*. Two members' awards were presented to Helga Vissa and Marilyn Brown, who won \$500 and \$200 respectively. I was so impressed by the quality of the pictures on display that I purchased four paintings by artist Wayne Barry, one of which was awarded second prize.

FAIRFIELD-LIVERPOOL CRICKET ASSOCIATION

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.31 p.m.]: Today I recognise the achievements of the Fairfield-Liverpool Cricket Association. I recognise not only the players but also the coaches, managers, parents and club officials of that association. As a patron of the club, I was delighted to be at the presentation of club caps to the association junior representative teams on Monday 20 October. The function was held at the Cabramatta Rugby Leagues Club and was also attended by other club patrons, including my colleague Guy Zangari, the member for Fairfield, and, I think I can say, umpiring legend Arthur Watson. Also present were first grade players and previous association representative players Liam Hartcher and Luke Ohrynowski; Luke Doran, first grade captain; and development officers for Cricket NSW. I particularly acknowledge the inspiring and enthusiastic work of Peter Moore, the association secretary. I congratulate Peter and the association on their hard work and achievements.

SHORE REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [4.32 p.m.]: I recognise that the highest honour for excellence in New South Wales planning has been conferred on Manly, Mosman, Pittwater and Warringah councils, with the Shore Regional Organisation of Councils [SHOROC] awarded the President's Award by the Planning Institute of Australia at its annual gala ceremony last night. The award, along with a commendation in the Hard Won Victory category, was for SHOROC's Shaping Our Future strategy which, together with the advocacy and partnership of the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments, has resulted in an investment of more than \$1 billion in health and transport infrastructure for the region.

Councillor Jacqueline Townsend, SHOROC president and mayor of Pittwater, was honoured to receive the award on behalf of the four councils. I acknowledge the mayors and general managers of those councils as well as Ben Taylor, executive officer at SHOROC. I note that Councillor Townsend acknowledged the partnerships between the mayors and New South Wales members of Parliament in receiving the award. She also praised all five members of Parliament from the region for their leadership in bringing about these great results with those councils.

CESSNOCK POSTIE BIKE GRAND PRIX

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [4.33 p.m.]: I recognise, congratulate and thank the organisers of the inaugural Cessnock Postie Bike Grand Prix, which was held two weekends ago. Unfortunately, it was an incredibly hot day. Despite temperatures reaching more than 40 degrees, approximately 10,000 visitors attended the event. The motorbikes were standard 110cc postie motorbikes and national and international riders

competed. Cessnock Motorcycle Club president Dave Robinson was the main organiser. I thank Dave and his club members for their organisational skills. I also thank Cessnock City Council for being so accommodating in helping them get the event up and running. I hope this becomes an annual event.

CASULA DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [4.34 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about the Casula pub development proposal on the Fontainebleau site on the Hume Highway, Casula. It was proposed to be a 24-hour operation but a school is located about 200 metres away and children could be exposed to inappropriate behaviour. There was also the threat of increased violence from alcohol and domestic violence. The pressure of gaming machines was also a consideration. I am happy to report that the Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel [IHAP] refused the application. Shortly thereafter the application was withdrawn, thanks to the hard work of local resident Chris Moore and the Casula Community Group for Responsible Planning. I was so thrilled to see the application withdrawn. I hope the Casula community will now be able to live safely and quietly enjoy their homes.

THE HONOURABLE ROGER PRICE, A FORMER FEDERAL MEMBER FOR CHIFLEY

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.35 p.m.]: I inform the House that the Hon. Roger Price, with his wife, Robyn, has returned to his home in Mount Druitt after serving three years as Consul General in Chicago. Roger was the Federal member for Chifley from 1984 until his retirement in 2010. It was some time after his retirement from Parliament that Roger accepted the appointment to Chicago. At the time of his retirement Roger Price was the longest serving Labor member of Parliament in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. His parliamentary service included being appointed as parliamentary secretary to both Prime Minister Bob Hawke and the Minister for Defence and, like me, he finished his career in the Whip's position—he was the chief Government Whip. I congratulate him on his long years of public service. I am happy to welcome Roger and Robyn Price back to Mount Druitt and look forward to keeping in touch with them on a regular basis.

GRAFTON HOCKEY ASSOCIATIONS

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [4.36 p.m.]: Today I offer my congratulations to the Grafton Women's Hockey Association and the Grafton Hockey Association on their very successful seasons this year, which culminated in a combined grand final day last month. I congratulate the winners of the grand finals: Demons Green, Demons Red, Barbarians 2, Kylies Kasuals and McAuley Magic in the women's games, who defeated McAuley White, Baileys Diamonds, Royals Originals, Kylies Kosmics and Kylies Krushers respectively; and in the men's, the City Bears Hockey Club, who were victorious in all three of the men's grades they competed in defeating Barbarians Hagars in Premier League, Avros in reserve grade, and Barbarians Marauders in C grade, while in D grade Royals Nevilles defeated Barbarians Vikings. This has been a momentous year for these two great hockey associations. They have now formally merged into one association, which will give them an extremely strong voice in New South Wales. Together with the outstanding facilities that have been built in Grafton, it is easy to see why Grafton is held in such high standing in the hockey fraternity.

TRIBUTE TO RANDALL "ANIMAL" WILSON

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.37 p.m.]: I acknowledge the passing in September of Kings Cross legend Randall "Animal" Nelson who touched many lives. Animal experienced poverty, illness and misfortune in his life, but he came through that and developed empathy for others in strife. Animal began the Kings Cross Bikers Social and Welfare Club in 1989, challenging the "bikie" stereotype. He made it his mission to contribute to society through unselfish acts, always looking out for people who were lost, frail, homeless or addicted to alcohol and drugs. Animal was also the Kings Cross Santa for many years, delighting children with gifts and visiting sick people in hospital. In 2004 Animal received an Order of Australia Medal for his service to the Kings Cross community. On 4 October I joined many hundreds of people, including former Governor of New South Wales Dame Marie Bashir, at Animal's funeral, which was fittingly held at the Wayside Chapel, to remember his life and contribution.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.38 p.m.]: I congratulate Terry Dewing of Cronulla on being named Business Person of the Year at last night's Sutherland Shire Business

Awards. Terry is a principal at Caringbah chartered accountants Sullivan Dewing. He specialises in providing tax advice, in particular on capital gains tax. He also has expertise in self-managed superannuation funds. He is a director and treasurer of Business Enterprise Centre—St George and Sutherland Shire Ltd, a not-for-profit organisation established to assist small businesses. I congratulate Terry on his work and wish him every success in the future.

I congratulate Victoria Spiteri of Caringbah for winning the Most Outstanding Youth Award at last night's Sutherland Shire Business Awards. Syltoria Hair Glamour in Cronulla was established by Victoria and her mother Sylvana in 2011. Victoria has more than eight years experience and is an expert in colour, foils and balayage. Congratulations, Victoria.

FAIRFIELD ART PRIZE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.39 p.m.]: On 24 October 2014 I had the great pleasure of attending the Fairfield Art Prize twenty-second annual exhibition, hosted by the Fairfield Art Society at Club Marconi. A large variety of artworks and styles were on display at the exhibition. I congratulate all the local artists who participated. Awards were in the following categories: traditional, contemporary, works on paper, and youth awards. I congratulate all award recipients on their outstanding works of art. I offer my thanks to the members of the Fairfield Art Society committee under the direction of its president, Mr John Supe. I thank also Club Marconi and Mounties of Mount Pritchard for their support of the exhibition. I thank the many community members who turned out to support the local artists who all made this wonderful exhibition possible.

ROSE BAY FAIR

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [4.39 p.m.]: On Sunday 26 October 2014 I was pleased to attend the Rose Bay Fair in my electorate on a warmer than usual sunny spring day. Every year this event attracts a large turnout of locals and visitors to enjoy great food and interesting stalls, including those of local community groups, and this day was no different. The fair is a wonderful way to bring together the local community and a great way to give back because all the proceeds from the day were distributed to the Sydney Children's Hospital and other local charities in our community. I commend the Rotary Club of Rose Bay and the Rose Bay Chamber of Commerce for another successful fair. It clearly took a lot of hard work to organise the fair. I thank the Rose Bay Public school choir and the Rose Bay Secondary College choir for providing great performances on the day.

LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.39 p.m.]: I inform the House of the wonderful services provided by Life Without Barriers Lower Mid North Coast to residents in the Manning Valley and beyond. Life Without Barriers provides care and support services including family support and out-of-home care, disability services, home and community care for older Australians, and support to refugees and asylum seekers. The organisation also works in the areas of mental health, homelessness and youth justice and has a strong commitment to delivering culturally sensitive programs.

Life Without Barriers recently celebrated Mental Health Week, which aims to raise awareness of the importance of mental health and wellbeing in the wider community. Now in its twentieth year, Life Without Barriers is committed to working in partnership with community and government agencies to deliver mental health care services. Earlier this year I had the pleasure of attending a ball in Taree with my wife to raise money for Life Without Barriers.

WAVERLEY SENIORS GROUP

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [4.40 p.m.]: On Thursday 30 October I had the privilege of attending and paying tribute to the Waverley Seniors Group as it celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday. Waverley Seniors has a vibrant group of members and it was a pleasure to be able to share a wonderful barbecue lunch with them and to help draw the raffle prizes. I had the pleasure of joining the president of the Waverley Seniors Group, Mr John Wright, OAM, and Waverley Council councillor Joy Clayton in cutting the cake to celebrate this terrific event. I thank the organising committee of the Waverley Seniors Group for their ongoing efforts in supporting seniors and pensioners in the community, and I again congratulate them on reaching such a great milestone of 25 years.

ALF CANTRELL, REGIONAL SERVICE AWARD

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [4.41 p.m.]: I congratulate Alf Cantrell of Yeoval who took out the Elite Coatings Regional Service Award at the 2014 NSW/ACT Regional Achievement and Community Awards in Wagga Wagga at the weekend. Mr Cantrell won the award for his work around Yeoval and at the Banjo Paterson Museum. Mr Cantrell and his wife, Sharon, run the museum in Yeoval, which attracts hundreds of tourists from across Australia and was a particular hotspot during Banjo's birthday celebrations earlier this year. I congratulate Alf and Sharon Cantrell on their wonderful work in Yeoval and the surrounding districts. The communities in the Central West are very proud of what they have achieved for Yeoval.

VIETNAMESE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [4.42 p.m.]: On 22 August I was honoured to attend the Vietnamese Students Association's fundraising dinner in support of the Taiwan Alliance to Combat Trafficking campaign [TaiwanACT] to raise awareness and funds to support victims of human trafficking. I was and would have remained completely unaware of this deeply concerning issue had it not been for the Vietnamese Students Association, which organised the dinner to highlight the grave situations faced by Vietnamese workers and brides. The evening was in support of a non-government organisation instrumental to the TaiwanACT, the Vietnamese Migrant Workers and Brides Office, which was founded 10 years ago by Father Peter Nguyen. I thank the association's president, Gordon Butt, and the external vice president, Tammy Diep, who have taken the reins of leadership of this vital organisation since January this year.

DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE SMALL BUSINESS

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.43 p.m.]: I congratulate the owners of Diamond Kids on the opening of a unique clothing store in Drummoyne. Veronica and Duart had the vision and courage to open a small business, to back themselves and to have a go, like many business owners in my electorate. I congratulate also Steven Cincotta on the launch of his company, First Class Digital Print and Design in Five Dock. The company produces a range of printed and specially designed material to assist the promotion of local businesses. I congratulate the Cincotta family on its longstanding ties to our local community and I wish Mr Cincotta well in his new venture.

MR BASIM ABBAS DAOUD, CONSUL GENERAL OF IRAQ

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [4.43 p.m.]: I acknowledge and pay tribute to the Consul General of Iraq, Mr Basim Abbas Daoud, for the important role he has played in maintaining harmony in his community by organising a forum for various religious groups. I commend Mr Daoud for organising this forum to highlight the issues in Iraq and to condemn all terrorist activities.

HEALTHY HEATHCOTE

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [4.44 p.m.]: Today I recognise the more than 300 Heathcote residents who have joined the member for Heathcote in Healthy Heathcote. As a participant in Healthy Heathcote I have lost more than 20 kilograms in the past 12 months and I hear many positive stories about this initiative. This initiative has brought together many people from different backgrounds in a common cause. It has improved not only our physical health but also our mental health. I encourage all members to start this initiative in their own electorates.

TUMUT FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.44 p.m.]: I congratulate the Tumut Family Violence Prevention Committee on its 16-day program of activism, which will include a family bowls night, a White Ribbon stall and a White Ribbon dinner. The committee aims to fund local initiatives to raise awareness of the destructive impacts of domestic and family violence; to engage local organisations, including men's-based groups and schools, in behaviour change; and to increase community awareness of domestic and family violence services, and the assistance available. I acknowledge the enormous contribution that this committee makes. The committee has been awarded a government grant to help assist the program in carrying out this very important work.

KILLARA HIGH SCHOOL

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [4.45 p.m.]: Yesterday, with the education Minister and the member for Ku-ring-gai, I attended the opening of a new building as part of an upgrade of Killara High School. The upgrade includes a new outdoor woodwork workshop, a new general woodwork workshop and a new metalwork workshop with a welding area. In addition, there are 15 new classrooms and two visual arts workshops. I am particularly pleased that following the upgrade 14 demountable classrooms have been removed, allowing students much greater access to green space for physical education and recreation.

The upgrade reflects the latest in thinking in school architecture and design, and new ways of teaching and methods of delivery, including adapting to new and future technology. It was extremely well received by the school community and I congratulate all who have been involved on that upgrade. As the member for Ku-ring-gai acknowledged earlier in the week, the school services a wide range of suburbs. The upgrade draws on the strengths of the school and the electorates surrounding it.

TIMOR CHINESE ASSOCIATION

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.46 p.m.]: I acknowledge the ongoing work of the Timor Chinese Association, an organisation with which I have had a lengthy association. I was delighted to be able to attend the twentieth Presidential Inauguration of the Timor Chinese Association on Saturday 1 November. The newly inaugurated and elected president was Mr Nie Feng Leong. He and executive committee members took their oath of office at the inauguration event.

A number of guests gave speeches, including Armandina Maria Gusmao from the Consulate-General of the Republic of Timor Leste in Sydney; Deputy Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Sydney, Mr Tong; Timor Ethnic Chinese Community in Victoria Incorporated President, Leong Nie Tee; and East Timor Chinese Middle and Aged Association of Victoria Incorporated, Mr Leong. As I said, I have been involved with this organisation and community for some considerable time and it is always a pleasure to be at their events. They are a valuable part of south-west Sydney's multicultural society.

JONATHAN AND LILLIAN CHEN, HAMMONDVILLE PHARMACY

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [4.47 p.m.]: I acknowledge the work of Jonathan and Lillian Chen, and their staff at Hammondville Pharmacy. They recently invited me to their pharmacy to learn more about their new campaign "Discover More, Ask Your Pharmacist", which is being run by the National Pharmacy Guild of Australia. Their aim is to reduce unnecessary visits to general practitioners. If people have their blood pressure taken at a pharmacy rather than in a doctor's surgery it helps to reduce "white coat syndrome" and it gives a more accurate reading of blood pressure.

Pharmacies can check bone density and hearing, and they can give treatments for colds and flu, hayfever and pain management. It is far better to be able to go to a pharmacist than to wait for a doctor's appointment. Pharmacies also make Webster packs, which are a fantastic way to have medicines organised safely in correct doses in a blister pack. I had the fun of trying to make some Webster packs—under supervision of course. I appreciate the efforts of Jonathan and Lillian Chen at Hammondville Pharmacy.

ALLYRA ROBSON, MISS CESSNOCK CITY

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [4.48 p.m.]: I recognise and give thanks to Allyra Robson who, for the past 12 months, has been Miss Cessnock City. Allyra has handled herself incredibly well for a young lady. She has been a role model to other young people, particularly young girls in the area. The Miss Cessnock City quest is 24 years old and is supported, organised and coordinated by the Cessnock *Advertiser*, which I also congratulate. I look forward to the announcement of the next Miss Cessnock City.

PREMIER'S SPELLING BEE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.49 p.m.]: I congratulate four Sutherland Shire primary school pupils on reaching the State Final of the Premier's Spelling Bee—Kirrily Blyth, from Gynea Bay Public School, and Antonius Yasintus, from Caringbah North Public School were in the junior division for students from year 3 and year 4. Ben Liew, from Sutherland Public School, and James Marks, from Caringbah North Public School, were in the senior division for students from year 5 and year 6. More than

130,000 students in New South Wales competed in regional finals. Kirrily Blyth, from GyMEA Bay Public School, competed in the finals for the second time. My old school, Caringbah North Public School, was one of only four schools in New South Wales with finalists in both the senior and junior divisions.

MEDICALLY SUPERVISED INJECTING CENTRE ART EXHIBITION

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.49 p.m.]: Over the weekend I joined Robyn Kemmis, the Deputy Lord Mayor of Sydney, and representatives from UnitingCare to launch the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre's annual art exhibition, which shows some of the amazing artistic skills of their clients. The exhibit allows the centre's clients to express themselves through art and to contribute to the community. The exhibit is on show at the City of Sydney's Kings Cross Community Centre. I commend it to the House.

MANNING RIVER DREDGING

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.50 p.m.]: Today it was announced that \$70,000 has been allocated for the dredging of the Manning River at Taree. The Farquhar Inlet Management Group is a non-profit organisation that raised more than \$100,000 to buy its own dredging machine and it will carry out this work. I congratulate Greg Crisp and Bill Nelson, hardworking members of that management group. I look forward to the dredging of the river.

BLACKTOWN AND DISTRICT OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK PINK RIBBON DAY

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.50 p.m.]: I would like the House to recognise that on 24 October the Blacktown and District Older Women's Network manned a Pink Ribbon Day stall in the Westfield shopping centre. Pink Ribbon Day is an important event to support the Cancer Council of New South Wales. The Blacktown and District Older Women's network has been at the forefront of many good causes and local campaigns. This event to assist in the fight against cancer is but one of the many good deeds the Older Women's Network does for my electorate. I was pleased to attend this stall, along with Councillor Edmond Atalla and Councillor Charlie Lowles, and to support one of our hardworking local groups.

PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [4.51 p.m.]: I thank and acknowledge the Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation for its work, especially Leanne "Lulu" Zalapa. I thank her for her longstanding contribution to the foundation. She has worked tirelessly to make the hospital a better place for well over 10 years now. For some time Lulu and the foundation have been working towards providing a hybrid operating suite for the hospital. A hybrid operating suite or theatre is designed to allow surgery with new endovascular techniques, all enabled by high-tech imaging systems that are installed in the operating theatre itself rather than in a traditional X-ray room or catheter laboratory. Last week Lulu's work came to fruition with a grant from the New South Wales Government of \$2.5 million. I congratulate Lulu on all her hard work.

DRUMMOYNE WATER POLO CLUB ANNUAL GOLF DAY

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.52 p.m.]: I congratulate the Drummoyne Water Polo Club on the success of its annual golf day. The golf day was held at Massey Park Golf Club at Concord on Friday 17 October and raised funds to meet ongoing costs associated with the sport. I congratulate Mr James Tuite, the President of the Drummoyne Water Polo Club, and his committee for their dedication and commitment to the club.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution valedictory speeches proceeded with.

VALEDICTORY SPEECHES

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [4.53 p.m.]: (Valedictory Speech) It was probably about 12 years ago that the late Dave Bennett fell over in a bunker at the Broken Hill golf course and broke his leg. The club had to get an ambulance to come and get Dave and take him to hospital. One of the wags at the golf club, Ernie Carol, said to me, "That's a new way of getting out of a bunker; I never thought of that before." Anyway about 12 years later something similar happened to me—I lost my seat. I thought to myself, "Well,

that's a new way of losing your seat." Thanks to the NSW Electoral Commission, they made sure I lost it. I never planned on that. I had done so much and worked hard to ensure I would be re-elected for another term and then along came the Electoral Commission and hacked off a seat that represents 250,000 square kilometres of the State.

I would like to mention the important women in my life who have made my life in politics so much easier and have allowed me the freedom to get on with the job and to get around 250,000 square kilometres in a coordinated manner. The first woman in my life is Helen, my wife of 44 years—it will be 45 years in February next year. She has always been there for me. She has taught me the good things in life. She taught me how to tell the truth, and I have to say that I went through quite a few years of trying to tell her lies. But she worked that out. She cross-examined me. I walked into this job as a politician and I told the truth—even though a couple of times I wished that I had told lies. Telling the truth is a hell of a lot easier than trying to mop up a lie. So I thank her for that.

Helen has always kept my feet on the ground. There is absolutely no chance that I will think I am any good because she makes sure I am not going to get too carried away with myself. She has always been there for me, looked after me and been faithful, and brought up two lovely boys. She is now the proud grandmother of two beautiful girls. I have spent much of the past eight years away from home. I have been absent for much of the time. I do not know how she is going to manage when I leave this place. She is concerned about my presence in the future, and I do not blame her for that. I thank Helen and I look forward to seeing a bit more of her in the near future.

My mother turns 94 in March next year. She is in a nursing home. Her only complaint to me is, "I'm in this place and there's a whole lot of old people around." My father died two years after I got this job. I think about him every day. He was a big inspiration. Sue Sulicich is the backbone of my team and the leader of my electorate offices. Bryan Doyle acknowledges her because she has been working for The Nationals for many years.

Mr Bryan Doyle: She has trained up many members.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: Absolutely. Mary Jinks used to work for me in a previous life and has always been very faithful in support of Jane Hynes, or nurse Jane Hynes in the future, who is a great young lady who has looked after me with the media and made sure I get the right exposure. Maree Flagg made sure that my diary was always up to date and that there was a plane I could get to wherever I needed to go. Marilyn Hussey has been my long-term electorate officer. These people have made my job so much easier. They have done a professional job and my constituents have never been better served. They are the backbone of my team and I appreciate the great work they have done. I will always remember them. Having so many good people around me made my job so much easier and I knew that no-one was missing out.

Jane Standish, Hannah Parsons, Rachel Hayes, Amelia Hain and currently young Meagan Skinner, who will go a long way, have assisted me in my role as The National's Whip. It is very important to have good young people in that job. They have been great to work with and made my job as the Whip so much easier. I thank all of the branches in my electorate, which I visit, and all those great people who are the backbone of The Nationals. They ensured both my original election and my subsequent re-election. I can only say that I was blessed to get into this job. I wonder some days if I am worthy—probably not, but I really love the job. It has been a passion. It is great to think that I have been able to achieve a lot for those people in western New South Wales, and a lot of them really need the support of someone who can communicate their problems to government. Every day I see a new set of circumstances that people are in. There is so much disadvantage in what they deal with every day.

I would like to start my speech with the disappointments. I know that is negative, but the thing is that a decision made by the former Labor Government is something that I will carry with me forever—it was the decision to lock up the red gum forests and kill off 130 years of logging. In many cases four generations of loggers did this hard work. They went out there and did their best. A lot of them did not know anything else. They probably could not get another job, and many of them still do not have jobs. They are battlers and we are supposed to represent them. They got their jobs taken away by a Government decision.

We went through all the reports and they all said the industry was sustainable. We went through a full forest assessment. Even the Nature Resources Commission [NRC] did not recommend what we got, but we ended up with it. We also ended up with the loss of 130 direct jobs and those of other people who supported the

industry. Aboriginal people came to see me and asked, "Why don't our boys have a job any more? What have they done?" They could not believe that the decision could not be reversed. I have a great deal of respect for the then Premier, Nathan Rees. I respect him as a man, but I did not respect the fact that he did not even visit the area to see what the people were facing. He did not understand the industry and he did not visit the area to look at the red gum forest and see exactly what was happening. That hurt me the most.

That is one of my greatest disappointments, and it has not gone away. It is still there and people in the area face it every day. So it will always be remembered. Somewhere along the line a future government must find a way of changing the culture of the national parks so forestry can work with national parks. There is more work to be done. Even the NRC recognised that the thinning operations were essential to the forest. I turn to my other disappointment. When I walked into this place I thought it was one big happy family. I come from a simple background and I like to be friends with everyone, and I expect the same back. The Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water always says, "What you see is not what you see." That became evident. I saw a minority of people—they are probably pathetic—whose ambitions exceed their capabilities. They need to be told that taking another person down is not what it is all about. One thing that sticks in my mind is the Lions Code of Ethics, which states:

To remember that in building up my business it is not necessary to tear down another's.

That said, I will talk about the good things. Not long after I entered Parliament something needed to be done in Broken Hill. Renal dialysis was in demand. As members well know, Aboriginal people are susceptible to diabetes and require dialysis. One guy, a pensioner named Rocky Ramatula Shamraiz, visited me. He was living in Adelaide. He had left his house in Broken Hill. He had his electricity cut off and he left his dog with his daughter. He lived in a hole-in-the-wall in Adelaide so that he could have dialysis treatment every day. Another guy who visited me was in the same situation. He was in tears about leaving Broken Hill to go to Adelaide.

Through Andrew Stoner's office and the support I received from the then Leader of the Opposition, a story was run in the *Sydney Morning Herald* to tell the wider community about what was happening in western New South Wales. I guess that was the catalyst for change. Not long after that story hit the headlines, about \$360,000 was spent on converting the old rehabilitation area at the hospital to accommodate six dialysis chairs. I acknowledge the member for Macquarie Fields, who is not in the Chamber, for his assistance. After eight years in politics he is still as credible as he ever was. I attended the opening of the renal dialysis facility. I was proud of it. I thought I would be the hero, but the government of the day said that that was not the case. So I was the dog in the manger, part of the crowd; I sat back and took it all in.

George Cubis, another person who needed renal dialysis, said to me, "John, they can say what they like. There's only one reason this is here, and that's because of you." I said, "Well, that'll do me." What we did that day was not about politics or government. John Della Bosca had provided the money and the means, and we did what governments do—we met the need. We found the gap and filled it. I was chuffed by what was said to me. I did not need to be on the front page of the paper or a hero. But we got that done. The Ivanhoe emergency centre was another issue. If people want to see a Third World healthcare facility in Australia they should look at the news clips of Ebola patients entering facilities in Africa. Ivanhoe was no better than that. With a little help we secured funding of \$660,000 to upgrade that facility at least to world standards.

The inclusion of Broken Hill in the Resources for Regions program was important. Broken Hill, a mining community that goes back 130 years, felt neglected. It felt that it had put all its money on the New South Wales Government and got nothing back. For the first time we changed that, thanks to Andrew Stoner, who was responsible for that decision. It was important to us. An airstrip at Tibooburra does not mean much, but a sealed airstrip meant that the Royal Flying Doctor Service could get in at night on a cross strip for some of the important evacuations they do in the bush. I turn to the upgrade of roads and bridges, particularly in the Wakool shire. There were 36 wooden bridges in that shire when I was elected. I reckon we have got it down to about 12. So well done to the Government, because it certainly supported me on that.

The stock spelling yards in Broken Hill are important because they are used for stock during transit as part of the animal health and welfare requirements. That was important to the grazing community in western New South Wales. We saw the opening of a subacute care facility to meet some of the shortfalls in the hospital. The hospital continually faced bed block. Aged patients, who were not ready to go into aged care but who lived at home, were admitted to hospital, blocking the beds. We now have 16 places where they can transition through care and return home, removing the bed block. That is very important. I thank the Minister for Health, who responded to my requests to address the issue. I had the honour of opening that facility, which I think cost \$6.3 million.

I turn to funding for Federation Way in Broken Hill. It is an iconic site. The road to the site was built in a hurry and it deteriorated to the point where it was absolutely dangerous. Again I thank Andrew Stoner, who supported me and made sure that the Broken Hill community and the city council got \$675,000 to upgrade the road. Water tanks for Tibooburra was a response to an emergency. Tibooburra was running out of water. Thanks to the great work of the Minister for Primary Industries at the time. She came to the rescue with \$250,000 worth of water tanks, which sat in Tibooburra. We trucked water from Coally Bore and kept the community of Tibooburra going.

As for funding of the Silver City Highway and the Cobb Highway, we were blessed when Duncan Gay came into the ministry. I have never looked back and I have never been knocked back. The Minister recognised that at some point we must build a ribbon of tarmac between Tibooburra and Broken Hill so that the community will not be isolated in the future as it has been in the past. In the last budget \$50 million was allocated. Duncan has assured me that in three years time people will be driving on a sealed road between Broken Hill and Tibooburra. The Cobb Highway is another unsealed major highway that will be progressively sealed over time. Funding has been provided for the resealing of the Old Wool Track Road between Balranald and the Central Darling shire. It is an important route because in time a Bemax minerals sand miner will truck its products to a railway siding at Ivanhoe for transportation to Broken Hill.

We funded a mental health subacute care unit at Broken Hill Hospital. Rather than dumping clinical patients out the front door of the hospital we can now transition them through care that will prepare them to re-enter the community. That was an important development for those people suffering from mental health issues. We provided a \$550,000 grant to the Intereach NSW Inc. Deniliquin family centre, which was very important for the community. They were operating the centre out of a Country Energy building and the grant enabled us to secure a permanent building for them. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I thank the Hon. George Souris for his support to ensure that we have ongoing funding for Deni Ute Muster. It is an important event for Deniliquin and the funding was obviously greatly appreciated by the community. We secured \$200,000 from this Government for the Finley Sports and Community Centre. Finley is a great little community in my electorate that has a terrific spirit. The people in the community deserved every bit of help they could get because they raised \$800,000 themselves. The \$200,000 we provided saw them get over the line for what they needed.

The construction of the new maternity unit was another great bit of work by Jillian Skinner, who allocated \$720,000 to build the facility at Deniliquin Hospital. The community thought they would see the end of their maternity centre but we put it back on the agenda for them. We established the Tocomwal Community First Responders Program. The Tocomwal community was concerned about the 19 minutes it took for an ambulance to come from Finley to Tocomwal. We lost one gentleman to a heart attack in that time. We worked with the local fire brigade officers and trained them as first responders. We can now assure the people in Tocomwal that if someone suffers a cardiac arrest a first responder will be there to make sure they are alive when the ambulance arrives.

Our lobbying for the Dalwood Assessment Centre to remain open was an absolute no-brainer to help kids in western New South Wales who needed that assistance. It was a shame that service was ever taken away, but the previous Government cashed in its chips. I am proud that we were able to recover that service. I thank the Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, for granting \$200,000 to Finley Biralee Preschool for extension works. I am proud of the funding the Government contributed to the multipurpose service projects at Hillston and Barham.

I thank Duncan Gay for reinstating the 110 kilometre an hour speed limit on the Newell Highway. It was absolutely critical in my area because there were so many complaints when the speed limit reverted to 100 kilometres an hour. The unfortunate thing about it was we had more accidents at 100 kilometres an hour than occurred at 110 kilometres an hour, so I do not know where the figures came from to suggest it should have been downgraded in the first place. I thank Katrina Hodgkinson for helping me to assist a business called Charlie Carp in Deniliquin to obtain a licence to collect carp for use as fertiliser. The business needed the licence to proceed. It is great to see that product being utilised and turned into a saleable commodity. The business is receiving plenty of orders for what it produces.

The container deposit levy is obviously going to be a bugbear. We have some unfinished business there but I hope common sense will prevail. We lobbied for grazing in national parks. Unfortunately, when State Forests were taken over, the people who had bought properties that had grazing area attached to them lost out. In

one case nearly 60 per cent of a property was made up of grazing areas with access to national parks. I thank Robyn Parker for her assistance on that issue. She made sure we got extensions for grazing in national parks with a long-term view of reviewing the matter in the hope of securing a permanent opportunity for that grazing to continue.

One of the properties affected was owned by the Indigenous Land Corporation. It was very committed to making a business in grazing but when it was just starting off it found out that it might not have access to about 50 per cent of the property that it was relying on to make its way. The Firewood and Home Heating Taskforce was another of our achievements as we ensured that we got the firewood people took for granted in our area. Once again I thank Robyn Parker for assisting with that because it was very important to us.

Committee work is another important aspect of being a member of Parliament. It has been great to serve on the Public Accounts Committee under Jonathan O'Dea and the Staysafe Committee under Greg Aplin, both of whom have chaired their committees in an exceptional and professional manner. Previously I was a member of the natural resources committee with Matty Brown, which was quite colourful. Noreen might like to talk about Matt's political career.

Being in The Nationals is like being in a party with your brothers and sisters. They are a great group of people and I have loved every minute of it. I have loved the people I have served with but I will take the time to mention a few names in particular. Thomas George is a good old mate of mine. When I found myself wandering around the streets of Sydney on my own trying to find somewhere to eat Thomas was in the same boat. We used to head off and have a feed together. There is one thing about it: you'll never win an argument with Thomas. I have tried it on many nights. Andrew Fraser helped me in my unsuccessful attempt to enter the upper House. I thank him very much for all the work he has done for me and the time he took.

When I walked into this place I needed a mentor. The Hon. George Souris was always there. He gave me good advice. It was the advice I did not listen to that got me into trouble. The other advice was pretty good. When Troy Grant, John Barilaro and Paul Toole came into the Parliament they joined Thomas and me in trying to find the best culinary spots in the square mile of the Sydney central business district. Most nights we ended up in the "yellow cave of death". We always got out of there without too many problems.

Steve Bromhead has recently taken over as the chair of the Parliamentary Lions Club and has done an absolutely magnificent job. He has taken on the role I served in for eight years, joining the volunteers at Matthew Talbot House on Thursday mornings. Since I have been in Parliament that has been a great part of my life and it has been a pleasure working with those volunteers. It helped to remind me that not everyone has lives as good as we have. It is important to remember that. Geoff Provost would hate not to be mentioned. He and I became members of this place at the same time and, although we have had many discussions, part of that pact has always been there.

I have to mention one member of the Liberal Party because he told me that I had to, but he did say that his solicitor will be listening to what I have to say. John Sidoti's parents must have told him he was never allowed to talk—because I can tell you, he is making up for it now; he is absolutely unbelievable. I came to this place in opposition. We won the 2011 election. I saw the hard work that was done by Barry O'Farrell and Andrew Stoner to get that win over the line—a magnificent job by magnificent people; it was all about the effort they put in. I saw the hard grind. I was part of the hard grind, but you guys did it harder and you did a wonderful job.

I now refer to the future: The future is Mike Baird. I feel sorry for John Robertson having to go up against this bloke. Mike Baird is one of the greatest: young, smart, with a sense of humour and the most electable premiers in the history of State elections. He is going to win by a mile. It is too late for me. I now refer to our new leader of The Nationals. I have to say, I saw this guy in Dubbo when we had a Nationals meeting in Dubbo before the last election. I said, "This guy is a leader, he is a stand-out. He absolutely is going to blow them away." I can tell you, Mike Baird and Troy Grant are going to be hard to beat. They are a team that will go from strength to strength. I know that Troy is just getting his teeth into the job, but I can tell you that this guy does not need any encouragement. He works hard and he is an absolute natural.

I have not mentioned Daryl Maguire. He gave me a lot of guidance. I did not know how he worked, but I found out later he had had his conscience removed. He told me that was one of the prerequisites. I do not know how he gets it done, but he has managed to get it done and he has done pretty well. He did want a mention—he

is an old Ivanhoe boy, so he is out of the backblocks. They say in life one door closes and another one opens. But I tell you, I have had a look around and I have not seen too many doors, so I do not know where I am going to go from here. It is going to be a tough call going forward.

There is absolutely no doubt that I have loved every moment I have had in this job. I have been blessed in my life. I have had a great life. It has been an absolute pleasure to be part of this. It has been a pleasure to know everyone in this House. The Opposition has been great. I do not think that I can walk away from here. I have never, ever gone into this place feeling any anger or ill-feeling to anyone. I have loved every minute. I have loved the people that have been here. I certainly leave here with a heavy heart. Thank you.

DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I add my thanks to John, the member for Murray-Darling. This is an historical occasion because for the next few years there will be no member for Murray-Darling. At the next election it will become the seat of Murray. It is difficult to come all the way to Sydney from Broken Hill. I know that he has had the support of Helen, but I think that John is a great example of a humble person. For example, I refer to the fact that he goes to Matthew Talbot House to volunteer every Thursday morning. That reinforces what this man is all about. To John, Helen and the family, we ask that you will be blessed with good health and happiness—and that some doors open.

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FIRE STATION CLOSURES

Mr PAUL LYNCH: [5.25 p.m.]: I advise the House of serious issues concerning the safety of residents of Liverpool. On the morning of Monday 20 October a fire broke out in a shop in the Liverpool central business district. This was a shop in Macquarie Street, just near the intersection with Moore Street. Just after 7.00 a.m. smoke was seen billowing from this two-storey retail store. The blaze was eventually contained. The fire seems to have started at the rear of the shop. It was a reasonably significant incident; roads were closed and police advised people to avoid the area. More than 40 firefighters from eight stations attended the fire to contain it. Worryingly, since the incident, I have been contacted by local firefighters who are concerned that the response to the fire was not as expeditious as it could have been. They explained to me that the brigade that most quickly responds to fires in the Liverpool central business district is the brigade based at Busby.

For those who know the geography of Liverpool, that makes perfect sense. A fire engine proceeds down Cartwright Avenue and then along the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway onto Hoxton Park Road. However, the Busby brigade could not attend the Liverpool central business district fire on the morning of Monday 20 October because its fire station was shut. They were subject to a station closure, which I understand the Government refers to as "temporarily offline". This applies to deal with all types of leave, not just sick leave but also more predictable leave such as annual leave and long service leave. It was introduced in response to budget decisions by the Government in 2012.

When stations are closed they are meant to be backfilled by brigades from other parts of Sydney. On 20 October Busby brigade was backfilled by a brigade from Mascot. That all sounds good as far as it goes. The problem is that the shift during which Busby brigade was closed and backfilled by Mascot was from 6.00 p.m. on Sunday 19 October until 8.00 a.m. on Monday 20 October. The Mascot truck had to start its shift at Mascot at 6.00 p.m. and travel to Busby and had to return to Mascot by the end of the shift at 8.00 a.m. That meant that by the time the alert was raised about the fire in the Liverpool central business district on 20 October at 7.00 a.m. they were no longer available at Busby—they had left at 6.00 a.m.

This is not to say that fire units did not attend at Liverpool central business district. As I indicated earlier, they did. But because of the issues I have outlined those that got there did not arrive as quickly as they could have if they had come from Busby. The longer it takes the more damage can occur and the more strongly the fire takes hold the harder it is to bring it under control. That, it seems to me, is especially serious in an area such as the Liverpool central business district because there is so much retail and commercial development. There is also increasing residential development around the central business district.

The other brigades that would mostly attend if Busby could not are Cabramatta and Moorebank. The latter is technically called Liverpool, although it is certainly not in the suburb of Liverpool. It takes longer to get to the Liverpool central business district from Moorebank than from Busby. Significantly, Moorebank, I am told, is a busy station and will often be at other jobs if there is a fire in the Liverpool central business district.

I have been concerned at the potential problems arising from this situation for some time. In April 2013 I was told by way of answer to a question on notice that since 1 July 2012 until February 2013 Busby brigade was offline—that is closed—seven times while backfill crews were in transit. That strikes me as seven times too many because the Government will not allocate sufficient resources.

I pursued this matter subsequently in August 2103 and asked for an update of the figures from February 2013 as to station closures. The Minister refused to provide any details of the period the station was offline in response to my question on notice. He likewise refused to provide those details to me for Horningsea Park, Bonnyrigg, Cabramatta and Liverpool fire stations. I renewed the question in May this year and once again received a purported answer with no detail as to station closures or details of stations taken offline. Inevitably, I am suspicious as to why the Government will not answer these questions and will not provide that information. Fire stations protecting the electorate that I represent should not be closed because of budget cuts. Protection of life and limb in Liverpool should not be subject to the accountant's calculus of this Government. The safety of the people I represent is too important.

AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [5.28 p.m.]: I refer to the Australian Red Cross. Of course, we all know that part of the world's largest humanitarian movement—the Red Cross—has been woven into the fabric of Australian life for more than 100 years. It began as the Australian branch of the British Red Cross Society on 13 August 1914 at Government House, Melbourne, nine days after the outbreak of World War One. Hundreds of thousands of volunteers signed up during World War One and by World War Two Red Cross had become Australia's largest charitable organisation. From a population of seven million, nearly half a million people were Red Cross members, most of them women. The Red Cross has focused on social welfare, national emergencies, natural disasters, first aid programs and of course the blood bank, which is what I wish to highlight.

Thirty-eight years ago I completed my Higher School Certificate. The year 12 students at my old school, Gosford High School, decided we should put something back into our community, so we all decided that we would donate blood. After that year, the practice was continued for a couple of years but then it seemed to wane. Last Wednesday it was great to pick up my local paper and see that my old high school will regenerate that tradition. The school community met with a gentleman by the name of James Harrison of Umina Beach, who may not be known to members of this House. James Harrison is Australia's greatest blood donor. He has made an impressive 1,050 donations. James has a rare type of blood plasma that is used to make lifesaving injections for mothers whose blood is at risk of attacking and killing their unborn babies. In Australia, 17 per cent of all pregnant women are at risk of that happening.

James began donating blood after receiving 13 bags of blood as a 14-year-old. He is now known as the man with the golden arm. However, James is nearing retirement age and he hopes to reach his target of making 1,111 donations before his retirement. He met with the local school community and he has encouraged the school and several other schools to begin donating blood. I acknowledge my old high school, Gosford High School, as well as Narara Valley High School, Henry Kendall High School, St Philips Christian College, St Peter's School at Tuggerah, Central Coast Grammar School, and Terrigal High School. Blood service spokesman Simon McMillan said that across Australia the number of youth blood donors had dropped off but that trend has been broken by schools on the Central Coast, such as Gosford High School. He stated:

With the number of younger donors decreasing recently, and an ageing population, school blood donor initiatives like this are critically important to replace many of our older donors who are reaching retirement.

I take this opportunity in the House to congratulate all the schools involved. Well done! After 38 years, it is good to see blood donations being made again. My grandmother said that the greatest gift is not the gift you receive but the gift you give. It has been said that to give blood is to give life. I congratulate all the high schools involved. I put the challenge to all other high schools, not just on the Central Coast but across the State. We say so much about young people. We talk about Schoolies Week, the muck-up days and things that happen, but this is an opportunity for our young people to give back to their community. The young people of the Central Coast who are attending our high schools are giving something back to their communities. They can do no better than support the Red Cross by donating blood as part of their end-of-year celebrations. I congratulate all the high schools on the Central Coast that are involved. I challenge all other high schools to accept this great opportunity to contribute to their communities. There can be no more worthy cause than that of the Red Cross.

GRAFTON ELECTORATE CHARITY FUNDRAISER

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [5.33 p.m.]: I inform the House of the wonderful support that the Grafton community has shown to the Carroll family at a very difficult time in their lives. Their 10-year-old son, Sam Carroll, is battling a rare form of cancer and a fundraiser was held to support him through his treatment. Sam is the middle child of parents Adam and Angela Carroll; he has an older brother, Hugh, and younger sister, Mae. The family are much loved by the Grafton community. On 11 October the townsfolk came out in droves for a trivia fundraiser to help to support their friends during this challenging time in their lives. I was there with 500 others who supported the Carroll family. It was a terrific fun night and the contribution of the Grafton community was staggering. Over \$20,000 was raised for young Sam.

The Helping Hands Committee organised the trivia night and other fundraising activities. The Helping Hands Committee began almost 30 years ago and has grown over the years. It predominantly assists people with medical hardship, 90 per cent of whom are children and 10 per cent are adults. The committee consists of the following people: Arthur and Jo Lysaught, Warren Tozer, Dennis and Tracy Pearce, Ian and Leanne Speechley, John and Mandy Pitkin, Stuart and Anne Messer, Richie and Leonie Williamson, Chris Tuite, David and Sue Fischer, Terry Marsh, Richard Sear, and John "Wicker" White. Stuart and Richie were quizmasters on the trivia night.

A trivia and charity auction was held at the Grafton District Services Club. The club has been the backbone of many fundraising events in Grafton. The Helping Hands Committee has worked with many sponsors in Grafton and, with the incredible generosity of the community, has raised more than \$650,000 for those in our community who need the most help. I am very proud to belong to such a wonderful community that looks after its most vulnerable people. The generosity of the Grafton community on the night of Sam's fundraiser was overwhelming. We, like many other regional communities, are doing it tough, but that did not stop people from putting their hands in their pockets and supporting someone worse off than they are. I agree with the former General Manager of the Grafton District Services Club, Arthur Lysaught, when he said:

You could travel the world and not find a more generous people than here in the Clarence Valley.

One Grafton resident, after winning the major raffle prize, returned it so it could be raffled again to raise more money. Retired veteran Tom Cross won the raffle and gave it straight back, saying it was not a time for taking but a time of giving. The major raffle prize was a rubber dinghy and outboard motor from Ron Skinner Marine. It was donated by the Grafton District Services Club and filled with a range of refreshments donated by local pubs and clubs. It was valued at about \$2,500. Mr Cross, who went along for a good night out and to make up the numbers on the Legacy table, said it seemed like the right thing to do. Mr Cross is quoted as saying:

We were there to raise money for the boy and help take the heat off the family. That is all we can do.

That shows the sort of community I live in, one of which I am very proud. Grafton bakers Aaron and Chrissy Hancock from Hanks Kitchen came up with the idea of donating 50¢ from the sale of each product from both their shops in Grafton and South Grafton. Hanks office manager, N'dea Skeels, said the company predicted it would make more than \$3,000, and they were right on the money. The Good Intent Social Club raffled a State of Origin league poster, which raised more than \$1,000 for the cause. There were many other generous donations from business houses and individuals—too many to mention. The local newspaper, the *Daily Examiner*, and the local radio station, 2GF, did a wonderful job in promoting the fundraiser. The rest of the community rallied to the cause. Our thoughts and prayers are with Sam and the Carroll family as they go through this difficult time.

FAIRFIELD CULINARY CARNIVALE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.37 p.m.]: On 24 October 2014 Fairfield was alive with party fever as it played host to the annual Culinary Carnivale. The carnivale showcased Spanish and Latin American culture and, as we would all imagine, there was an exquisite selection of food and entertainment to choose from. The carnivale has been running for four years and it has made a name for itself. Every year, people come from near and far to experience the culinary delights and atmosphere that Fairfield has to offer. Anyone who has not been there in person to experience the Fairfield Culinary Carnivale firsthand truly does not know what they are missing. The Culinary Carnivale is Western Sydney's premier Spanish and Latin American food festival and it was proudly a part of the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Good Food Month. Festival goers got to experience a wide variety of foods, including churros, asado barbecue, empanadas, gelato, seafood, Spanish paella and caramel-infused pastries. If hearing that line-up does not make people hungry, then I do not know what will.

Joanna Savill from the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Good Food Month was the festival's director. What can I say? If you are a foodie, then Joanna is definitely the person you want to be talking to. She knows all the great hotspots. We were again joined for another festival by a very special guest, celebrity chef Miguel Maestre, who is one of the most down-to-earth celebrities I have ever met. He is an absolutely wonderful person, who loves nothing more than getting involved with locals and talking about great food. Miguel showed us a thing or two about how he cooks a few of his favourite dishes while incorporating a personal touch, with audience participation. It was really an experience like no other ever seen in Fairfield. Miguel stated in a more politically correct version:

I really feel at home here. ... I think it may be because everyone here speaks with a different accent.

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention that Canley Heights also has been highlighted recently as a part of Good Food Month, hosting "Canley Heights by Night", which ran from 1 October to 31 October. Canley Heights by Night involved over 30 restaurants which displayed a variety of high-quality foods from across the South-East Asian region. Every night there were roving entertainers and people aplenty and fireworks topped it all off at the end of the night. As the member for Fairfield, I am truly proud to see suburbs in the Fairfield area having their amazing food and culture highlighted during Good Food Month and the wonderful reception it has received.

On the following day, 26 October, the Parklands Food Fest was held, which had some special guests—Julie Goodwin from *MasterChef*, and Costa Georgiadis from *Gardening Australia*, conducting interactive and brilliant food demonstrations at the Lizard Log, Abbotsbury. As I have been saying, in the Fairfield area we really are in the centre of a foodies' paradise. If members ever want to visit a food hub in Western Sydney, they really do not have to look much further than the Fairfield region. I thank all those involved in organising the Fairfield Culinary Carnivale and making it the resounding success it has become over the years. Every year the carnivale has gone from strength to strength thanks to local community support and the passion of the wider Latin American and Spanish-speaking community.

I acknowledge also the hard work that Fairfield City Council has put into the promotion and organisation of the Culinary Carnivale each year, and I give a special thank you to Helen Pijaka, Tony Walker and everyone on the Fairfield Place team for the countless hours they have poured into Culinary Carnivale at Spencer Street. As always, they are right behind this initiative and our community, ensuring they highlight our diverse range of cultures and promote Fairfield for what it truly is—a remarkable multicultural community that bonds together like family over a common love, great food. Congratulations are in order to everyone and anyone involved in organising the festivals and events throughout the Fairfield area. They are all champions. I and the rest of the community eagerly look forward to seeing what is in store for next year's carnivale.

MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE FESTIVALS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.41 p.m.]: I want to inform the House about a day in paradise. When I talk about paradise, I am referring to the electorate of Myall Lakes. Members will recall that last Saturday was a magnificent day, but of course it was even more magnificent in Myall Lakes. The day started with the Lakeside Festival at Tuncurry, where about 2,300 people converged on John Wright Park. I congratulate event coordinator Katerina Dobbie. This festival is held right on the lake at Tuncurry where there is a small amphitheatre shell and a number of stalls are set up. It was an absolutely fantastic day.

Further south was the Bulahdelah Rock, Rattle 'n' Roll Festival. I congratulate the chamber of commerce, its president, John Sahyoun, and organisers, including Anne-Marie Barry and the committee on organising such a fantastic day. Markets were set up in the park and next to the hotel, the main street was closed, bands were playing, and things were happening right round the town of Bulahdelah. The place was rocking and rolling. On the following day, Sunday, there was a display of vintage cars, hot rods and so on that one associates with 1950s rock 'n' roll music. The weather was fantastic—42 degrees in the shade. It was absolutely great to be there for the festival that day.

Killabakh held its Day in the Country—once again attended by a huge crowd. This is the main fundraiser for the Killabakh Hall, which is next to the memorial, and generally about \$10,000 is raised on the day. They had all sorts of stalls and, as usual, there were the Manning Valley woodworkers, Men's Sheds participants, music and arts and crafts. There was a big crowd supporting the Killabakh Hall. I congratulate the committee on its hard work. From there we went back to Tuncurry for more of the Lakeside Festival and more music. Then we went home, had a quick dip in the pool, got changed and back into Taree to that great restaurant

The Sicilian. I congratulate Gabriel, the owner of The Sicilian, who does a fantastic job. I have heard a rumour which I think the House would be interested in: The Sicilian may open a sister restaurant in Forster, to be known as The Sicilian Forster, with Gabriel also running that restaurant. When members of Parliament, Ministers and others visit the Great Lakes area and the Myall Lakes electorate they often stay at premises called The Dorsal, which has a restaurant downstairs. The rumour has it that The Sicilian might move into those premises. I think the people of Great Lakes would look forward to that.

From these events one can see what a fantastic day can be had in the mighty Myall Lakes electorate—absolute paradise; a place where the sun always shines and the water has a hue that is different from any other place in New South Wales. It is a tropical aqua-blue that one would normally only see on tropical islands and in the far north of New South Wales. The great colour of the sand, the clarity of the water and the pristine conditions make this place unique. It is a place that I would recommend to anyone, including all members of this Parliament. If you are thinking about somewhere to go and stay, think about the Myall Lakes electorate and places such as Seal Rocks, the location for some great Australian movies, Forster, Tuncurry, Blueys Beach and Boomerang Beach. It has almost 200 kilometres of beaches, pristine waterways, the mighty Manning River—with the only delta formation in the Southern Hemisphere—the great lakes of the Bombora, Myall Lakes, Smiths Lake and Wallis Lake. This area is internationally renowned as Australia's water playground. I commend the area and I commend a day in paradise.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mark Coure): I am one of those who once a year travel to the electorate of Myall Lakes, stay in Forster or Tuncurry and then spend another week in Port Macquarie. It truly is a beautiful part of the world.

CENTRE FOR DIGESTIVE DISEASES

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.46 p.m.]: I start by congratulating the Centre for Digestive Diseases in my electorate on its establishment in 1984 and on celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. Professor Thomas Borody's passion, dedication and extensive clinical experience are at the forefront of a medical industry that tries to understand, experiment with and find cures and treatments for many illnesses. I am sure Professor Borody, in his thirtieth year with the Centre for Digestive Diseases, feels a very strong sense of achievement through his work and that of his many staff, who have been so dedicated for many years to patient care. The Centre for Digestive Diseases has distinguished itself as a unique medical institution, not only diagnosing and treating gastro-intestinal conditions of all types but, just as importantly, undertaking research and innovation work. It has also had success in many clinical trials.

The Centre for Digestive Diseases is internationally regarded, particularly for the work it has undertaken in conjunction with the pharmaceutical industry, universities and medical societies in striving to provide excellence in gastroenterology. Before I went to the thirtieth anniversary function, held in Five Dock, I read a little on the work that the centre has done. I am in awe of what it does. It does vital work on the importance of a healthy diet and how we can innocently be doing harm to ourselves by the very nature of our western diet. I read with great interest about a treatment known as faecal microbiota transplantation, or FMT, and how it has become a game changer. It is an extraordinary medical revolution and I knew nothing about it. The process involves repopulating the gut with beneficial bacteria using faecal material from healthy individuals. It might sound gross but it is amazing. I thank and congratulate Professor Borody and his staff on the thirtieth anniversary of the Centre for Digestive Diseases. Once again, I hope that these discoveries open the way for a profound change in treating and perhaps one day preventing diseases that plague our society.

CAMDEN WEST RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.50 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to one of my local Rural Fire Service brigades, the Camden West brigade. Last week the Premier, the Hon. Mike Baird, and the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. Stuart Ayres, handed over the keys to a new truck to assist the Camden West brigade to combat what is expected to be a very active bushfire season. The funding for the new truck is part of the 2014-15 New South Wales Government budget, which increased by \$1.8 million, bringing the total New South Wales Rural Fire Service allocation to \$285 million. These additional funds will help the Camden West brigade to continue to provide the highest standard of protection to our local communities throughout the Camden district.

The Rural Fire Service is committed to ensuring its members have the equipment, resources and support they need to continue their important work. The New South Wales Rural Fire Service is now the world's

largest volunteer firefighting organisation. It covers an area of 800,630 square kilometres and has jurisdiction over 99 per cent of the State's land mass. From its humble beginnings, the organisation has grown dramatically with the best technology available to assist the officers and volunteers. During the nineteenth century, coordinated firefighting was almost non-existent, with many landowners forced to defend their own properties. By the beginning of the twentieth century, in response to particularly serious fires, the State Government formalised control of fire prevention, which led to the formation of the first formal brigade at Berrigan in the State's south.

The Berrigan brigade was formalised in November 1900 at a meeting at the Royal Hotel on the Murray River. Bushfires have always been an integral part of the New South Wales environment. Fire has been used by our Indigenous Australians as a tool for hunting, farming and regeneration of the environment. When European settlers came, there was a change to the landscape, which included the introduction of crops and grazing stock and, of course, an increase in population. The Australian bush is part of our lives, but it can be the enemy. Without much warning, a fire can ignite and move very quickly towards our highly populated areas. Fighting fires is a part of our fabric. Many lives and properties have been lost over many years. The most recent major fire was only last year in the Blue Mountains.

We have more than 600 valued volunteer firefighters in the Macarthur zones. Like many Rural Fire Service stations in New South Wales, the Camden West brigade is a vital organisation in the local area. The brigade recently moved to its new location at Grasmere, which provides more room to store equipment and more modern facilities. The station features three truck bays, training rooms, amenities and modern additions such as computerised access and security systems, along with a water-harvesting and storage system. The Camden West brigade outgrew its old station and, with the assistance of a grant of \$88,000 from Camden Council, the construction of the new brigade was commenced. The facility was built on land owned by Carrington Retirement Village and I thank the chief executive officer, Raad Richards, for his assistance.

The Camden West Rural Fire Service Brigade has attended Carrington Fair for more than 20 years and its contact with the community is invaluable. The brigade has always been very proactive among our community and it ensures that residents understand its work and provides advice on being prepared for potential fires. The people of Camden are always grateful for the ongoing work and support the officers and volunteers give to the community. Australia is unique in its reliance on volunteers in times of disaster. When emergencies arise, volunteers can always be found at the forefront and they are the backbone of our emergency services. They give of their time, manpower and experience ensuring the community is protected, often risking their own safety.

I know at times they feel they are taken for granted, but I assure them they are not. Recognising the Camden West brigade officers and volunteers today is a small way of showing them they are not taken for granted and that the community is grateful for their efforts and support. On behalf of the people of Camden I thank all the Camden West brigade volunteers: Andrew James, Bob Carney, Brendon Scott, Brenton Nicholson, Brett Atkins, Chris Hill, David Pritchard, Jason Evans, Jason Finlayson, Jim Drinnan, Johan Van de Vate, John Nicholls, Joshua Finlayson, Justin Pile, Lindsay Thomson, Mark Honor, Matthew Donaldson, Michael McMillen, Peter Shiels, Phil Hannaford, Rob Boardman, Ross Smith, Sandy Ballesteros, Steve Devine, Steve Urquhart and Vaughan Butler. I thank each and every one of them for their service to the local community and to the wider community.

WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [5.55 p.m.]: I congratulate the Western Sydney Wanderers on winning the Asian Football Confederation Champions League last Sunday. This is a great achievement and it is the first time that any Australian side has reached this height in the football world. Western Sydney is undoubtedly the home of football in Sydney. It has produced some of the best footballers, some of whom have played for the Socceroos representing Australia in World Cup tournaments and at top-level football clubs in Europe.

There was jubilation in Western Sydney when the Wanderers team was established. In a short space of time, an army of thousands of loyal fans and supporters was assembled from all corners of Western Sydney to support their team, united by a unique culture and tradition second to none—that is the Wanderers phenomenon. The fans march in masses in their traditional red and black colours to home and away games singing their favourite songs. At special derby games, the fans constantly overflow the capacity of their 21,000-seat home ground, Parramatta Stadium. The Western Sydney Wanderers did not exist three years ago. The team was born

in April 2012 and instantly captured the imagination of communities across Western Sydney, ultimately uniting the community like no other force before. The first team was formed predominately with players who had no current contract with other teams.

In its inaugural season in 2012-13, Western Sydney Wanderers achieved record-breaking results by reaching the 2013 A-League Grand Final and became the reigning A-League Premiers with a 10 consecutive game winning streak. This result guaranteed the Wanderers direct qualification into the prestigious 2014 Asian Football Confederation Champions [AFC] League group stage. Now the Wanderers must play champion teams from different nations—truly a world-class assignment. In the 2013-14 season the club followed up by reaching the 2014 A-League grand final and secured second place in its second season in the league. All this happened in the first two short years of the life of this amazing club.

The Wanderers were triumphant over all the teams they encountered in the AFC Champions tournament, which included top teams that were champions in their own domestic competitions. Western Sydney Wanderers continued its astonishing run in the Asian Champions League, booking its place in the decider of its maiden campaign with a 2-0 victory over FC Seoul at Parramatta Stadium on Wednesday evening. In the quarterfinals, the Wanderers knocked out the Asian Champions League champions Guangzhou Evergrande and beat last year's runners-up FC Seoul in the second leg of the semifinal clash. This result set up a final showdown with the Saudi Arabian well-supported Al Hilal club.

In the first leg of the Asian Champions League finals, the Wanderers defeated Al-Hilal 1-0 at home, with a wonderful goal scored by Tomi Juric. On 1 November 2014 the team became the champions after managing a goalless draw in the return leg at Riyadh and therefore won with a 1-0 aggregate. The Wanderers endured enormous pressure on and off the field in an attempt to break their spirit. However, the players stood like a solid rock in the face of all the attacks from Al-Hilal. There was nowhere to go because the defence and midfield blocked every avenue, while Ante Covic, a towering giant, protected the goal and made sure we kept a blank sheet.

With this fantastic achievement, the Wanderers became the first Australian side to win this prestigious tournament—an outstanding achievement and on their first attempt. This result put the manager of the Wanderers, Tony Popovic, and his squad on the world map. Thank you Tony Popovic, captain Nikolai Topor-Stanley and the team. I especially mention the 39-year-old towering giant Ante Covic, who was awarded Player of the Tournament for making crucial saves and keeping two clear penalty sheets over both final legs. Congratulations also go to the management team: chairman Paul Lederer, Jefferson Chang, Glenn Duncan and David Siadeand. I acknowledge also the work of the former executive chairman, Lyall Gorman, in developing the club. Thanks also to all the technical staff and sponsors and special thanks to and admiration for the fantastic support of the loyal fans. Well done Wanderers, and all the way to football glory—"Who Do We Sing For!?"

CESSNOCK ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [6.00 p.m.]: I speak about two important infrastructure needs in the Cessnock electorate, particularly around traditional old mining villages North Rothbury, Greta and Branxton and, of course, Cessnock itself. North Rothbury is a small traditional village of around 200 residential lots situated essentially on its own between Cessnock and Branxton, about a kilometre south of Branxton. Of course, Branxton is fully connected to the sewer after a massive upgrade at the treatment plant about four years ago. In talking about unsexy government spending, money spent on sewerage and treatment works is incredibly important but not sexy. This week we were reminded at the memorial service for Gough Whitlam that one of the many great things he did was to have sewerage provided to the people of Western Sydney. Indeed, I ask for and seek support from the Minister to provide sewerage services to the people of North Rothbury.

As I have stated, North Rothbury is situated about a kilometre to the south of Branxton, yet that one-kilometre stretch is about to accommodate a new subdivision called Huntlee which, essentially, will be a town or city of its own with 7,500 residential lots. Rest assured, the new Huntlee subdivision and village will have full sewerage connection, just as Branxton does. Yet North Rothbury will be situated immediately beside a completely sewered town and village but will not have the same facility unless something is done now. My great fear is that this will result in the development of areas of the haves and the have-nots depending on which side of the fence one sits: the one with sewerage services or the one without. I made a submission to the Minister's office about four months ago regarding the rollout of future sewerage works by Hunter Water in the Hunter Valley to put North Rothbury needs into the mix. I hope the ministry makes an announcement in the coming weeks that North Rothbury has been successful because I cannot think of one—

Mr Greg Piper: Wyee.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Lake Macquarie. Wyee probably needs connection to the sewerage system just as much, but I cannot think of many other towns that need it more urgently. The second matter I raise is the condition of Cessnock police station, which is an incredibly old building that has been cobbled together and gradually expanded and added onto over the years. It includes the original police officer's residence and purpose-built structures beside the Cessnock courthouse. As a result of the add-on, join-on, attached and detached-type process over the past 50 or 100 years, we have ended up with a police station that is more like a rabbit warren than a modern police station. Space is tight and cramped and male and female change facilities are completely inadequate.

Much of the infrastructure is rusted and is falling down and paint is peeling from the walls. Even the back car park area has derelict and completely unusable garage spaces. One garage still standing looks like it was built for a horse and buggy and certainly would not house a car or vehicle used for modern policing. It is important that Cessnock police station is upgraded in the very near future. The population essentially has doubled over the past 20 years, but police numbers certainly have not. On at least six occasions in this House I have said that local area commands in regional New South Wales do not work. I acknowledge that they were introduced by former Premier Bob Carr and the former Labor Government, but they do not work in regional New South Wales. Cessnock is serviced by the regional command based in Maitland.

However, 20 years back when Cessnock's population was half that of today the police operational force included 36 officers, a team of detectives and the highway patrol unit all operating out of Cessnock police station under different work, health and safety conditions. Present conditions would not have the ability to house those officers. Nevertheless, the detectives have moved to Maitland, although they spend a short period at Cessnock, and, of course, the highway patrol has moved as its own unit. Inspector Gary O'Dell is an incredibly hardworking local officer who is doing his very best to service the needs of the people of Cessnock, but we need a new police station. I urge the Minister to consider providing it in future budgets.

SYDNEY MARINE PARK PROPOSAL

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [6.05 p.m.]: I speak about the establishment of a marine park in the Sydney bioregion. I am especially thankful to the southern Sydney branch of the National Parks Association of New South Wales for helping me to better understand the importance of this issue. I have taken a specific interest in this area as it is something for which I have strongly advocated over the past 12 months. It is also an issue of particular relevance to the House at this time. The Minister for the Environment today referred to the World Parks Congress that will take place in Sydney next week. The congress is the pre-eminent event of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and it is an honour for our great State to host it and distinguished delegates from around the world.

A marine park in the Sydney Basin would be an invaluable asset not only to the people of Sydney but also to all Australians and, indeed, future generations. The waters of New South Wales are home to an incredibly diverse range of marine life, many of which are found nowhere else on earth. Members may not be aware that Sydney Harbour alone has over 600 species of fish—more than the total species found in the United Kingdom or in the Mediterranean Sea. We have an incredible ecosystem and natural resource in New South Wales, particularly in the Sydney bioregion, but this unique marine environment is under threat from pollution from land and vessels, invasive species of organisms, nutrients finding their way into the water and the destruction of various habitats due to overdevelopment.

These are but a few of the threats that many scientific organisations, including the CSIRO, have identified specifically regarding the Sydney marine bioregion. As much as we might think we are good custodians of our beautiful marine environment, both as a government and society, the threats are real and imminent. A marine park in the Sydney bioregion is not a magic trick and certainly should not be established recklessly or flippantly, but it will offer some proven protections and some ways to sensibly and responsibly manage these serious threats. Providing a marine park sanctuary zone has been scientifically proven to protect the environment and manage threats. In the past 10 years over 1,000 academic papers have been published on the costs and benefits of marine parks.

The scientific consensus is that marine parks protect the environment and manage the threats and are an important part of the mix of tools that governments can use to conserve and rebuild our marine ecosystems. That is what I bring to the House's attention today. Like all Australians, I love our water. Growing up within the boundaries of the Oatley electorate, I have always been pretty close to the Georges River, Botany Bay or all the

fantastic surf beaches in the Sutherland shire. In fact, I have enjoyed the Australian coastal lifestyle right up and down the New South Wales coast. Therefore, I am particularly mindful of maintaining, encouraging and celebrating that lifestyle and the way it interacts with our national resources. There is strong support for a marine park in the Sydney bioregion, including from recreational fishermen, divers and other water users, as well as the general public. In fact, a Galaxy poll conducted earlier this year found that 93 per cent of those surveyed supported the concept.

Further study and community consultation will be an important part of any plan or proposal, certainly before the precise location and scope of a marine park is finalised. The process requires consultation with commercial and recreational fishing interests as well as local communities. I have supported this proposal for the past 12 months, and I congratulate the Government on its commitment to our environment, especially to our State's marine environment. I ask the Government—I have written to the Minister for the Environment about this matter—to seriously consider, investigate and have a conversation regarding the establishment of a form of marine park in the Sydney environs region that would not only protect our environment for generations to come but also preserve our coastal lifestyle.

SWANSEA ELECTORATE COMMUNITY GROUPS

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [6.10 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge the achievements of the unstoppable Dorothy "Dot" Butler and her team of hardworking volunteer Blue Ladies of the Belmont District Hospital Auxiliary who recently reached yet another milestone in their history. Last financial year the Blue Ladies of Belmont District Hospital raised more than \$103 million—funds that were used to purchase vital equipment for the hospital, including three fully automated beds, an ECG machine and a patient lifter. Over the past decade the Blue Ladies have raised a staggering \$700 million, funds that have allowed the auxiliary to purchase many sophisticated life-saving pieces of equipment as well as outdoor seating and shade structures for the use of patients, visitors and staff. I congratulate and thank the wonderful volunteers of the Belmont District Hospital Auxiliary Blue Ladies on their dedication and their extraordinary efforts to date and trust that they will continue to reach new milestones in the years ahead.

I also acknowledge the executive and members of the Belmont Lions Club. Recently I had the pleasure of attending the club's Charter Night, officially establishing it as an active club with an astonishing 27 inaugural members, with several others from the community pledging to join. As a Belmont resident and member of the New South Wales Parliamentary Lions, it gives me a great sense of pride that the Belmont Lions Club has been established and its members can now continue the proud legacy of Lions International by undertaking many invaluable community projects, this time within the Belmont community. It was an honour for me on the night to present to President Bobbie the club's first banner—a banner of the New South Wales Parliamentary Lions.

It is with great pleasure and pride that I congratulate those communities surrounding Koala Park, an established facility used by community groups for many years and adjacent to San Remo in the vicinity of the suburbs of Lake Munmorah, Doyalson and Budgewoi at the southern end of my electorate. As a result of my lobbying since 2012—including a site visit by the then Treasurer, now Premier—Koala Park is to remain in public ownership and administered by Wyong Shire Council pursuant to a management agreement with the New South Wales Government. This outstanding outcome is a particularly gratifying result for me, having advocated for such on behalf of the surrounding communities since 2012.

In September this year I was pleased to confirm that the successful tenderer for the major dredging project in Swansea Channel was awarded to Neumann Dredging Pty Limited. The announcement was the culmination of 3½ years of consistent lobbying by me with the support of several community groups, including the Boat Owners Association, Marine Rescue, local businesses, concerned boat owners and members of the local community generally. This project is one that not only my constituents but those of neighbouring electorates such as Lake Macquarie, Wyong, Charlestown and Newcastle—not to mention the many intrepid seafarers who visit from interstate and also sometimes from overseas—have been desperately waiting almost 50 years for.

The \$2.5 million project has been funded jointly through NSW Trade and Investment, Crown Lands and Transport NSW. Upon completion, the dredging project will deliver a navigable channel of some 60 metres in width and 3.5 metres in depth and see the removal of up to 100,000 cubic metres of sand, which is to be pumped to Blacksmiths Beach as part of the dune stabilisation and regeneration project. Periodic maintenance dredging will take place once certain trigger points have been reached. This monitoring will be undertaken by Crown Lands and NSW Maritime. These measures are outlined in the latest report on the most appropriate and

effective dredging strategy for the channel and are expected to deliver a solution to a problem that has existed ever since man began interfering with the channel by way of ad hoc measures decades ago. At present, subject to conditions, it is anticipated that this dredging program should be completed by Christmas this year. To see the Swansea Channel major dredging program commence and finally deliver a safe and navigable access to and egress from Lake Macquarie will be one of my proudest achievements as the member for Swansea.

AUBURN SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS FORUM

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [6.15 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about an incredible initiative in my local community of Auburn: a strategy to raise awareness of suicide and suicide prevention. Auburn is home to many diverse communities and groups and has great cultural and religious diversity. The community acknowledged that we must find the courage to talk about the challenges of mental health and suicide because too many people suffer alone and in silence. Over the past two years the community has lost 20 precious lives to suicide, and hundreds of hospital admissions must be added to that figure. The Auburn community adopted a unique approach and came together to hold a forum in May. We decided that we needed to have a meaningful conversation about the devastating impacts of suicide, and the community expressed a desire to respond actively to this very challenging issue.

It was decided on 11 September that our first initiative would be to hold a candlelight walk through the Auburn town centre. That is what happened. More than 300 local residents attended this powerful and meaningful event. I co-hosted the forum together with the Salvation Army and other individuals and organisations including Dooleys, the Lidcombe Catholic Club and the police. Canterbury Bulldogs legend Steve Mortimer attended and lent his support, seeking to highlight the need to reduce the stigma of discussing mental health issues, particularly in multicultural and religious communities. I praise also Captain Nesan Kistan from the Salvation Army who was inspirational, together with the extraordinary local people on the steering committee which emerged during this process. Every one of us was made keenly aware from our one-on-one involvement with so many concerned residents that talk, whilst important, must be translated into action.

The event organising committee consisted of various organisations, including the Bhanin El-Minieh Association, Dooleys and a number of mental health organisations in our community. It put together an event that started a conversation. This is a long-term strategy. The committee continues to meet and to engage with the local community. I was deeply moved as we walked together that evening and I was reminded of the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness." I pay tribute tonight to my community. We can all do something if we are prepared to listen and talk with open hearts and minds. We must refuse to accept that suicide loss is inevitable or that mental health issues only happen to other people. We must offer hope which, tragically, seems to be in short supply in our neighbourhoods. Hope says that the light is stronger than the darkness and that the world can be a friendly place. Hope acknowledges that while life can be difficult and the road marred by suffering we do not have to give up; suffering does not have to end in despair.

The challenge for us all is to step up and ensure that in our various capacities as members of community organisations and as individuals we stay committed to this incredibly important cause in Auburn and indeed across New South Wales. I place on record my thanks to many people, including Wilma and Bill from the Salvation Army, Nesan Kistan, and the many mental health organisations and individuals in my community who were very much part of this event and who will continue to be part of this strategy.

WHITLAM SUBURB AND STATION

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [6.20 p.m.]: Last week in this House I paid tribute to Gough Whitlam in recognition of the work he did in my electorate. This week I received a letter dated 30 October 2014 from the newly elected Mayor of Blacktown, Stephen Bali, seeking my support for the naming of a suburb and a railway station in honour of the former Prime Minister Edward Gough Whitlam. I will read from the correspondence that was sent to me. Stephen Bali wrote:

I write with a proposal to commemorate the great contribution of the late Gough Whitlam AC QC to Blacktown City and to seek your support for it.

I wholeheartedly support the proposal by Blacktown City Council. The letter further states:

Blacktown City Council has submitted an application to the NSW Geographical Names Board seeking approval to name "Whitlam" a new suburb in the Blacktown Local Government Area based around the rezoned Area 20 Precinct, as shown on the attached plan.

Further to this, Council considers that the planned new railway station on the North West Rail Link within this suburb (provisionally known as "Cudgegong Rd" station) should be known as "Whitlam Station".

I would be very grateful for your support.

Blacktown City is proud to be part of the legacy of a great former Australian former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam.

As is widely known, Mr Whitlam chose Blacktown as the place to deliver two of the most iconic speeches in Australian political history.

Mr Whitlam chose Blacktown because the area and its people represented the opportunity, diversity and complexity of the Australian nation—as Blacktown City and the region of Western Sydney still do today.

In November 1972, as Leader of the Opposition, Mr Whitlam delivered his party's election campaign speech at Bowman Hall in the Blacktown CBD. The following month, Mr Whitlam was elected Prime Minister of Australia.

Seventeen months later, in April 1974, Mr Whitlam returned to Bowman Hall to launch his next election campaign. After being re-elected, he referred to Bowman Hall as his "Temple of Victories".

In Blacktown and across Western Sydney, the Whitlam government made a very practical difference to so many people's lives. Without doubt Blacktown City, Western Sydney and Australia are better for the contribution of Mr Whitlam.

In Blacktown City, we will forever honour the Whitlam legacy and the values of tolerance, justice and equality, for which he strongly stood in his long service to the Australian nation.

Mr Bali goes on to invite me to discuss these matters with council officers. The letter is signed, "Yours sincerely, Stephen Bali, Mayor". I strongly support the application by Blacktown City Council to the Geographical Names Board. This week has been an emotional week for members of the Labor Party, but this is not about honouring a Labor man or a fraternal brother. The naming of places, suburbs, universities and such after Australian prime ministers is commonplace. To support the assertion that this proposal is not just about Gough Whitlam, I will list some Australian prime ministers who have been given this honour. Frank Forde, who was Prime Minister for less than a month, has a suburb named after him in the Australian Capital Territory. Edward Barton, our first Prime Minister, Arthur Fadden, George Reid, Earle Page, Joseph Lyons, James Scullin, Stanley Bruce, Billy Hughes and Andrew Fisher all have suburbs named after them in the Australian Capital Territory.

John Curtin is recognised around the country with various establishments named after him, not least Curtin University. Ben Chifley—another great former Labor Prime Minister—has a Federal electorate named after him, a senior college in Mount Druitt and a suburb. Liberal member Harold Holt, who was Prime Minister between 1966 and 1967 before his tragic demise, also has a suburb—postcode 2615—named after him in the Australian Capital Territory. There are many more places, parks, streets and highways, universities and schools and so on that are named after our former prime ministers. Gough Whitlam would stand proud in that company. The application by Blacktown City Council should be strongly supported by both sides of politics.

FOX STUDIOS AND ENTERTAINMENT QUARTER

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [6.25 p.m.]: Fox Studios and the Entertainment Quarter are situated on public land that provides a vital inner-city open space resource. The site was originally part of Governor Macquarie's bequest in 1811 that the 405-hectare Sydney Common be used for outdoor and recreational needs of present and future Sydney generations. It later became the Centennial and Moore Parklands. From 1881 the site was used by the New South Wales Royal Agricultural Society to host its Sydney Royal Easter Show until it moved to Homebush Bay. In 1995 the then Carr Government leased the site to Fox Studios in an opaque process that excluded a competitive tender process and provided concessions, including a cap on payroll tax; a cap on land tax; stamp duty exemptions; a subsidy to refurbish on-site water, electricity and gas services; and asbestos removal from heritage buildings. Fox Studios was exempt from paying rent until 1999.

In a 1997 Performance Audit Report the Auditor-General concluded that the process failed to ensure the best outcomes for this important public site. While the purpose of the lease was to provide a world-class film, television and video production centre with ancillary retail and entertainment activities, the initial film studio concept has been diminishing and non-studio activities bear no relation to film production expansion. In 2003 the lease for the then Family Entertainment Precinct—which is now named the "Entertainment Quarter"—was unsold. That transfer further transformed the precinct from film studio purposes which had been used to justify the private use of this public land.

The site, which was set aside for the public outdoor recreation needs of the people of Sydney, is now dominated by shops, bars, cafes, restaurants and entertainment venues, providing little public benefit. In late 2011 the initial concept plan was amended to allow for six new buildings and to transfer potential built land from the working studio precinct to the Entertainment Quarter. While development on the land is restricted by State environmental planning policy 47, a broad range of purposes are permitted, including restaurants, shops, parking and fuel storage. On 4 June the *Daily Telegraph* reported that the site lease was under negotiation for onsale to a private company for a figure of \$10 million above what the former owners expected and was pending approval of the landlord as required by the initial 1995 lease.

In a *Sydney Morning Herald* report of 4 June, one investor referred to the potential redevelopment opportunities as "endless". Any future development of the site must not stray further from the initial film-related intention of the site and must not further erode open space. Reference to serviced apartments is of particular concern. It is vital that community spaces such as the Showring, which hosts the Farmer's Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and the children's playground are protected. The site lease period is 40 years from 26 April 1996, with the potential to extend the period by 10 years. Being close to 20 years into the lease, it is worth reminding the House that the original lease expressly states that, on its expiration, the land and buildings—including any new buildings constructed on the site—are to be returned to the State.

Local residents, the wider Sydney community and I will monitor this site into the future to ensure that it is handed back, as was promised in 1995. Any lease renewal, particularly under new provisions that allow for 99-year leases, that is essentially freehold land would be adamantly opposed and would demonstrate that governments cannot be trusted. While the site lease provides vital funds to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust—thanks to Clover Moore's Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust (Macquarie Sydney Common) Amendment Bill—expanding commercial ventures would further betray the initial intent of the lease and Governor Macquarie's bequest and would deny the public of much-needed future open space opportunities.

Furthermore, the financial benefit to the trust from increased commercial returns is limited because the 1995 lease capped revenue-based rent. The inner city is experiencing significant residential growth, particularly in suburbs surrounding the parklands. The Green Square redevelopment alone will see 40,000 adjacent new residents living in apartments with no private open space. Older adjacent suburbs such as Paddington and Surry Hills also have lower ratios of open space and face increasing populations. Urban consolidation is only sustainable if ample open space is available, but there are limited and diminishing opportunities for this.

Future uses of the Fox Studios and Entertainment Quarter site during the lease period must respect the primary purpose of the lease for film production and ancillary-related activities as well as the site's history, heritage, social significance and open space potential. In the longer term this public land must be returned to the much-depleted Macquarie bequest, adding to the parklands and expanding recreational and open space for the high and increasing inner-Sydney populations.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 6.30 p.m. until
Tuesday 11 November 2014 at 12 noon.**
