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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 13 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

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Bills

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [10.05 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the introduction without notice and passage through all stages at this sitting of the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (NSW Gas Plan) Bill 2014.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [10.05 a.m.]: Unless I am mistaken, the Opposition has not had a briefing on the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (NSW Gas Plan) Bill 2014 which the Government is planning to introduce on the day that the Legislative Council cut-off applies. I assume it is cobbling together some late policy in respect of coal seam gas. Coal seam gas has been an issue for the entire four-year term of this Government. However, as soon as it finds itself under some serious electoral pressure because it is all over the shop, it cancels all business at the eleventh hour and attempts to ram this bill through all its stages. This bill could only have been cobbled together to enable the Government to hide under a fig leaf in the lead-up to the next election. This is not the way in which serious energy policy should be considered in this place. Opposition members oppose the introduction of this legislation without any notice to them, to the community or to industry.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 40

Mr Anderson	Mr George	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Ms Gibbons	Mr Roberts
Mr Barilaro	Ms Goward	Mr Rohan
Mr Baumann	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Ms Berejiklian	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Smith
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Souris
Mr Brookes	Mr Issa	Mr Speakman
Mr Conolly	Mr Kean	Mr Spence
Mr Constance	Mr Maguire	Mr Ward
Mr Coure	Mr O'Dea	Mrs Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Page	
Mr Doyle	Ms Parker	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Edwards	Mr Perrottet	Mr Patterson
Mr Fraser	Mr Piccoli	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 16

Mr Barr	Mr Greenwich	Mr Robertson
Ms Burney	Ms Harrison	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Collier	Ms Hornery	
Mr Crakanthorp	Mr Lynch	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Daley	Ms Mihailuk	Mr Amery
Mr Furolo	Mr Parker	Ms Hay

Pairs

Mr Baird
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Rowell

Mr Lalich
Mrs Perry
Mr Rees

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery Daniel Harris from the United States Consulate and his guests, Senator Ricardo Lara, Alfredo Pedroza and Javier Angulo. Welcome. I am sure we will see you throughout the day.

PETROLEUM (ONSHORE) AMENDMENT (NSW GAS PLAN) BILL 2014

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

Second Reading

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [10.16 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (NSW Gas Plan) Bill 2014 is part of the package of reforms announced today in the NSW Gas Plan. The NSW Gas Plan sets out the Government's blueprint for building a safe and sustainable gas industry and securing reliable and affordable gas supplies for this State. As an important first step in implementing the NSW Gas Plan, this bill amends the Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 to enable us to hit pause and reset the development of our gas resources. This State is rich in gas resources. However, only 5 per cent of what it uses is produced domestically. Unless we take decisive action New South Wales faces potential gas shortages over the next five years.

We face increasing competition for access to gas from other States as producers on the east coast move to sell the product overseas. Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that industrial users of gas, including metal product manufacturers and chemical industries, employ around 300,000 people in New South Wales. Without affordable and reliable gas supplies these manufacturers will struggle to compete and grow. Some will be forced to move their activities out of New South Wales, taking jobs and government revenue with them. Others will be forced to cease operations altogether.

This Government is committed to the safe and sustainable growth of our domestic gas supply. At the same time, however, we recognise that some in the community have rightful concerns about gas activities in New South Wales. The development of our gas reserves must be guided by stringent regulation to ensure our vital land and water resources are protected and that there are no risks to human health. Since taking office in 2011 the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has implemented the toughest rules around coal seam gas in Australia. We have delivered more than 30 significant reforms.

These include a water monitoring framework to map, monitor, report and protect groundwater resources across New South Wales; scoping the development of an environment data repository and baseline subsidence mapping; banning the use of harmful BTEX chemicals; banning evaporation ponds; introducing an aquifer interference policy; and developing codes of practice for well integrity and fracture stimulation. We have also taken measures to facilitate greater consultation between government, community and industry about gas activities. For example, we appointed a New South Wales Land and Water Commissioner to provide independent advice to the community about exploration activities. We have also established the Gloucester Dialogue, chaired by the Land and Water Commissioner. The Gloucester Dialogue brings together community, industry and local and State governments to explore issues surrounding the exploration and extraction of coal seam gas in the Gloucester Basin.

This is the first time in New South Wales this type of dialogue has occurred. Through the dialogue there is regular contact between senior departmental officers and Gloucester Shire Council. Any topic is up for

discussion. A community liaison officer from my department operates out of the council chambers two to three days a week. The tenth dialogue meeting was held last Thursday. I commend the Gloucester Shire Council, particularly the mayor, Councillor John Rosenbaum, for his tireless work in the dialogue. It has not been an easy road—there have been a lot of robust discussions. However, the dialogue has reshaped the way local communities engage with government and companies in relation to large resources projects. It has transformed our role from absence to informing and genuine engagement.

Through the dialogue the community has access to all materials relevant to licensing decisions and approvals about AGL's Gloucester gas project. It has also resulted in changes to the way AGL carries out its activities in the Gloucester Valley. For example, through the dialogue, the Gloucester Shire Council asked for more air monitoring and as a result additional monitoring sites were implemented. Similar arrangements to the dialogue are being established in Santos' Narrabri project area. Here the council and community have also benefited from access to government and the company.

We do not shy away from the fact that there is more to be done—by government and industry—to build community confidence in the New South Wales coal seam gas industry. We are committed to a world-leading regulatory framework underpinned by science, not scaremongering. That is why last year we commissioned the New South Wales scientist and engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane, to undertake an independent review of coal seam gas activities in New South Wales. Professor O'Kane released the final report on 30 September 2014.

The report brings together the extensive body of work undertaken during the review and makes a series of 16 recommendations. Professor O'Kane's report provides us with a road map to establish a world-leading industry that is safe and sustainable. The Government welcomes the report and will adopt all its recommendations. Professor O'Kane found that the risks posed by the CSG industry can be effectively managed. They can be managed through ensuring the right regulatory framework is in place, engineering solutions and constant learning through monitoring and research.

The NSW Gas Plan draws on the insights of the Chief Scientist and Engineer's report to set a clear direction for gas in New South Wales. The NSW Gas Plan identifies five priority pathways to reset New South Wales' approach to gas. These are: pausing, resetting and recommencing gas exploration on our terms; developing a framework underpinned by better science and information to deliver world's-best practice regulation; ensuring strong and certain regulation; sharing the benefits of gas production with landholders and communities; securing supply and helping consumers. The plan sets out a raft of actions under each of these pathways.

These actions include: resetting the Government's approach to granting petroleum exploration licences; developing an online portal that will bring together environmental data collected by New South Wales regulators; establishing the independent Environment Protection Authority [EPA] as the lead compliance and enforcement watchdog for all gas activities; lifting industry performance through minimum standards for applications and outcomes-based licence conditions; commissioning the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to benchmark compensation rates annually; and establishing a Community Benefits Fund to fund local projects in communities where gas exploration and production occur.

As a key first step in implementing the NSW Gas Plan, the proposed amendments enable us to pause and reset the Government's approach to issuing petroleum exploration titles. The bill lays the foundations for a transparent, informed and strategic approach to allocating our petroleum resources to be introduced in 2015 as part of a second comprehensive tranche of legislation. This second tranche of legislation will implement a number of other actions set out in the NSW Gas Plan. These include: establishing the EPA's new lead role; introducing new landholder compensation requirements; ensuring that standards and conditions are continually updated and improved; and equipping regulators with the tools they need to strictly enforce compliance.

Gas exploration and development will be undertaken on our terms. Under the current legislative framework applications for petroleum titles are processed on a first come, first served basis. There is no clear requirement preventing companies with no financial capacity or technical expertise from applying for petroleum titles over large areas of land. The Labor Government handed out petroleum exploration licences in a careless and clumsy, freewheeling fashion with little oversight and no long-term vision. The application fee for these licences was a mere \$1,000. They gave a number of companies with no operating history and no technical expertise licences over vast expanses of the State. Understandably, this placed unnecessary stress on communities.

New South Wales deserves better. The Chief Scientist recommended that government designate those areas of the State in which coal seam gas activity can occur. We support that recommendation. As set out in the NSW Gas Plan we will introduce legislation next year to scrap the existing first come, first served system. In its place the Government will introduce a strategic release framework for petroleum titles. This will give the

Government control over the areas that are released for petroleum exploration and production. Petroleum exploration and production will be undertaken on our terms and we should not be tied to the mistakes of those sitting opposite. The bill is the first step in ensuring that we have a targeted and controlled approach to facilitating petroleum exploration in this State.

There will be no more ad hoc, inadequate and inappropriate applications to explore that take the community by surprise. Never again will licences be allocated like confetti to anyone who puts up their hand. Gas exploration and production will be undertaken on our terms. However, before we can introduce a strategic release framework we need to roll back the areas under application for titles and ensure the settings are right for a safe and sustainable industry. The NSW Gas Plan lists a number of measures for achieving this. An important measure, which this bill implements, is to wipe the slate clean of the outstanding petroleum title applications that cover almost half the State. These applications will be expunged and the \$1,000 application fees paid returned.

I turn now to a more detailed discussion of the provisions in the bill. As a first step the bill will wipe the slate clean of applications for licences. It will do this by voiding all current applications. The bill will not affect applications for areas that are already covered by an existing title. However, as I noted earlier, the NSW Gas Plan sets out a range of measures to lift the performance of existing titleholders. The bill will remove petroleum title applications from the books. These applications currently blanket 43 per cent of the State, including large parts of the northern rivers region, the Riverina district and the Southern Highlands. There will be no compensation payable for voiding these applications; however, application fees will be refunded. I stress that these actions are not a reflection of the merits of the applications or the companies that submitted them. Rolling back these applications is simply a necessary first step towards moving to a framework that enables us to designate areas in which it is appropriate for exploration to occur.

Currently, under section 9 (1) of the Petroleum (Onshore) Act, the Minister for Resources and Energy may designate areas in which a petroleum title cannot be granted. In March this year I used this power to impose a freeze on processing new petroleum title applications. As set out in the NSW Gas Plan, next year we will introduce a strategic release framework to release areas for gas exploration. This will give the Government control over the areas that are released for petroleum exploration and production. Petroleum exploration and production will be undertaken on our terms. The freeze on processing new applications will remain in place until this framework is implemented. Once the freeze is lifted new exploration licences will be issued only in areas released by the Minister for Resources and Energy. A triple bottom line assessment of environmental, economic and social factors will be undertaken before these areas are released. This will draw on the new approach to coal exploration recommended by the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

It is time for a reset in New South Wales. Gas exploration and development should be undertaken on our terms. The bill achieves just that. It pauses and enables us to reset the current approach to issuing petroleum titles. It lays the foundations for a transparent, informed and strategic approach to allocating our petroleum resources. This bill is an important milestone towards developing a safe and sustainable coal seam gas industry, and securing reliable and affordable gas supplies for industry and households. I indicate that the Government will be moving to debate and pass this bill through all its stages later today in line with the resolution of the Legislative Council regarding the consideration of government bills. I commend the bill to the House.

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

LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (STATUTORY REVIEW) BILL 2014

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (LIFETIME CARE AND SUPPORT) AMENDMENT BILL 2014

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

PARLIAMENTARY ZONE

The Speaker reported the following message from the Legislative Council:

Madam SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

That under section 17 (2) of the Parliamentary Precincts Act 1997 this House declares that the area of Hospital Road between the pedestrian crossings adjacent to the State Library and Sydney Hospital and hatched in the "Plan of the Parliamentary Zone within Lot 1824 in DP 841390" dated 19 October 2014, Surveyor's Reference 117202001-00, be treated as part of the parliamentary zone for the purposes of the Act.

Legislative Council
13 November 2014

DON HARWIN
President

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

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

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown [10.35 a.m.]: I seek leave to move a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders to permit the passage through all stages at this sitting of the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2014.

Leave not granted.

MOTOR DEALERS AND REPAIRERS AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Tania Mihailuk, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [10.37 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

On behalf of this State's six million motorists and 12,000 smash repairers, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2014. It is a shame that the Government has decided not to allow this bill to pass through all stages today despite allowing its Petroleum Onshore Amendment (NSW Gas Plan) Bill 2014 to do so. This bill will impact six million motorists and 12,000 motor vehicle repairers, but it will not pass through all stages today. The bill will amend the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 to provide for the licensing of motor vehicle assessors and the keeping of a register of offences under that Act and to allow motor vehicle repairers to seek assistance from the NSW Small Business Commissioner.

The motor vehicle repair industry is an important part of the New South Wales economy. It is valued at approximately \$5.5 billion and employs approximately 140,000 people across this State. This bill will introduce much-needed reforms affecting the motor vehicle repair industry that will greatly assist in improving road safety outcomes for motorists throughout New South Wales. This Liberal-Nationals Government has been stuck in neutral when it has come to implementing these vital initiatives to improve road safety for our motorists, but members opposite now have the opportunity to show to their electorates that they care about road safety by supporting this bill. This bill is the culmination of months of inaction by the Minister for Fair Trading, who is simply out of his depth when it comes to improving consumer protections for motorists and increasing fairness and transparency in the smash repair industry.

In November 2013 the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 was enacted. It combined the former Motor Dealers Act and Motor Repairers Act into the one Act. This legislation will come into force on 1 December 2014. During the second reading debate on the legislation the New South Wales Opposition highlighted unfair practices within the insurance industry, where some providers were giving preferential treatment to repairers based on the cost of repairs, rather than quality. The New South Wales Opposition highlighted that the Act did not adequately protect the interests of smash repairers in respect of their relationship with insurance companies, and that, on balance, there was potential for unjust conduct and unfair contractual terms in the dealings between insurers and repairers. Approximately 90 per cent of the smash repair industry's work is supplied by insurance companies, with 62 per cent of the market being controlled by the two biggest companies.

The New South Wales Opposition proposed a series of 39 amendments to address industry concerns. These amendments were rejected by the Government in both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. It was in this context, and with the support of the New South Wales Opposition, the crossbench and the Body Repairers Division of the Motor Traders' Association of New South Wales, that the bipartisan Select Committee on the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry was established. The select committee inquired into the

relationship between smash repairers and insurance companies, with a focus on poor quality and unsafe repair work, and the impact on consumers of existing business practices between insurers and repairers. In total, the select committee received 77 submissions from individuals and stakeholders from within the industry, including major insurance companies in the marketplace.

The committee also held two public hearings, taking evidence from 24 witnesses, and examined vehicle rectification figures supplied by major insurance companies and the Motor Traders' Association of New South Wales. In total, 21 recommendations and 12 findings were made to reform the industry. Overall, the inquiry identified that motorists were at risk from poor-quality vehicle repair practices, and that a major imbalance existed in favour of insurance companies over smash repairers. I note for the record that the committee was bipartisan in nature and was unanimous in supporting the recommendations and findings made in the report. In fact, it is worth highlighting the contribution of Coalition committee members during the take note-debate on the committee report. The chairperson, the member for Monaro and Minister for Small Business, said:

I believe the recommendations contained in the committee's report are an essential step towards improving the operation of the motor vehicle repair industry in New South Wales, and the safety of the State's roads. I am confident that the recommendations will help to increase the accountability of motor vehicle loss assessors, repairers and insurers and establish a better balance in the relationship between insurers and repairers. These recommendations will provide the Government with a clear framework to implement thorough and effective change.

Another member of the select committee, the member for Hawkesbury, stated:

I understand the importance of ensuring that damaged motor vehicles are repaired to pre-accident condition prior to being returned to our roads. This is and must always be the fundamental objective of all industry stakeholders involved in the repair of motor vehicles. Only an appropriately repaired motor vehicle can ensure the safety of its occupants if the same vehicle is unfortunately involved in another accident. If the structural composition of a motor vehicle is not appropriately repaired it poses a significant threat to the occupants of that vehicle and to other vehicles.

The member for Campbelltown, the deputy chair of the committee, stated on record:

The greatest focus of the committee was to ensure that damaged vehicles are repaired properly and returned to the road in a roadworthy condition. That is something that concerns every member of this House. The recommendations of the committee are designed to achieve that focus by increasing the accountability of insurance motor vehicle loss assessors, improving the quality of repair work.

It is a great shame that these overwhelming calls for reform have fallen on the deaf ears of the Minister for Fair Trading, who has yet to implement any of the recommendations made by the select committee. I hope that Coalition members of the committee have raised their concerns directly with the Minister and asked why there has been a delay in the Government implementing these recommendations. The Select Committee on the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry tabled its bipartisan, unanimous report on how to further reform the industry on 2 July 2014. It was the intent of the committee for further industry reforms to be acted upon before the end of this parliamentary session, and every member of the committee understood that to be the case.

I invite those members to come forward and advise the House otherwise, should that not be so. The Minister for Fair Trading knows all too well that, after this session, Parliament will not sit again until May—at the earliest. His delay in formally responding to the report of the select committee is nothing more than a deliberate attempt to stop any reforms occurring before the State election. It is a great disservice to smash repairers and motorists throughout New South Wales that the Minister for Fair Trading has been unable to draft a simple bill to enact vital road safety reforms. That is why the New South Wales Opposition decided that it needed to prepare a bill and introduce it into this House.

The New South Wales Opposition recognises that smash repairers need greater protections to guarantee a fair and transparent motor vehicle repair industry. The New South Wales Opposition wants to ensure that when a vehicle is repaired and the keys are returned to a family, the vehicle has been repaired to a safe and roadworthy standard. The particulars of this bill will address these concerns by implementing recommendations made by the select committee that have so far been ignored by the Minister for Fair Trading. New sections 1 to 8 will introduce and expand the categories of licences under the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 to include a motor vehicle assessor's licence. The bill defines a "motor vehicle assessor" as a person, other than a motor vehicle repairer, who carries on the business of assessing the value or cost of the repair of motor vehicles, or inspects repair work carried out by a motor vehicle repairer.

People will be punished by a maximum of 20 penalty units if they carry on, or advertise that they are willing to carry on, the business of a motor vehicle assessor without a licence. The grounds for refusal

of a licence and criteria for determining who is a fit and proper person to hold a licence within sections 25 and 27 of the Act will also apply to applicants for a motor vehicle assessor's licence. Upon commencement of this bill, motor vehicle assessors will have a transitional period of three months to make an application for a licence. There is no doubt that during the inquiry this was the single most important issue impacting the smash repair industry. Many smash repairers are sure to have raised these concerns directly with local members of Parliament. Motor vehicle assessors play a vital role within the motor vehicle repair industry.

Assessors are the party responsible for approving quotes regarding the cost of repair and the method of repair. Motor vehicle assessors are often tasked with ensuring that a vehicle has been repaired to its pre-accident condition to a safe standard. The assessor also acts as a crucial link between motorist, repairer and insurer. The licensing of motor vehicle assessors will act as a necessary safeguard for motorists to improve road safety. During the inquiry process, the licensing of assessors was supported by both smash repairers and leading insurance companies. This measure will greatly enhance accountability in the assessment process to ensure that motor vehicles are repaired to a standard, rather than a price.

I turn to clause 9 of the bill, which will introduce a public "name and shame register" of offences under the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013. This register would apply to motor dealers, motor vehicle repairers, motor vehicle recyclers and motor vehicle assessors if an offence is committed under the Act or regulation. The register will include the name of the person, the name and address of the business at which the offence was committed, the name and address of the usual place of business of the person, the name under which the person trades, and the name of the chief executive of the company and any company director. Crucially, the register will include a description of the nature and circumstances of the offence, the decision of the court and the penalty imposed or order made against the person, and any other information of a general nature thought of as necessary. This name and shame register will operate in a similar manner to the register of the NSW Food Authority by giving consumers—the motorists—the information they need to choose the best professional for the job.

During the inquiry process the fair trading commissioner, Rod Stowe, expressed his support for the establishment of a name and shame register that would help circulate information to better inform the public of repairer quality and improve compliance by repairers. I note that the Minister has not legislated for the introduction of a name and shame register of motor vehicle industry professionals, despite his recent backtracked announcement of a name and shame register, and that, to date, a register has not been implemented. To make an informed decision about which business or professional is in their best interests, consumers require detailed information about the nature and circumstances of an offence. The register announced by the Minister would not include those kinds of details—unlike the register within this bill, which extends even further and includes motor vehicle assessors, dealers and recyclers.

I will now consider clauses 10 to 27 of the bill, which will amend the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 to enable motor vehicle repairers groups and motor vehicle repairers to seek assistance from the NSW Small Business Commissioner in dealing with a dispute about an unfair term of a repairer contract or a class of repairer contracts or unjust conduct by an insurer who is a party to a repairer contract or class of repairer contracts. A repairer contract is defined by the bill as a contract between an insurer and motor vehicle repairer for repair work by the motor vehicle repairer. This definition includes all documents that form part of or are referred to in the contract.

Motor vehicle repairer groups and individual repairers will be able to apply to the tribunal for a declaration that a term of a repairer contract is unfair or that the conduct of an insurer is unjust. These provisions will be similar to the existing provisions under the Act that provide recourse for motor vehicle dealers who are in dispute over unfair contract provisions or unjust conduct with a vehicle manufacturer. It is a great irony that the party that claims to be a champion of small business has refused to give hardworking local smash repairers and local smash repairer business operators access to the Small Business Commissioner to resolve unfair insurance contractual disputes. I am sure that the current Minister for Small Business and the former chairperson of the select committee, the member for Monaro, will want to swiftly rectify this great injustice.

The select committee noted its concern that insurers have been using their market dominance to exert pressure on repairers through contracts that may involve fixed-price repairs. Fixed-price repairs not only have a direct flow-on effect on the quality of repairs completed, but also can significantly affect the bottom line of hardworking local smash repairers, who may have had no choice but to accept the terms of a contract or go bust. These small businesses need the assistance that would be provided by the provisions of this bill. Rather than

keeping the status quo, which only serves to favour insurance companies at the big end of town, I urge members opposite to support their local smash repairers, who contribute a great deal to our local communities and to the New South Wales economy.

In my role as a member of the Select Committee on the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry, and in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Fair Trading, I have had the pleasure of meeting many smash repairers throughout New South Wales, who will undoubtedly be welcoming the provisions in this bill. In Gosford, Joanna and Brett Dicker of Dicker Motors Smash Repairs expressed to David Harris, the Labor candidate for Wyong, to the Hon. Greg Donnelly and to me that their livelihood is being pushed to the brink due to current practices in the industry. The couple, who are third generation smash repairers, have refused to cut corners on the quality of repairs they have provided to their customers. But this is sadly resulting in a financial loss on some repair jobs due to the unfair terms of the repair contract. Ms Dicker stated to the *Central Coast Express Advocate*:

We desperately need change to save our business, this is unsustainable and it's devastating.

In Campbelltown I joined the Labor candidate for Campbelltown, Greg Warren, in meeting Mr Daniel Fenech, manager of AAA Malibu Paint and Panel, who also joined the call for change to prevent quotes being based on the cost of repairs rather than on the quality of the repair. He said to the *Campbelltown Macarthur Advertiser*:

There are also certain repair shops that have done certain contract deals with insurance companies.

They get so much volume because they are quoting the cheapest repairs.

That should concern each and every member of this House, including the member for Campbelltown. In Oatley the Labor candidate, O'Bray Smith, and I met respected long-term repairer Terry Flanagan of T R Flanagan's, who described the current state of the industry as "a mess". He stated to the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*:

The insurance companies want the cheapest deal, so they run their own shops which don't always do top quality work.

Small business is getting bashed big time here by insurance companies and the owners are denied their choice of repairers.

I am always getting cars whose owners are saying they have not been fixed properly.

The good news for all these repairers is that this bill will address all those concerns. This bill will support our local small businesses, enhance accountability, transparency and compliance within the motor vehicle repair industry, and greatly improve road safety outcomes for motorists. In formulating this bill there are many people that I would like to thank and acknowledge. I particularly acknowledge Mr Graham Judge from the Body Repairers Division of the Motor Traders' Association of New South Wales, who has worked tirelessly to advance road safety reforms to improve the motor vehicle repair industry for the better, and I thank him for his wise counsel. I note that he is here today in the gallery. I also acknowledge Mr Greg Patten, the chief executive officer of the Motor Traders' Association. In particular, I would like to thank and acknowledge all the brave smash repairers who have liaised with my office to express their honest and forthright views on how to improve their industry and for coming forward with their submissions and personal experiences during the parliamentary inquiry.

I have had the honour of visiting a number of smash repairers and many aggrieved motorists. I commit to each and every one of them that the New South Wales Opposition will advocate their cause for a fairer and more transparent smash repair industry in order to prevent the Baird-Grant Government from succumbing, effectively, to the big end of town. I say to the Premier, the Minister for Fair Trading and members in this House that the New South Wales Opposition has made it clear that it supports these changes. The Government cannot absolve itself from the responsibility it has to ensure that every motor vehicle repaired in this State is repaired in a safe manner.

The Government should stop the rhetoric and support the bill. The Government should support our hardworking local smash repairers, it should address the motorists' and the broader industry's need for fairness and transparency, and it should support the recommendations made by the bipartisan parliamentary inquiry chaired by the Minister for Small Business. I remind the House that at the outset today I sought leave to suspend standing and sessional orders to permit the passage of this bill through all stages at this sitting. That was rejected by the Government. Clearly, the Government did not think it was important to look after the interests of 12,000 smash repairers and six million motorists across this State.

Mr Bryan Doyle: You had 16 years.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: There will be more on the member for Campbelltown later. I commend the bill to the House. I am delighted that the member for Campbelltown is in the Chamber. I hope that he and the other Coalition members of the select committee will support this bill.

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

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

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

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 October 2014.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.01 a.m.]: On behalf of the Attorney General I will make some comments on the Relationships Register Amendment (Recognition of Same-sex and Gender-diverse Relationships) Bill 2014, which seeks to ensure that same-sex or gender-diverse couples who marry or engage in a civil union in other jurisdictions are automatically eligible to register their relationship under the Relationships Register Act. The bill also seeks to ensure that these couples are treated as de facto partners in a de facto relationship for the purpose of New South Wales law. While the intent of the bill is supported, the Government has concerns with some of the proposed amendments.

First, the amendments are considered to be largely unnecessary. The Relationships Register Act provides that persons are not eligible to register their relationship if they are married. In his second reading speech the member for Sydney said that this provision of the Act prevents New South Wales citizens in same-sex relationships who marry overseas from registering their relationship. However, under Australian law, "married" means a union between a man and a woman; it does not include a same-sex marriage. Therefore, same-sex couples who marry overseas are not currently excluded from registering the relationship under the Relationships Register Act.

Secondly, the bill raises practical concerns. In particular, it would not require parties to a relationship that is solemnised as a marriage or a civil union in certain other jurisdictions to provide any evidence of that marriage or civil union. The applicants need only provide a statutory declaration that the ceremony has taken place. This is a lower threshold than that which applies to register a marriage in New South Wales. Thirdly, the bill could have substantial unintended consequences. It is not clear whether it is appropriate that parties to relationships that are registered under the Act should automatically be treated as de facto partners in a de facto relationship for the purposes of New South Wales laws.

A thorough review of all relevant legislation and proper consultation would need to occur to ascertain the consequence of this amendment and whether it should be supported. For those reasons the Government does not propose to support the bill. However, it has committed to making administrative changes in order to make the relationship register more inclusive of those married in same-sex marriages in other jurisdictions. In light of this, the Attorney General recently requested that the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages consider amending the application form for registering a relationship to make it clear that a same-sex couple who has married overseas is eligible to register that relationship.

Furthermore, when the forms asks for marital status there is now a specific box on the application form to tick for a same-sex couple that has married in another jurisdiction. This will confirm that the Relationships Register Act is intended to be inclusive of these couples. These amendments have now been enacted and are live on the Births, Deaths and Marriages website. I commend the member for Sydney for raising these issues, and trust that the measures the Government has implemented address his concerns.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [11.04 a.m.]: I apologise to the member for Sydney and to the House for not being in the Chamber to lead in debate on this bill. This morning I was in Parramatta opening a new Koori youth court. So other good things are happening.

The member for Sydney and I have had discussions about this bill. While the Government is opposing the bill in its current form, it is certainly not opposing the principle. I agree with the member for Sydney. Hopefully, we have addressed the concerns he has properly brought to the House.

I have instructed the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to ensure that appropriate changes are made to the application form relating to the relationships register. Hopefully, the issues are now live. I understand that the clearly prejudicial circumstances for same-sex couples have been addressed and they are now able to apply to register their relationship without the difficulties that were occurring up until yesterday. I thank the member for Sydney for drawing that to the attention of the House and the Government. I indicate a continuing willingness to ensure that the Government will do all it can to address any prejudicial position that might currently exist for same-sex couples, whether they are heterosexual, homosexual or whatever the nature of their relationship.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [11.06 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to debate on the Relationships Register Amendment (Recognition of Same-sex and Gender-diverse Relationships) Bill 2014 introduced by the member for Sydney. I congratulate the member on bringing this bill before the House. I also congratulate the Attorney General and the member for Sydney on the effective way they have resolved the issues, which the bill sought to determine. It now seems that it was necessary to introduce a bill. The cooperation of the member for Sydney is to be commended, as is the leadership of the Attorney General and, indeed, his excellent ministerial staff to get this matter resolved.

Unlike the member for Sydney, while I have been in a same-sex relationship for 23½ years, I am not married. Perhaps I will marry when we finally achieve same-sex marriage in Australia or in New South Wales. Last year we came so close to realising same-sex marriages in this State; we lost by only one vote in the other place. Over the past four years the Parliament has shown great respect and recognition for my community and that of the member for Sydney—the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex community. The Government has indicated its willingness not only to address the concerns of members of that community and further their cause but also to respect their values and, most importantly, their right as equal citizens in this great State and this great country. Once again, I thank the member for Sydney for raising this matter. It is simply another box we get to tick on the long road—

Mr Alex Greenwich: Literally tick.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: Indeed, I have seen the forms. The boxes are to be ticked, even before the bill needed to be debated. We have been on that long journey for many years and it has been somewhat easier for us because of all the great work that was done by our predecessors who fought physical and not just verbal battles to have our rights recognised. We are getting closer and closer to that utopia. I understand that the Government does not need to support the bill in its current form, but I certainly support the purposes and the objects of the bill.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.10 a.m.], in reply: I thank the Attorney General, the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Coogee for their contributions to this debate. I also welcome to the Chamber Senator Ricardo Lara from the California State Senate along with his guests, Alfredo Pedroza and Javier Angulo, and Daniel Harris from the Consulate General of the United States in Sydney who are here to listen to the debate. California is a State that has embraced marriage equality and where many Australians, same-sex and gender-diverse couples travel to get married. Indeed, I believe that approximately 30 to 35 States of the United States have marriage equality. Australian couples can go to any of those States to get married, but unfortunately, there continues to be Federal inaction in Australia.

I especially thank the member for Coogee for his contribution and his strong support for marriage equality and wider lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender and intersex [LGBTI] law reform. I have greatly enjoyed working with him in this Parliament and I look forward to working with him in the next Parliament—that is what we both hope for. I must acknowledge the work of the Hon. Trevor Khan, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, Dr Mehreen Faruqi and the former member of the Legislative Council from The Greens, Cate Faehrmann whose motion in support of marriage equality passed the upper House but, as the member for Coogee said, the legislation to enact same-sex marriages was sadly lost by just one vote.

The aim of the Relationships Register Amendment (Recognition of Same-sex and Gender-diverse Relationships) Bill 2014 is to ensure same-sex couples and couples with at least one person who is gender-diverse who have married overseas can access the Relationships Register, which gives adults in de facto

or couple relationships the opportunity to have their relationship officially recognised by the State, thus ensuring their rights as a couple. It is widely acknowledged that the register is most useful for LGBTI couples because they are at greater risk of having their relationship and rights challenged, and because of Federal Government inaction on marriage equality. But only unmarried couples can register their relationship, leaving many same-sex couples who marry overseas in limbo. These couples must deny that they are married if they want their relationship recognised by the New South Wales Government. This insults the commitment of these couples, who have travelled overseas to be married, and it undermines the aims of the register to protect these relationships.

While marriage between same-sex couples is, sadly, not recognised under the Australian Marriages Act 1961, such marriages are valid and recognised throughout the world, including in California where our guests today come from. In fact, to enable same-sex couples to marry overseas, the Australian Federal Government provides them with Certificates of No Impediment to Marriage, something I was happy to champion in my previous role as the National Convenor of Australian Marriage Equality. The last census identified 1,338 Australian same-sex couples in which one person was described as the husband or wife of the other. It is likely that many of these couples were married overseas—that number would have increased greatly. Recent statistics from New Zealand reveal that between August 2013 and December 2013, 97 Australian same-sex couples were married in New Zealand. More recently couples are being married in the Sydney United Kingdom consulate.

I welcome the Government's changes to the application process for couples applying to register their relationship, as outlined by the member for Port Macquarie and indeed the Attorney General. This outcome follows my discussions with the Attorney General and his staff, and particularly the work of Emma Gittoes. This change directly addresses the aims of my bill. Under these changes, same-sex couples who marry overseas will be able to reflect their marital status on relevant forms and will no longer have to declare that they are not married. Marital status on the form will provide a new option for same-sex couples married overseas. The eligibility criteria will specify that these couples are eligible to register their relationship in New South Wales.

These important changes brought about by my bill acknowledge the growing number of New South Wales same-sex couples travelling overseas to marry in places that have embraced marriage equality, and remove impediments to their relationship being protected by the New South Wales law. Given these changes, I will seek leave to adjourn debate on this bill. I remain concerned that couples with one or more person who is gender diverse, who marry overseas, will not have a specific option that reflects their situation. People who are gender diverse can have their "sex" on their passport reflect a different sex than their birth certificate or an "X" to reflect indeterminate, unspecified or intersex. They can marry in New Zealand as a person with an indeterminate sex. Many trans and intersex people do not see their marriage as same sex or opposite sex, and do not want to declare they are unmarried or declare that they have a same-sex marriage.

I understand that making changes to the application form specifically to address the concerns of gender-diverse people requires detailed assessment, as they could impact on other operations of Births, Deaths and Marriages. I am committed to working towards complete equality and inclusion in all New South Wales laws for trans and intersex people, and have previously introduced legislation to end the practice of forced trans divorce. Of course, none of this would be necessary if the Australian Government got its act together to reflect the aspiration of Australians and legislate for marriage equality. The inaction of Federal governments, past and present, on marriage equality remains an embarrassing blight on our nation's reputation for fairness, freedom and equality. It is ridiculous that some Australians cannot marry the person they love in the country they love.

My marriage to my husband, Victor, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was the most important day of my life. Our families came together to witness us exchange solemn vows, committing ourselves to each other in sickness and in health, till death do us part. Of course, we took our vows in Spanish because we were in Argentina, but I am pretty sure the translation was accurate. Returning home to Australia was hard, with the law not recognising our solemn vows. The majority of Australians support marriage equality and do not want our laws to treat the gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex people as second-class citizens. In fact, recent polling from Crosby Textor indicated that 72 per cent of Australians support marriage equality.

A commitment between a couple can provide stability and belonging for the people involved; the law should value, protect and support this regardless of gender. Where there is love, the law should provide support. As newly voted Tasmanian of Year, Rodney Croome, AM, has said, "Marriage is about wants in your heart, not what's between your legs." Rodney has worked tirelessly for the LGBTI community for more than 25 years, and would make an excellent Australian of the Year. I thank him for his support and the support of Australian

Marriage Equality for my bill. Equality in the law for the LGBTI community is needed to ensure fairness, prevent injustice and provide protection, particularly in times of crisis. It is now time for the Prime Minister to stop blocking the path to marriage equality, and for our Federal colleagues to work together towards getting the reform through the Senate and House of Representatives. Our Federal colleagues could learn a lot from the New South Wales LGBTI working group.

The member for Coogee, the Hon. Trevor Khan, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, Dr Mehreen Faruqi and I have worked well together to progress reform and, as the member for Coogee said, we got very close in the upper House. I know that is a challenge many of us are prepared to take on in the next Parliament. I acknowledge Federal Senator Sarah Hanson-Young for her tireless work to progress marriage equality. Senator Hanson-Young proposed a sensible bill in the Federal Parliament to recognise overseas same-sex marriage in the Federal Marriage Act. However, Federal Government and Opposition members blocked its progress. I thank the Attorney General and the Government for working with me to do what we can in New South Wales to recognise that growing numbers of same-sex couples are marrying overseas, and ensuring that when those couples return home—couples like me and my husband, Victor—there is no impediment to being recognised in New South Wales law. I thank all members for their contributions.

Debate adjourned on motion, by leave, by Mr Alex Greenwich and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

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

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 6 November 2014.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.20 a.m.], in reply: I thank all members who have contributed to debate on the bill: those members representing the electorates of Cronulla, Keira, Tamworth, Sydney, Riverstone, Lake Macquarie and Myall Lakes. This bill is critical to the future of TAFE in New South Wales. It attempts to impose a moratorium on the damaging implementation of Smart and Skilled due to be introduced next year. Although the bill does not provide every solution to the problems in TAFE, it seeks to stop the clock. Its aim is to make sure that the Government's introduction of Smart and Skilled does not tear the heart out of the provision of public education.

Members who have spoken on the bill focused on issues within their electorates. It is appropriate to examine what is happening in the electorates because in preparation for Smart and Skilled colleges are sacking staff, reducing course diversity and implementing some of the most regressive decisions in the TAFE system. They are doing this because they know that under Smart and Skilled they will be forced into a competitive race to the bottom, a race against other low-quality, low-cost training organisations. This has happened federally. In the Federal sphere Christopher Pyne is battling under the weight of evidence that shows dodgy, shonky registered training organisations [RTO] and training providers are rorting the system—and we have seen a lot of evidence of this—to get government funding and engaging students in some pretty unscrupulous forms of marketing to get them into training programs.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Name them.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I will name them. I will go through each one of them. The *Australian* has reported three times on discussions about organisations that have seen incredible increases in their income through exploitation of the system. One of the recent headlines in the *Australian* was, "Will Christopher Pyne drown under the weight of shonky schools?" We have seen that in the Victorian context. It is true to say that Smart and Skilled is not identical to the Victorian model, but that is about as far as the truth goes with the Government when it looks at the impact of Smart and Skilled on the TAFE sector. Members know the importance of TAFE as an organisation.

I had the great pleasure of visiting many areas in New South Wales as part of an inquiry into skills shortages in New South Wales. It is a very challenging area of public policy that is important in how we grow and engage communities, and how workforces reflect the needs of industry in the local area to maximise employment and productivity levels. Ensuring happiness and enjoyment for people in their workplaces should be encouraged. As we travelled across the State during the inquiry looking at workplace employment and skills

shortages, in town after town, from every chamber of commerce and every business, big or small, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales, people highlighted the importance of TAFE—TAFE, not some other bodgie, out of the back of a bus or truck training organisation, but TAFE itself. The reputation and credibility of TAFE was second to none.

Members from all sides have said they agree that as a provider TAFE is doing a fantastic job not only in providing employment and education across New South Wales but also in building communities. Victoria has seen the implementation of the competitive model that has ripped the heart out of TAFE in that State, where it is providing less than 30 per cent of training. Our fear, our concern and what the evidence demonstrates is that we are heading down the same path. In my second reading speech I went through each of the electorates where members have signed the TAFE pledge but, more importantly, each one of the electorates that identify cuts to TAFE jobs. It makes for sober reading.

Smart and Skilled, which the Government is proposing, is a competitive model. This was first started by Federal Labor, and Julia Gillard in particular. Although she received a great deal of unfair criticism, some of the fair criticism is that the competitive tendering of vocational education strikes at the heart of public provision of vocational education. We saw that with the adult migrant education program: tens of millions of dollars of public money was put up for competitive funding and TAFE NSW was not successful in obtaining that public funding; it went to a lower-quality, lower-service private provider. That is what we are seeing writ large now under this Government. The competitive tendering process introduced by the conservative forces in Labor have now been acted upon by this Government and put on steroids. We now see a threat to the heart of TAFE and the existence of TAFE colleges. That is what happened in Victoria. The competitive tendering model in Victoria exploded and was destroyed because the competition is not fair.

We are seeing low-cost, low-quality training organisations cherrypicking the low-cost and easy courses such as finance and other simple courses where a textbook is provided, and a teacher stands up and uses a whiteboard to deliver a lecture. Those courses have been cherrypicked by the cheap registered training organisations [RTOs] and TAFE is left with the high-cost, high-expense courses that the private sector will not cherrypick. This undermines the heart of TAFE, reduces its capacity and destroys the public provision of education. Labor started the competitive tendering process of vocational funds and it is now being implemented at a State level. That is why this bill is so important. I know that the House will shortly be hearing inaugural speeches and I congratulate the new members of the House. They should know as well as anyone that their job is to fight within Labor to work against the worst elements of the Labor Party that has been promoting these privatisations, commercialisation and competitive tendering.

Mr John Robertson: You should sit down now. We certainly don't need advice from you, mate. You should worry about your own party. You're a salesman of horny goat weed; the man who made a living driving his Mercedes selling horny goat weed.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Balmain has the call.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: The Leader of the Opposition is shouting at me across the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: The Leader of the Opposition, who failed to declare being offered a multimillion dollar bribe, is now abusing me in the House because he knows that the privatisation that Labor implemented during its term in government, whether it was selling the lotteries or whether it was trying to sell electricity, is wrong. I simply said that these new members of Parliament should be fighting the worst elements which many other members also fought. I encourage them to do their best within Labor to fight for the best traditions of the Labor Party. I am sure that is a matter of concern to them as they know that the moral heart of Labor is no longer there. They would much rather fight The Greens than fight the Coalition, which is the problem. Labor members need to stand up for the best Labor traditions and if they do not The Greens will, which is why The Greens introduced this bill. We did not introduce this bill just to reduce fees in TAFE; we introduced the bill to roll back competitive tendering and TAFE privatisation—an issue about which we are very proud.

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

Pursuant to resolution inaugural speeches proceeded with.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Mr TIMOTHY CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (Inaugural Speech) [11.31 a.m.]: I begin my first speech in the New South Wales Parliament by acknowledging the traditional owners, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, on whose country we meet. I also acknowledge the traditional owners of my home town, Newcastle—the Awabakal and the Worimi people. You are a tough and spirited people. You make a strong and ongoing contribution to our city. It is a great honour to stand in this Chamber today as the elected member for Newcastle. It is a privilege that I do not take lightly and one that I will carry out to the utmost of my ability.

My story begins in the picturesque town of Moruya on the far South Coast, famed for supplying the granite pylons the Sydney Harbour Bridge stands upon today. My parents, David and Jeanette, were schoolteachers. My father, an English History Master, passed on a great appreciation of the written word, running, and the love of a good time. My mother, who is here today, gave me an eye for detail, a full appreciation of the values of social justice and the importance of education. To my two brothers, Andrew and Justin, I appreciate your support, strength and wily habit of always being there when needed most.

My journey to this Chamber was sparked by my father's consistent questioning of the status quo, my parents' constant letters to the editor of the *Eurobodalla Star*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and, finally, by my father's campaign in an attempt to become a councillor on Eurobodalla Shire Council. I was fortunate enough to be elected School Captain of Moruya High School which led me in part to apply for a Rotary scholarship at the age of 17. That scholarship took me on a remarkable journey to South Africa in 1987 where I witnessed the ugly, brutal policy of apartheid and the indignity it imposed upon everyone associated with it.

I was privileged enough to be taken into the real South Africa by ANC sympathisers who took me into the township of Soweto where I saw the real impact of apartheid on local schools, communities and churches. The reality of apartheid was emphasised when I was forced to hide in the back of the car to avoid detection on my way into the township. It was there that I first saw the effects of extreme poverty, exploitation and inequality. I saw white military personnel with submachine guns in the school grounds of black students where windows were smashed out in school buildings.

What I also saw was a very politically active school population. It was not the headmaster who ran the school; it was the school students and the school representative council. It was those same black students who asked me those difficult questions regarding our own Indigenous population and our own racist heritage. It was then during my time in South Africa that I made a vow to myself to fight for better health and education, and social and political outcomes for my community, no matter where I live. So that, colleagues, is the base upon which my motivations have been built. I am driven to fight for social justice and equity—which is why I joined the Australian Labor Party. There is no other party that has the same focus on improving the life of everyday people.

These principles have always guided me over the years and developed and been deepened by my life experiences. From my first job of cleaning out stables, to working in a hardware shop, restaurants and bars, to driving delivery trucks, I learned about long hours and hard work. After a short stint working for IBM I started working in the disability sector where my passion and commitment for social justice led me to work with people who could not talk, people with severe behavioural problems and those with severe brain damage. After working at the Cerebral Palsy Centre I was privileged to gain a deep understanding of the need for individuality of those with cerebral palsy. I have a Business Degree from Charles Sturt University and a Masters Degree of International Studies from Sydney University. It was at university as the President of the Student Association that I became politically active and lead busloads of students from Bathurst to Sydney to fight against the injustices of government.

After I completed my Masters I was fortunate enough to work in other areas of real passion for me—foreign aid and the environment. In Indonesia I worked for an environmental education centre which specialised in growing Indigenous rice seeds and helping local communities gain control of their rice seed production and harvesting. It was here that I found myself building the local village chief's compost bin. The significance of this incident may seem opaque but as I was stuffing the *Jakarta Post* into the bin I was astonished to read the front page which showed dogs on leashes and men in balaclavas on the docks in Sydney. It was the time of Peter Reith and John Howard; a time to come back to Australia and to fight the good fight for jobs, a fair go and the right to bargain collectively.

And so I did. I worked for Tanya Plibersek on her inaugural election campaign. This was followed by work for Carmel Tebbutt, Allan Morris, Sharon Grierson and Bryce Gaudry. These were astute and wise people

and I thank them for sharing some of their many insights with me. To Allan and Bryce, I thank you for your unwavering support. For the past nine years I have worked in mine safety for the New South Wales Government. I have a deep belief in the value of public service. During my time in mine safety I have worked with some outstanding people who always conducted themselves with the utmost integrity. To the current and former directors of mine safety, Rod Morrison, Jennifer Nash and Rob Regan, I owe you an enormous debt of gratitude. I am especially grateful to Rod. Thank you for your mentoring and fearless advice—which was not always to your advantage. To the whole team in mine safety, thank you for your comradeship and your support over the years.

For the past six years I have also been a councillor on Newcastle City Council. It has been quite a tumultuous experience, particularly with the recent ICAC-induced resignation of our Lord Mayor. This experience has given me an even deeper appreciation of what is really important to the everyday lives of my fellow citizens of Newcastle. I have also been fortunate enough to represent Newcastle City Council on the board of the Westpac Rescue Helicopter for the past five years, and the board of Northern Settlement Services, which in the past two years has helped to settle refugees in our community. Both boards have provided a great experience and insight into their unique experiences. Thank you for allowing me to work with you and to learn from you. In my time as a Labor councillor I have had the pleasure of working as a team to get some great outcomes for the people of Newcastle. We have fought to save pools, childcare centres and public spaces for community groups. We have saved and invested in Blackbutt Reserve as well as championed the Bathers Way Coastal Walk, which has become the envy of other coastal cities.

Perhaps my proudest achievement as a councillor was successfully fighting alongside the local youth to get what is now considered one of the best skate parks in Australia at Empire Park. It is across the road from what is one of the best surfing strips in Australia—Bar Beach to Merewether. To fellow Labor councillors Stephanie Posniak, Jason Dunn and the future lord mayor of Newcastle, Nuatali Nelmes, thank you for your support and comradeship over the years. I wish to offer special thanks to Sharon Claydon, MP, my former council colleague and now our fantastic Federal member for Newcastle, for her consistent support over the many years that we have worked together on so many projects. It is much appreciated.

The union movement has always had a very strong presence in the Hunter. The first trade union was established 157 years ago at the coal pit near the art gallery in Laman Street. Trade unions and the Newcastle Eight Hour Committee met in the local hotels before the opening of the first Newcastle Trades Hall 120 years ago. Still strong today, and now called Hunter Unions, I thank Daniel Wallace and the peak body he leads for their steadfast support during my campaign, with particular thanks to the Maritime Union of Australia, the Maritime Union of Australia Veterans, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the Finance Sector Union, the United Services Union, the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, United Voice and the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association.

The union movement in Newcastle not only fought for fair pay for workers but also was instrumental in saving large parts of historic Newcastle. Like Jack Mundy's better-known efforts in The Rocks, Peter Barrack as secretary of Newcastle Trades Hall saved large swathes of what is now the historic East End of Newcastle. They also stopped inappropriate development on Foreshore Park and the historic precinct of Cooks Hill which now, like The Rocks, is a much sought after suburb. Following the closure of BHP 15 years ago, the rest of Australia is beginning to see what Newcastle really has to offer. Our largest employer is not a steel producer but, rather, great institutions like the John Hunter Hospital and the University of Newcastle.

Retail, healthcare, tourism, energy research, construction, education, accommodation and manufacturing are now our key areas of employment opportunity. Local people tell me consistently that their number one priority is jobs. Over the past year, unemployment in Newcastle has nearly doubled to 8.8 per cent and youth unemployment is now one of the State's highest. Despite this, we still see New South Wales Government train carriage contracts going overseas and Newcastle manufacturers are forced to close. New South Wales bus contracts go to Queensland, and again Newcastle manufacturers close. Contracts for Navy supply ships are going to Korea and Spain and now submarine contracts are going to Japan. I want to see more manufacturing contracts come to Newcastle. Like the Hunter Business Chamber, I want to see a convention centre in Newcastle to create and attract business and jobs to our city.

While it is great to see the New South Wales Government showing an interest in Newcastle and pushing ahead with the implementation of the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy, there have been some worrying developments that are now the focus of an upper House parliamentary inquiry. These include three high-rise towers in the historic precinct of Newcastle and cutting the rail line into the heart of the city. As a

result of this, mixed with the disappointment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption investigations over the past six months, we have seen an unprecedented number of public rallies expressing the discontent of people in Newcastle. We have had resignations of the State members and resulting by-elections. It is time to restore trust and confidence in the political process. Now is the time for the unions, businesses and community groups to work together to ensure that we get the best outcomes for Newcastle. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

One key organisation that has been working to revitalise the city centre is Renew Newcastle. This groundbreaking organisation, under the leadership of Marcus Westbury and formerly Marni Jackson, has done an exemplary job in revitalising the city centre though finding short- and medium-term uses for buildings in Newcastle's central business district that are now vacant, disused, or awaiting redevelopment. My vision for Newcastle is for a vibrant, smart and healthy city with full employment that nurtures the creativity for which we are known. Newcastle has more artists per capita than any other city in Australia. We have a magnificent collection of art valued at \$60 million. It is a tragedy that we have not been more nurturing of this creative resource. The \$21 million redevelopment of Newcastle Art Gallery, a catalyst project in the Government's own 2020-21 Plan for NSW, has not proceeded. Such a project is pivotal and would have provided a huge economic boost for Newcastle. I will fight tooth and nail for this art gallery redevelopment to come to fruition.

Over the past six years as a councillor on Newcastle City Council I have also campaigned, on behalf of the people of Newcastle, to retain the existing rail line into Newcastle station. At the beginning of this year I initiated a process of consultation that I called "Our Town Our Choice". I asked members of our community to tell me their preference for the allocation of the \$350 million announced by the Government for the termination of the railway line. I outlined a number of urgent infrastructure projects that would have significant long-term benefits to Newcastle and the region. The community response has been overwhelmingly in support of using the \$350 million for the infrastructure projects. It is because of this that I made the decision to base my by-election campaign on this proposal and offered the community a very clear choice. My main opponent in the by-election was publicly and stridently in support of the Baird Government's plans to rip out the rail line into Newcastle. Of the eight by-election candidates, only two supported the Government's policy.

The result was that 66 per cent of voters supported candidates who wanted to keep the rail line running into Newcastle. The people of Newcastle have clearly shown that they do not want the rail line cut. I now have a mandate and a clear responsibility to follow through on what my community elected me to do. The community concerns over this matter are also reflected in the submissions to the parliamentary inquiry. Some 350 submissions have now been published and the vast majority of them support retaining the railway line. Where is the logic in removing this transport system? We are about to have a new university campus bringing 5,000 students into the area and the nearby law courts almost completed and very little parking space has been provided. There is also GPT's proposed 500 apartments and 30,000 square metres of retail and commercial space. The Asian Cup, which will be held in Newcastle in January, will attract 35,000 people.

This matter must be resolved. The quandary is why any government would spend almost \$500 million doing something that the community clearly does not want. The way out of this impasse is for Mr Baird to put on hold the plans to terminate the service at Wickham on 26 December and to give the community a clear choice at the March election. If the people of Newcastle want the rail line to be terminated they will vote for a Liberal candidate. If I am re-elected, the Government will need to accept that it is our community's choice and respect it as such. However, I would like to achieve some sense of bipartisanship on this issue to avoid the truncation continuing to be a divisive issue for another 20 years. I presented a letter to the Premier's office this morning requesting a meeting to discuss this issue, and I await his response.

Newcastle has the largest coal port in the world. However, we cannot continue to rely on king coal. We must diversify as a region and focus on other energy resources. The Newcastle of the future I want to see will focus on new energy and technology markets. Newcastle can be the energy capital of Australia. We already have the CSIRO Energy Centre, the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources, a world-class university and a thriving digital technology sector. These are the vital ingredients for a long and bright future for the young Novocastrians of today.

I thank my unstoppable campaign managers Samantha Marsh and James Connor, and the irrepressible David Latham. I thank the Posniak-Marshall family: Stephanie, James, Isobel, Annabel and Amelia. I also thank the Newcastle Labor team: Sally Tate, Graham Wilson, Judith Driscoll, Stu Morgan, Gary and Liam Parker, Jazzua Andrews, Phillip Johnson, Shirley Schultz Robinson, Barbara Whitcher, Nicola Dean, Cath and Kevin Claydon, Victoria Phillis, Simonne Pengelly, Donovan Harris, Chris McNaughton and Deb Wood. Forgive me if I have missed anyone.

Indeed, thank you to all the wonderful Australian Labor Party members in Newcastle and beyond, and especially Young Labor who did so much for me during my campaign. To John Robertson and Linda Burney, and the team in the leader's office, thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to making Newcastle the best it can be. John Robertson's 17 visits in the past three months demonstrate that Labor does not take Newcastle for granted and never will. To Sonia Hornery, Clayton Barr, Jodie Harrison, Peter Primrose, Lynda Voltz, Penny Sharpe, Andrew McDonald, Michael Daley, Adam Searle, Ron Hoenig, Paul Lynch, Luke Foley, Ryan Park, Tanya Mihailuk, Nathan Rees, Guy Zangari, Anna Watson, Sophie Cotsis, Greg Donnelly, Walt Secord and all my other new colleagues who came up to Newcastle, thank you. Also, to John Graham, Kaila Murnain and the head office team, thank you.

To my children, Oscar, Luca, Sienna and Avalon, I know that you do not understand what is going on just now, but I hope that one day you will understand why I am doing this and forgive me for the sacrifices that you have already made and will no doubt make in the future because of my choices. Thank you. My deepest thank you is to the person who is my rock and to whom I owe everything—my wife, Lara. Without you, none of this would be possible at all.

People in this Chamber may well ask why people in Newcastle are so passionate about their home town. Why are they such a resilient, tough bunch of people who pick themselves up after earthquakes and floods, and are so proud of their city? Let me fill you in on what it means to be a Novocastrian—things I have learnt since first coming to Newcastle some 27 years ago. It means just whipping down to Nobbys, Newcastle, Bar Beach or Merewether on a weekday before or after work and having a peaceful swim, and joining the unwashed crowds on a weekend to surf or be swamped by Nippers. It means watching a film at King Edward Park in the dusk of summer and then slipping down to the Bogey Hole, the rock pool hewn out of the majestic cliffs 194 years ago.

It means watching my kids playing for Cooks Hill Juniors with children from all over Newcastle on a sunny Saturday morning, trying to pick them out in a sea of black-and-white jerseys. It means walking out to the breakwall beyond Nobbys, the big chunk of rock in the water upon which our lighthouse is built. It means catching the ferry to Stockton and meandering around this historical suburb with its wide streets, slow pace and long, flat beach. It means going to Fort Scratchley and hearing the guns firing, imagining they are returning fire to the Japanese submarines that shelled Newcastle all those years ago. It means swimming in the egalitarian Newcastle and Merewether baths at dusk, with the moon reflecting off the ocean.

It means hearing the roar of "Newcastle, Newcastle" when the Knights are whipping Manly at Hunter stadium, or hearing the deafening sound of the squadron cheering from the stands when the Jets are thrashing the Central Coast Mariners at yet another game. There is so much that is Newcastle and so much that Novocastrians hold dear, and today you have heard but a snippet. As the new member for Newcastle I thank my community for placing your trust and confidence in me. I will do my absolute best to advocate for you and represent you and our great city in this Parliament. Thank you.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I congratulate the member for Newcastle on his election and his inaugural speech. As a former Novocastrian I know the area well and I still have spies there.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [11.51 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): At the outset of this, my inaugural speech representing the good people of the electorate of Charlestown, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I am standing—the Gadigal people of the Eora nation—and pay respect to their elders, both past and present, and to Aboriginal people in this place today. Acknowledgement of country is something that is right and proper to do in this, the oldest Parliament in this country. The Aboriginal people of Australia carry with them the oldest surviving culture in the world. Acknowledgement of country was made more meaningful for me when I sat with my father, Clive, 10 months before he died, as he watched television coverage—the day after eye surgery with a patch over one eye—as Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

The Prime Minister apologised for the pain, suffering and hurt endured by these children and their descendants and for their families left behind. Clive, a man of European heritage, had tears in his unpatched eye, and afterwards he recalled to me his childhood in primary school in Port Macquarie when he used to play with the local Aboriginal children. He recalled too that when he moved into high school he was told he had to wear shoes to school, and that he was no longer allowed to play or associate with those Aboriginal kids, and he took that advice. With a patch over one eye, Dad cried for the injustice in which he had played a part. He cried acknowledging the healing that the apology worked towards.

Clive Harrison had an incredible influence on me. Dad was a fitter and turner by trade, completed his apprenticeship with the Forestry Commission, was a professional singer for a while, and married my mother, Elizabeth Denning, in 1967 in Sydney. I was born in 1968, first lived in Smithfield and spent my formative years growing up in the south-western suburbs of Sydney. My brother, Todd, was born five years later. Dad was promoted through the sheet metal engineering company he worked for eventually to become the general manager of the firm, which provided sheet metal for such iconic buildings as Centrepont, the Sydney Opera House and the High Court of Australia. He worked long hours, leaving home at 7.00 a.m. and arriving home often after 7.00 p.m. for dinner, which Mum had prepared. Mum worked largely part time, so that she could support Todd and me as we were going through school, and so she could keep the house together.

I remember lots of entertaining, Friday night card nights, and wonderful holidays caravanning throughout the eastern parts of Australia. Mum is still very much a solid rock in my family. I thank her for the support she gives without which I could not be in this place. When I was 11 years old, although our family was not religious in the traditional sense, I joined the Salvation Army, and was a member of the Salvos for the next five years. Yes, I learned to play the tambourine—or timbrel as we called it—but I was always jealous of the boys who got to play the horns in the brass band as we performed Christmas carols in the local streets for our neighbours.

More importantly, that was when my commitment to social justice was truly cemented in my being. While I still do not quite understand the Salvos's logic of collecting donations in licensed premises, the work that is done by non-government organisations [NGOs], faith-based and secular, in assisting people who are in need to get on top of their lives is something that is incredibly important. We live in a community, and it is incumbent on us to contribute to that community for the betterment of all its members, especially when some need a hand up. Government certainly has an essential role in looking after and building community, but community groups and NGOs are often ably placed to assist more quickly. I have certainly seen this over the past few months as I volunteered in one of the Samaritans Emergency Relief Centres, providing food for those with none, and assistance with paying bills for some people who were doing it very tough.

When I was only 19 years old I met my husband, Bruce Jones. Before meeting Bruce my life plan was, in this order: to get a degree and a good job, travel the world, marry in my late twenties, have two children and contribute to society. Meeting Bruce brought the marriage plan forward by several years and together we have managed to do the rest. In the early 1990s, after spending time with my parents who had bought a small business in Lake Macquarie, Bruce and I saw the light and moved to the Newcastle region. I think now we have been accepted into the Novocastrian club.

Bruce has always been supportive of my decision to enter public life, boosting my confidence in my ability to lead, represent and advocate for people. Bruce and our children, India and Phillip, are here today, along with my mum and her sister, Auntie Bev. I thank Bruce, India and Phillip for the love and support they have given me in choosing the path of representing the people of Charlestown. I would not and could not have entered public life without their support. I have probably developed my dad's passion for doing a good job, which meant hard work and long hours. Even though that was the case, I still have wonderful memories of holidays and relaxation time with mum, dad and Todd. I truly hope that, even though I may often be away from home throughout my time in Parliament—be it short or long—India and Phillip develop the kind of wonderful memories with our family that mum, dad and Todd gave me.

I also hope that through my time in this place I give further weight to the argument that it is, in fact, just as acceptable for a woman to be in Parliament as it is a man. By the time I left school there had been only six female members in this place. Thankfully, since then those numbers have increased and I am now the fifty-seventh female member. I am the fifth member for Charlestown, following four men. I am also the first female Mayor of the City of Lake Macquarie, a position to which I was honoured to be elected in 2012. The City of Lake Macquarie has more than 200,000 residents and is one of the largest local government areas in this State. I acknowledge my fellow councillors: Brian Adamthwaite, Barney Langford, Rob Denton, Barry Johnston, Daniel Wallace, Ken Paxinos, Rosmairi Dawson, Wendy Harrison, Kay Fraser, Chad Griffith, Jason Pauling and Laurie Coghlan. I thank them for the work that I know they all do in representing their constituencies, working together in a respectful way, and for making decisions that are good not only for now but also, importantly, into the future.

I would also like to make mention of the General Manager of Lake Macquarie City Council, Brian Bell. I think—although I may be biased—that Brian is one of the best general managers, if not the best general manager, in local government in this State. I thank him and his creative and insightful team for their friendship

and support as well as their fearless and frank advice. Back home, we are all excited about the International Children's Games being held in Lake Macquarie in 23 days, which will really show the rest of New South Wales, Australia and the world what a wonderful place we come from, and the warmth and generosity of our people. I recognise the role of the former mayor, the member for Lake Macquarie, Greg Piper, in winning the bid for Lake Macquarie to be the first city in the Southern Hemisphere to hold this prestigious event, which is endorsed by the International Olympic Committee.

I also recognise the incredible planning and work that has been underway for more than a year and a half and is happening right now at Lake Macquarie City Council to host the games, with 1,500 12- to 15-year-old athletes and their supporters coming from 80 cities in 30 countries right across the world. It is indeed exciting times for my home city. I am proud that the residents of Lake Macquarie voted for a council that plans not only for the here and now but also for future generations. Lake Macquarie City Council espouses the view that the late Hon. Edward Gough Whitlam stated so simply but so eloquently:

I plan for the ages, not just for this life.

I intend always to be cognisant and supportive of issues facing local government in this State. It was a Labor Government, after all, that introduced the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework into New South Wales—an incredibly powerful tool for the health of local government in the long term. Having worked for a local council for 14 years and having been privileged to have served in an elected capacity for a further six years, I know how important local government is to the provision of services and facilities for local communities. I am proud to be elected as a Labor member of Parliament. Sixty-five years ago tomorrow Ben Chifley said:

The Labor Movement exists to promote social and economic security for the people, higher living standards, and the progressive expansion of Australia as a nation in the world community of nations.

It was Labor that introduced the age pension, electrified rural New South Wales, began construction of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme and began construction of the Sydney Opera House. It was Labor that opened access to universities to all, made the historic decision to protect the New South Wales rainforests, floated the Australian dollar, created Medicare, passed the Sex Discrimination Act and introduced universal superannuation. It was Labor that passed the Native Title Act, doubled the size of New South Wales national parks in a period of eight years, built or rebuilt 72 hospitals in regional New South Wales over a period of 16 years, introduced the National Disability Insurance Scheme, provided New South Wales with its first female Premier, appointed the highly respected first female Governor in New South Wales, appointed the also highly respected first female Governor-General and provided Australia with its first female Prime Minister.

I want to thank all those Labor Party members, friends of Labor and personal supporters who supported my preselection back in July, and who assisted and volunteered in my by-election campaign. My eternal gratitude goes to the longstanding local Labor members who worked tirelessly to support me, and also to the wonderful Labor members from other electorates who joined us in Charlestown in the nine weeks right up until 25 October. We had thousands of very real conversations with Charlestown voters—conversations that showed Labor people are very much part of their communities, with a deep interest in issues that are of concern to their communities, as well as those issues that should be celebrated. I cannot name the hundreds of people who worked on the campaign, but I want in particular to thank the people who were absolutely central: Rose Jackson, Jesse Hancock and Declan Clausen. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I must say that I will not miss the 6.00 a.m. text messages, but I am sure there will be opportunity to do it all again next year. Thanks also to the local Hunter State and Federal members who provided me with sage advice and support: Sonia Hornery, Clayton Barr, Jill Hall, Sharon Claydon and Pat Conroy. To my parliamentary leader John Robertson and deputy leader Linda Burney, I extend my gratitude for the incredible work they both put in throughout the campaign. They both really need to get some more permanent accommodation in the Hunter to alleviate travel times.

I am excited to be able to be working with my Labor colleagues in Parliament to continue to do the great work that Labor does. The Labor Party is an intrinsic part of the labour movement in this country. Unions of working people are also intrinsic to the labour movement. I have been a union member all my working life. I have been a union delegate for several years and I worked for two unions prior to becoming mayor of Lake Macquarie: the United Services Union and United Voice. It is rather fitting that there is a union rally out the front of Parliament House at the moment. Good on the PSA! While with the United Services Union I negotiated working conditions with employers and represented members when they were experiencing difficulties at work.

The United Services Union provided me with an incredible opportunity when I was sent to the United States as part of an Australian Council of Trade Unions contingent to work with one of the major unions, the Service Employees International Union [SEIU]. I worked in Allentown and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, New York City and Washington DC. The model of collectivism and organising people who earn a wage that puts them under the poverty line was inspiring. The hope and passion that was imbued in these union members to improve their lives and the lives of those alongside them was astounding. I know that those experiences will be incredibly beneficial to me in representing the people of Charlestown.

United Voice is a union of some of the lowest paid workers in New South Wales. While working for United Voice I was given the opportunity to work with early childhood educators to inspire them to work collectively not only for better working conditions and pay for themselves but also, importantly, for a better, more stable early education for the young people they cared for every day. I thank the members and officials of United Voice for their passion in improving the lives of low-paid workers, some of whom live below the poverty line. I especially thank Mark Boyd who gave me the opportunity to work for such a progressive union and for being my quiet assistant on 25 October this year.

I cannot give this inaugural speech without making some reference to the reason for the by-election in which I was elected. It is through a very strange set of circumstances that I am here giving my inaugural speech when so many other members are giving their valedictories. The decisions made in this place should always be made by us for the overall benefit of the people we represent. We should always make decisions with that in mind but, more importantly, be seen to be making decisions with that in mind. The needs of our electorates must always be the primary focus of our decision-making here and of our everyday actions. I never want to move from what is in my heart—from a deep belief in, and observance of, what is right and what is ethical.

I truly hope that the values I hold deep within my core will always be there, and that they are not jaded by the politics of this place. I have asked my friends and the people I love to remind me to stay grounded. I know it will be up to me, along with every other elected member, to restore faith in politicians. As I have heard referred to in several valedictory speeches of colleagues over the past couple of weeks, we do indeed have in New South Wales an honourable profession of politics. Indira Gandhi said:

You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.

I hope that my hands will always be open, and that my heart will always be strong. I thank the members of Parliament who have made me feel welcome, some of whom sit on the other side of this place. In particular, Dr Andrew McDonald has given valuable guidance on the nuances of this place. I also appreciate the work of the parliamentary staff that have been incredibly helpful over these past few weeks and no doubt will continue to be as I settle into the role. Finally, I thank the good people of Charlestown for their endorsement. From Adamstown to Eleebana, Dudley to Cardiff, Windale to Warners Bay, I intend to represent them well in an honest and hardworking manner. I am truly honoured to be their representative in Parliament. I intend to work hard to achieve good outcomes for them, and I will do my utmost to build their trust in me.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I congratulate the member for Charlestown. I said I was a Novocastrian. I was raised in Kahibah and I still have family there—I cannot guarantee that they voted for her. I note that she failed to mention Kahibah in her speech.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Auditor-General's Financial Audit Report, Volume Six 2014, dated 13 November 2014.

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

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [12.13 p.m.], in reply: I will continue my speech in reply to the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill

2014. In my earlier contribution I referred to concerns about the philosophical approach that this bill seeks to address. I draw the attention of members to an article in the *Australian Financial Review* on 3 November 2011 headed "Minister Pyne risks drowning in sea of shonky operators". The article stated:

Education Minister Christopher Pyne has two weeks before Federal Parliament sits again and he gets another chance to do a deal in the Senate to get his higher education reforms through.

If he has time to pause and reflect he should think about one phrase: "moral hazard". It's used to describe a situation in which one individual takes risks and another bears the consequences of it going wrong, and moral hazard is on display right now in the private college industry.

That is the basis of concern about the Government's Smart and Skilled proposal. The article continued:

Generous government subsidies, which are meant to ensure young people can gain vocational qualifications at a reasonable price, have spawned a massive expansion of private colleges.

As is almost inevitable when a lump of government money is available, shonky players have emerged to get fat fast on public subsidies, while delivering low-quality courses which don't get graduates jobs.

We are concerned that Smart and Skilled—the name of the Government's bill—intends to put out to competitive tendering public funds that have been otherwise dedicated to the public institution of TAFE, which provides the lion's share of vocational training in New South Wales. This bill, put forward by The Greens and passed in the other place with the support of the Labor Party and crossbenchers, waves a red flag and draws a line in the sand. It says to the Government that competitive tendering of these public funds to be given to private providers will lead to the problems we have seen in Victoria. The provision of public vocational education in Victoria has been devastated. The article continued:

The biggest object lesson is Vocation, the company chaired by a former federal education minister, Labor's John Dawkins, which floated to huge enthusiasm last year. Its share price collapsed last week when it became clear the Victorian government would take back \$20 million which had previously been given to BAWM, a Victorian subsidiary, following an audit which revealed the group's shortcomings.

The Australian Council of Private Education and Training (ACPET), which represents public colleges, admits its industry contains "unscrupulous operators".

It's very ready to admit this because it knows the consequences of not addressing the problem are too dreadful to contemplate.

It could mean the winding back of state and federal government policies which have built up over the last five years and are now pouring billions of dollars into private colleges each year. State governments—

it refers to what we will see next year if the Government's policy is implemented—

(mainly Victoria) now pay private colleges \$1.4 billion a year for providing courses and the federal government is offering an estimated \$1.3 billion in VET FEE-HELP loans for students to do courses this year. Five years ago the VET FEE-HELP scheme was virtually non-existent.

The private college industry is also rapidly changing its structure with the recent emergence of agents who sell courses, sometimes using unscrupulous marketing tactics.

I refer to that article because Smart and Skilled is leading us down that road. We should not head down that road, and we should not support it. We should be improving, nourishing and supporting the public provider. In my second reading speech I outlined all the issues that identify why the bill should proceed, why Smart and Skilled should be put on hold and why there should be a moratorium. In many places throughout the world public funds have been given to private providers, leading to lower costs and lower-quality outcomes. That is the reason this bill has been introduced, and why it is supported by The Greens. I understand that the Labor Party, the Shooters and Fishers Party and other crossbench members support it for the same reason. It demonstrates that the alarm bells are ringing. We have seen the impact in Victoria and we know what the impact will be in New South Wales. I commend this bill to the House and encourage members to support it.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.19 p.m.], by leave: I move:

That this debate be now adjourned.

Division called for.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Division called off.

Debate adjourned on motion, by leave, by Mr Geoff Provest and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

ANIMAL WELFARE (POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAMS) BILL 2014**Second Reading**

Debate called on, and adjourned on motion by Mr Alex Greenwich and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

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

NEWCASTLE CITY CENTRE PLANNING POLICY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.23 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the significant changes in building heights facilitated by the State Environmental Planning Policy Amendment (Newcastle City Centre), which has the effect of abolishing clause 7.9 (4) of the Newcastle LEP, and thus adversely impacting on the heritage of inner-city Newcastle (Area C, Newcastle LEP).
- (2) Notes that Newcastle Inner-City residents, representing many concerned citizens, is opposed to these changes for the negative impact it will have on public amenity, heritage and environment of the Newcastle city centre.
- (3) Urges the Minister for Planning to provide a separate and extended consultation period on this proposed amendment.

I will take the House on a bit of a tour. As many members might know, Newcastle is a beautiful city, with a character, charm and history of its own. At the east end of Hunter Street stands buildings more than a century old. Newcastle Beach lies just a few minutes' walk away—golden sand, rolling waves and beyond that the open stretch of the Pacific Ocean. There are examples of classic, gorgeous colonial architecture and these buildings still bear the dates of their construction in moulded stone and plaster. Some feature the letters "VR"—Victoria Regina. The beautiful old courthouse in Newcastle features a bust of Queen Victoria, looking down on the street.

The east end of Newcastle stands as a monument to Australia's colonial past. It is for this reason that the State Environmental Planning Policy Amendment (Newcastle City Centre) is a cause for such concern to many who live, work and play in the city. Newcastle is Australia's second oldest city, a place of rich history and cultural heritage. The atmosphere in the east end of town is a vital and delicate part of the city as a whole, and we must be careful if we tamper with it. The new planning controls seek to lower the maximum allowed building heights in this precinct so that any new structures cannot be higher than Newcastle's Christ Church Cathedral, which sits atop the hill and dominates the Newcastle skyline. The Minister for Planning has said:

The Department of Planning and Environment has moved to reduce the maximum building height to ensure the heritage integrity of the Newcastle skyline.

Many disagree with this assessment. There seem to be two main reasons for opposition, the first of which relates to the important matter of atmosphere and aesthetics, and the second of which relates to the more substantive matter of how much the community was consulted before the changes were made. In contrast to the unwavering support shown by the now discredited former Lord Mayor and member for Newcastle, President of the Newcastle Inner City Residents Alliance, Geoff Evans, has labelled these changes a "joke." He told the ABC:

I don't know where [the Minister] thinks she's looking from to say that the proposed high rise will be lower than the parapet of the Cathedral.

It won't be from most places in the inner city, it will still dominate, and overshadow and shade the local areas and kill the atmosphere of inner city Newcastle.

Dr Ann Hardy, historian and cultural advocate, writing an opinion piece for the *Newcastle Herald*, agreed. She wrote:

Sadly, what we currently have are planning instruments that allow destruction of the city's historic character, for quick economic gain. I think the community understands Newcastle's uniqueness and its relevance in the future. There can be economic windfalls for us all in the long term if we invest in the city's cultural heritage assets.

Brian Ladd from the Newcastle Inner City Residents Alliance agreed. He said:

This decision will burden Newcastle's future by destroying a unique heritage asset ...

The high-rise GPT Urban Growth Proposal contravenes the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012 which had widespread support from the community ...

Indeed, this seems to be a sticking point for many: a perceived lack of consultation with the broader Newcastle community. Mr Ladd also told me:

Contrary to the Minister for Planning's statement and statements from the former Lord Mayor and member for Newcastle, the critical amendment to the SEPP had no community consultation. Many object to the sleight of hand here.

The amendment has also raised eyebrows amongst Newcastle's elected councillors. Stephanie Posniak, Newcastle's Deputy Lord Mayor, said:

As I understand it, the Urban Renewal Strategy was about preserving the east end's cultural heritage while moving the Newcastle CBD to the west. This amendment seems to be preparing to do the opposite!

Even more troubling, in October the *Newcastle Herald* reported:

Independent expert advice prepared for Newcastle City Council that was highly critical of increased building height limits for development in the city's East End was kept from councillors and the public.

This advice was provided to the department. No wonder people in Newcastle feel that there was not adequate community consultation. Recent population projections show that Newcastle's population will reach 190,000 by 2031—an increase of 22 per cent. This is an issue that needs to be addressed. As the planning Minister said:

We need to ensure those new Novocastrians have a home, a job and an efficient way to get between the two.

I would argue that the choices made by this Government, such as the truncation of the rail line, make this much harder to do—but let us leave that aside for the moment. Should we not also ensure that these new Novocastrians have a city that embraces its past as well as its future; a city with a cultural heritage it can be proud of, an atmosphere, an aesthetic and a sense of community for all to enjoy? I urge the Minister for Planning to provide a separate and extended consultation period for this proposed amendment. I urge her and her Government to do this not only because it is right but also because Newcastle has already been through enough in recent months. If the Premier is serious about rebuilding trust, why not start here?

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

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

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 21

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

Noes, 42

Mr Anderson	Ms Goward	Mr Rohan
Mr Aplin	Mr Grant	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Mr Baumann	Mr Hartcher	Mr Smith
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Hazzard	Mr Speakman
Mr Bromhead	Mr Issa	Mr Stoner
Mr Brookes	Dr Lee	Ms Upton
Mr Conolly	Mr Marshall	Mr Ward
Mr Constance	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Coure	Mr O'Dea	Mrs Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	
Mr Evans	Ms Parker	
Mr Flowers	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gee	Mr Piccoli	Mr Patterson
Mr George	Mr Provost	Mr J. D. Williams

Pairs

Ms Burney	Mr Baird
Mr Lulich	Mr Dominello
Mrs Perry	Mr O'Farrell
Mr Rees	Mrs Skinner

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

Bill not read a second time.

NEWCASTLE CITY CENTRE POLICY

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.40 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak to this motion, which the Government will oppose for several good reasons that I will put forward. Unfortunately, the mover of the motion has not taken on board some of the occurrences. I will go through that in detail in my opening remarks. Newcastle is our State's second-largest city. Recently released population projections show that Newcastle's population will grow to almost 200,000 people by 2031—more than a 22 per cent increase. The Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy is a 25-year plan to revitalise Newcastle, reinforce its role as a twenty-first century regional centre, and provide a framework to create the jobs and homes needed to support those new Novocastrians.

The Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy and the updated planning controls that will shape the CBD's future and take advantage of the New South Wales Government's significant investment in new public transport were finalised on 25 July 2014. The final approval is a result of the comprehensive community consultation process and robust planning assessment of the Department of Planning and Environment. I am assured that due process has been followed and that the resulting planning controls are fair and balanced. The Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy and draft planning controls were exhibited in 2013 and attracted 420 submissions, mostly concerned about the truncation of the railway line at Wickham—I will speak more about that in a moment. Further amendments to the proposed planning controls were exhibited in March 2014 and attracted another 266 submissions, mostly concerning the proposed height of the three towers at the east end.

The Department of Planning and Environment met with key stakeholders, including Newcastle inner-city residents, to help understand their concerns. The new planning controls have been informed by this community consultation. In response to the submissions the maximum building heights on the GPT/UrbanGrowth NSW plan have been reduced to the height of the parapet of the nave of the Christ Church Cathedral, which goes to the point made in the opening remarks of the mover: that the height should not exceed

the Christ Church Cathedral. For the benefit of members—and anybody else reading *Hansard*—that is exactly what has been achieved through appropriate community participation and the consultation process. The parapet of the nave of the historic Christ Church Cathedral will always be the tallest point in that area. A comprehensive visual impact assessment by the department formed part of setting the height limits. The approach taken will ensure the city's historic skyline will be maintained with, once again, Christ Church Cathedral as the tallest building.

The new planning controls and update to the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy will: maintain the city's historic skyline, with Christ Church Cathedral set to remain the tallest building; re-establish Hunter Street as the city's main street, revitalising the mall and the east end; promote jobs growth by allowing for the University of Newcastle to have a presence in the CBD, with a \$25 million contribution from the New South Wales Government. I listened intently to the inaugural speech by the member for Newcastle, a councillor on Newcastle City Council, I believe, who spoke about his life and the opportunity to be educated. He spoke about a Rotary scholarship that enabled him to go to university. If we are going to provide that same opportunity to the new generations of Newcastle, I would have thought that a \$25 million investment by the Government into an expansion of the University of Newcastle was something that the new member for Newcastle should take on board.

The member for Newcastle mentioned the high level of unemployment in Newcastle. I do not need to remind anyone on the Government benches of the situation that we faced when we were elected in March 2011: we had the worst economic growth of any State in this country and we had the highest unemployment rate of any State in this country. But fast forward 3½ years to the point where we now have the best economic growth and the lowest unemployment. The only way that we can stimulate growth and force down unemployment is to grow the economy. The Government chose to lease the Port of Newcastle so that we could provide significant investment into the city of Newcastle—hundreds of millions of dollars—which will provide growth and jobs on behalf of the people that the member for Newcastle just mentioned. The member for Newcastle cannot have it both ways. He cannot promote the benefits of education without accepting the need to expand our universities.

Members cannot continue to cry foul on the high unemployment level in their own backyard if they do not support measures to grow their economy and grow employment opportunities on behalf of future generations of Newcastle. I was happy last night to join the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Mike Baird, at the Premier's Public Sector Awards where, lo and behold, the public sector award for building the economy went to none other than the long-term lease of the Port of Newcastle. As I said before, hundreds of millions of dollars will be injected into that economy. We do not support this motion for additional consultation as these updated planning controls that will guide the revitalisation of the city centre whilst protecting the unique character of New South Wales' second city have been finalised. I have visited the wonderful area around Honeysuckle many times. It will be further enhanced and embellished through the proposals of the Urban Renewal Strategy.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.47 p.m.], in reply: Apologies from the member for Newcastle who has just given his inaugural speech and is entertaining his family and supporters.

Mr Ray Williams: There's an excuse to let down your community.

Ms SONIA HORNER: I think that is very inappropriate, and let Hansard record what the member for Hawkesbury said, which was unfair and inappropriate. The member for Hawkesbury said that the Government will oppose this motion.

Mr Ray Williams: I would have thought the most important thing to do on behalf of a member of Parliament was to support your community.

Ms SONIA HORNER: Thank you. The Government opposed the motion, which is very disappointing, but my first question to the member for Hawkesbury is: What backroom bureaucrat wrote your speech because it was pedestrian, very un-Novocastrian and it showed the lack of consultation that is endemic in the Liberal-Nationals Government, which is why I moved this motion on behalf of the Newcastle and Hunter communities. Yes, I agree with the member for Hawkesbury, Newcastle is the State's second-largest city and we need more density to provide for the growth of the population. However, everyone agrees that density should occur in Newcastle's western suburbs. Newcastle east, with its historic nature, does not require or need more

high-rise development. We are saying to the Government that if it needs to build high-rise it should do so—we realise that the Government needs to accommodate growth and population—but it should do so in the west and not in the historic eastern area of Newcastle.

I disagree also with the member for Hawkesbury on the consultation process—the main reason why I moved this motion. Due process was not complied with. There was a lack of transparency—Speedy Gonzalez could not have kept up with the speed with which the submission process occurred. The community had less than two weeks to provide submissions to UrbanGrowth. That was not enough time and that is what the community is saying to the Government. There might be great aspects to what will happen and there might not. What was needed was more consultation. I think the community deserves that.

I agree with the member for Hawkesbury that the extension of the university is wonderful. In his inaugural speech the member for Newcastle mentioned the 5,000 additional students who will be coming into Newcastle. Of course, the problem is that parking in Newcastle is at full capacity. The light rail service that was supposed to be opened on Boxing Day has been stalled for two years. Therefore, for two years we will have more buses and clogged inner-city roads, and that will generate enormous frustration. I would love better public transport in Newcastle and the Hunter. However, to achieve that people will have to leave their cars at home and use public transport. I hope that happens, but the transition must be seamless, efficient, effective and affordable.

On behalf of the Newcastle and Hunter communities and the recently elected member for Newcastle, I urge the Minister for Planning to extend the consultation process. There are too many flaws in the current process and too many concerns have been raised by people who live and work in eastern Newcastle. We realise that population growth is important and, given that Newcastle is the second-largest city in New South Wales, we must accept it. However, we should not go ahead with development at the cost of our beautiful and wonderful inner-city heritage, which we must preserve. I urge members to support this motion.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 21

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

Noes, 45

Mr Anderson	Ms Goward	Mr Rowell
Mr Aplin	Mr Grant	Mr Sidoti
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mrs Skinner
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Hartcher	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mr Hazzard	Mr Souris
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Speakman
Mr Brookes	Mr Issa	Mr Stoner
Mr Casuscelli	Dr Lee	Ms Upton
Mr Conolly	Mr Marshall	Mr Ward
Mr Constance	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Coure	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Doyle	Ms Parker	
Mr Evans	Mr Perrottet	
Mr Flowers	Mr Piccoli	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gee	Mr Provest	Mr Patterson
Ms Gibbons	Mr Rohan	Mr J. D. Williams

Pairs

Mr Lalich	Mr Baird
Mrs Perry	Mr O'Farrell
Mr Rees	Mr Roberts
Mr Robertson	Mr Stokes

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [1.00 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to:

- (1) Permit the consideration of the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (NSW Gas Plan) Bill forthwith until concluded.
- (2) Provide for the following speaking time limits, without interruption for dilatory motions, on the second reading debate:
 - (a) Leader of the Opposition or one member deputed, next speaking—15 minutes; and
 - (b) Minister in reply—unspecified.
- (3) Permit, following the second reading of the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (NSW Gas Plan) Bill, the Minister to move forthwith "That the bill be now read a third time" without any consideration in detail.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [1.01 p.m.]: As those in this House would have observed, the first I knew of this motion was when the Opposition Whip handed it to me across the table. Apart from having no notice, the Opposition objects on the same basis that I put to the House this morning—that is, the Government has had almost four years to come up with a policy on coal seam gas. Those opposite are now trying to give themselves some fig leaf of credibility on this issue because the Leader of the Opposition has been smashing them all over New South Wales on coal seam gas.

This happened on the very day that the Legislative Council said that this House must have all its business conducted. This is indicative of the way in which this Government has conducted not only the Parliament but also policy on the run over the past 3½ years. It stands testament to the fact that in many ways, and particularly in relation to policy development, those opposite are unworthy to sit on the government benches. The Opposition will claim its lack of organisation on this issue, as punctuated by this motion, as a victory on coal seam gas, but Opposition members do not support the motion.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 45

Mr Anderson	Mr Grant	Mr Rohan
Mr Aplin	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Mr Hartcher	Mr Sidoti
Ms Berejikian	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Smith
Mr Brookes	Mr Issa	Mr Speakman
Mr Casuscelli	Dr Lee	Mr Stoner
Mr Conolly	Mr Marshall	Ms Upton
Mr Constance	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Ward
Mr Coure	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Evans	Ms Parker	
Mr Flowers	Mr Perrottet	
Mr Gee	Mr Piccoli	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Gibbons	Mr Provest	Mr Patterson
Ms Goward	Mr Roberts	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 23

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

Pairs

Mr Baird	Mr Lalich
Mr O'Farrell	Mrs Perry
Mr Toole	Mr Rees

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

PETROLEUM (ONSHORE) AMENDMENT (NSW GAS PLAN) BILL 2014**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [1.10 p.m.]: What an appalling state of affairs having debate on the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (NSW Gas Plan) Bill 2014 gagged—debate on an issue that has divided communities and that has created much anxiety right across the State. Today is truly a day of shame for the Liberal-Nationals Government of New South Wales; it is a day that people will mark on their calendars. Today the bill was introduced in this place—a bill that we read about because of leaks from the Government—after no consultation whatsoever. Worse still, there was no consultation—

[Interruption]

I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Myall Lakes. I read the *Daily Telegraph* and I understand that is how The Nationals heard about it too. This is an attempt by the Government to hide from what it is doing and, more importantly, its plan for coal seam gas across New South Wales. This bill will simply repeal applications for licences for coal seam gas; it does nothing to address the many concerns of people right across the State about their drinking water catchments—whether those people be in rural and regional New South Wales or in south-western Sydney, around Camden and Campbelltown, or in the Illawarra.

The Government is trying to make out that this bill is doing something wonderful to protect the people of New South Wales when, in fact, it does nothing. The Government is trying to make out that somehow it is protecting the people who live in the northern rivers region, all the people who protested at Bentley and all the people who are concerned about the impacts of coal seam gas in the northern rivers region when nothing could be further from the truth as this bill does nothing. The Government is not implementing all the recommendations of the Chief Scientist. What is worse, people in Lismore—in your electorate, Mr Deputy-Speaker—and people in the electorates of Ballina, Tweed and Clarence will see coal seam gas let rip if this bill is passed and this Government is re-elected.

People in the northern rivers region have a clear choice at the next election: Vote for The Nationals and they will get coal seam gas extraction in that region; or vote for Labor and they will never see coal seam gas extraction in that region. People in the northern rivers region who are living in places like Lismore, which is where 90 per cent of people said they do not want coal seam gas, will feel badly let down. The new Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals huffed and puffed to get a meeting and he got a meeting. But what happened after the meeting? The Nationals did what they always do. The Nationals are good in their electorates—they talk tough and talk themselves up as if they are going to defend the region. But when they

come to Macquarie Street they roll over like a lapdog. Today The Nationals once again rolled over like a lapdog and allowed coal seam gas extraction operations in the northern rivers region. This Government has opened the gate and rolled out the red carpet for the coal seam gas industry.

I want to share with members a conversation I overheard in the corridor. The member I am talking about used to have a great interest in coal seam gas. He is now sitting on the backbench because he was forced to go there and he still sits there—he is one of the disgraced. I was on the tenth floor and he was on the eleventh floor but he was so happy that I could not help overhearing what he said. He was in the corridor saying, "This is a great day for the coal seam gas industry." He is the only one on that side of the House who is prepared to be honest and he was honest only because he thought no-one could hear him confirming that this was a great day for the coal seam gas industry. But it is a terrible day for the people of New South Wales because this Government will not protect their interests.

Chief Scientist Mary O'Kane made a recommendation that there should be a standing committee of scientists watching what happens. Is that mentioned anywhere in the announcements today? Not a chance. Is this Government going to protect our drinking water catchments? Not a chance. In fact, the Government's glossy question and answer document says, "We will consider allowing extraction and exploration in drinking water catchments." The Government will allow operators into these areas to drill for coal seam gas. I remind the House of the protections in the Sydney catchment area. People can be fined and prosecuted if they walk into the Sydney catchment area. But this Government is proposing to allow trucks and drilling rigs to go into the area, to drill down and to look for coal seam gas regardless of the consequences on our drinking water in this city.

This Government is prepared to compromise prime agricultural and farming land. This Government is prepared to jeopardise industries such as dairy, tourism and beef production simply to roll out the carpet for coal seam gas. Let me inform the House about the meetings I have had with dairy farmers in the northern rivers region at Norco. For years and years those farmers felt the brunt of the duopoly of Coles and Woolworths when they were being forced to sell their milk at \$2 for two litres. They worked hard and invested millions to build an export industry exporting fresh milk to China's growing middle-class, which pays \$8 to \$9 a litre for that milk. Those dairy farmers are very concerned that this Government will flush that investment down the toilet. The only reason the Chinese are buying the milk is that it is produced in a pristine environment. All that will go once the Government signs off on Bentley and those other operations.

The beef producers in the northern rivers region are getting paid a premium because the beef that is produced there also is produced in a pristine environment. The message I got from those beef producers was very clear. They know that the business they have in China can be turned off at a moment's notice as soon as there are any questions whatsoever about contamination of that environment. Those businesses, those farmers, those people The Nationals purport to represent will suffer at the hands of the lapdogs to the Liberal Party because The Nationals did not have the courage to stand up for their communities and be heard. Tourism operators in the northern rivers region attract domestic tourists and international tourists to one of the most pristine parts of New South Wales.

The member for Lismore and the member for Tweed know better than most how beautiful that environment is, how wonderful it is and why people are attracted to that region. They are attracted there because of its pristine nature. All that is about to disappear because today the Government will pull one of the greatest swifties ever on those who have invested their time, effort and personal savings—these people have invested millions of dollars—to grow a business and establish themselves. That is about to disappear because of the Government's disgraceful approach.

The most appalling and deceitful act—I must say that so far it is pretty bad for those people—is the deceit being played out when the Government says this is about putting downward pressure on gas prices or driving down gas prices. For three years the Government has seen the average household gas bill go from \$600 to \$900; and on 1 July this year it approved another 17.8 per cent increase in gas prices. All the experts—not me—say that we are likely to see gas prices rise by two or three times in the next few years for one reason and one reason only—not because we cannot get gas out of New South Wales but because we are now exposed to the global market when it comes to gas. It is useful to quote an article from that well-known economics commentator, Ross Gittins. I think he is pretty impartial and very honest when it comes to economics. The article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 26 February this year states:

Declining standards at federal level have been matched by bad behaviour at state level.

He was talking about honesty in the Liberal Party. The article continues:

For an example of state politicians willing to blatantly mislead their electorates, look no further than the Victorian and NSW governments' dishonest explanation for the looming jump of about 25 per cent in the price of household gas.

The true reason for the rise is that the building of natural gas liquefaction plants in Gladstone will soon allow gas producers on Australia's east coast to export their gas and obtain the much higher prices paid on the world market. The east coast will go from being outside the world market to inside it.

The price rise is thus inevitable unless governments were to prohibit companies from exporting their gas ... Rather, state politicians have taken up the dishonest claim of the gas companies that permitting them to build new and controversial coal seam gas plants would somehow prevent gas prices from rising or force them back down. But as any student of economics could tell you, there's no way NSW and Victoria could ever produce enough natural gas to significantly affect the world price of gas.

The price of gas in NSW and Victoria would stay below the world price only if the new producers were compelled to sell their gas to local users at below the world price ...

Last week the gas companies' illogical argument was taken up by the new NSW Minister for Energy and Resources, Anthony Roberts.

I'm prepared to believe Roberts may be economically illiterate—

Mr Paul Lynch: Not just economically.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I am quoting Ross Gittins, who further said:

Although Roberts has replaced a minister who left the cabinet under a cloud, he seems uninhibited in his efforts to mislead the electorate.

It's hard to know whether he is simply seeking to advance the gas industry's vested interests or is setting up an alibi which allows the government to blame the inevitable jump in gas prices on those terrible people opposed to fracking.

Today we know that it is an alibi to run cover for the gas industry. If members opposite were serious they would take up my proposition, which is to go to the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] and establish a national gas reservations policy. Instead, we have heard nothing. Even Ross Gittins said that the only way to put downward pressure on gas prices in this State is to put in place a national gas reservations policy—something that business supports. Businesses cannot secure long-term gas contract prices because the gas companies know that in 12 months, 18 months or two years they will be able to flog off gas overseas for much more than is currently being paid in this State. Major employers of thousands of people in manufacturing in this State are worried that if they cannot get a contract for 12 months they will not be able to plan for the future, and that puts jobs at risk. This is a travesty because the Government has gagged the debate. It is a travesty because the Government is pulling the wool over the eyes of the people of New South Wales by making out it is doing something to protect the environment when nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [1.25 p.m.]: Mr Deputy-Speaker—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Pursuant to the motion to suspend standing and sessional orders, the next speaker should be from the Opposition.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: No. It is straight to me for unlimited time, or as much time as required.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: I request that we stop the proceedings in the House until this has been sorted out.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It has been sorted out. It was clear that the Leader of the Opposition would speak for 15 minutes and then I would speak for an unlimited period, or as required.

Mr John Robertson: The suspension motion that I have before me, which was moved and then handed to our Whip—

Mr Paul Lynch: And was read out.

Mr John Robertson: —and was read out states, "Leader of the Opposition or one member deputed, next speaking—15 minutes; one Opposition member—5 minutes"—

Mr Paul Lynch: "Or."

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: No, it is clear.

Mr John Robertson: The motion states, "One Government member—5 minutes; one other member—5 minutes; Minister in reply—unspecified".

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: You should listen.

Mr John Robertson: That is what was tabled.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: No, it was not tabled. Listen to what I say.

Mr John Robertson: That is what was handed to us, so the Minister has pulled another swiftie today.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: That is what was handed to you.

Mr John Robertson: That is what we were given. We assume it was moved, but we did not see it beforehand.

Mr Paul Lynch: It was read it out. I remember the one extra Opposition speaker.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It is quite clear—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It is clear on the document you handed to me, but the document handed to me is different.

Mr Paul Lynch: You couldn't run a chook raffle.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The Leader of the Opposition has it wrong. He should listen for a change. We are here to fix Labor's mess.

Mr John Robertson: You have it wrong on this.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I will not start wrestling with pigs.

Mr John Robertson: With what?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It gets dirty. You wrestle with pigs and you get dirty. They enjoy it.

Mr Richard Amery: There cannot have been two notices of motions circulated, surely.

Dr Andrew McDonald: That would make the whole thing invalid.

Mr Paul Lynch: Let's get the tape.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Not at all.

Dr Andrew McDonald: You have a problem.

Mr Paul Lynch: Get Hansard to read it back.

Mr Richard Amery: The Minister read the motion as circulated. I watched him.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: We divided on it. It is not my problem if members opposite do not know what they are dividing on.

Dr Andrew McDonald: We divided on a motion that referred to five minutes.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: That is where Hansard is.

Mr Paul Lynch: Let's get Hansard to read it back.

Mr Richard Amery: We divided on the motion moved by the Minister.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Minister has indicated that this is what he read out. Frankly, I had another document—

Dr Andrew McDonald: We did, too.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: We divided on the motion I read out.

Mr Michael Daley: We can always check with Hansard.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Do you want to seek leave and give us five minutes?

Mr Ron Hoenig: You can move another suspension of standing and sessional orders and get another division.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [1.29 p.m.]: May I make a short contribution in relation to the confusion in the House? Following the division there was some movement in the House and a deal of noise. It was not possible, first, for Opposition members, or any other member, to hear what the Leader of the House was moving. What then happened, as a matter of chronology, was the Whip went over to the clerks and asked for a copy of the motion, at which time the Leader of the House handed the Opposition Whip this notice. If we are to proceed upon the disingenuous basis that is proposed by the Leader of the House—it is quite disingenuous—it will mean that the clerks of the House, through no fault of theirs, can no longer be trusted to circulate in good faith any motions to members.

The Leader of the House, or any other member, can slyly read something different from that which has been circulated by the clerks. That would be a disaster for proceedings in this House, Mr Deputy-Speaker. I implore you to recommit the motion so that we can proceed to debate it—and we will give an undertaking not to divide on it—or all hell is going to break loose because this is disingenuous. It would be a disaster for proceedings in the House. It will mean that the clerks can no longer be trusted because those opposite want to be sneaks.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [1.31 p.m.]: I take great offence at that comment. But if there was confusion—

Dr Andrew McDonald: You've been told to by your mate; your mate told you to give us another five minutes.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank Dr McDonald for his contribution. It is a shame he was not there to look after his community when these things occurred.

Mr John Robertson: It just descends even further into a disgrace; it descends even further into absolutely disgraceful behaviour.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Considering the time it may take to get the record of *Hansard*—

Mr John Robertson: We will wait. We want to wait because I am not going to accept for one minute that you moved something you did not. We will wait.

Mr Michael Daley: We will not divide. Just recommit it, pass it and let's go.

Mr John Robertson: No, because he stood there and said that he moved something different. I want to hear it.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It will be my word against yours. Let us bring it on because I know what I read.

Mr John Robertson: I will happily stand corrected, but that is not what we thought we were dividing on.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It has been verified that those points were not read out.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: There you go. So do I hear an apology? Apologise.

Mr John Robertson: I still do not accept the way you handled it. Why did you hand us something different? Why are there two motions?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The shadow Leader of the House and I have come to a compromise. If there was confusion because of the noise in the House, I am happy to move the following:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to amend paragraph (2) of the resolution for the consideration of the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (NSW Gas Plan) Bill to read as follows:

"(2) Provide for the following speaking time limits, without interruption for dilatory motions, on the second reading debate:

- (a) Leader of the Opposition or one member deputed, next speaking—15 minutes.
- (b) One Opposition member—5 minutes.
- (c) Minister in reply—unspecified."

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

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I thank the Minister and the Opposition.

Mr John Robertson: I apologise that I did not hear it, but what I do not apologise for is the way in which the Opposition was given something different from what the member read. That is completely unethical.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have made comments in relation to that matter. It is exactly what was handed to me also.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [1.34 p.m.]: This important issue is sensitive to the community that I represent and to the broader Illawarra community. We are here today—four days before we wrap up this parliamentary term—debating a bill about one of the most sensitive and important issues to ever come before this Parliament and it is being rammed through the House. I make it clear that from the day after my preselection, and while we were still in government, I said that we had got this wrong. I am on the record in my community—and it received widespread media coverage across the State—as saying that we got this wrong. But as I read the election commitments given by the former Premier, I hoped that the issue would be resolved.

Mr Tony Issa: Which one?

Mr RYAN PARK: The most recent former Premier. I hoped that it would be solved by his statement in around January or February 2011 that there would be no coal seam gas [CSG] exploration in water catchment areas—no ifs or buts; a guarantee. The NSW Gas Plan, which has been distributed, contains the section "Common questions and answers". It poses the question: "Will there be CSG wells in the Sydney water catchment area?" Two words could be used in answer to that question: yes or no. If the Government honours its election commitment, the answer will be no. Let us be clear about that; we are not going to muck around. If the Government intends to honour its election commitment—it is not the Opposition's election commitment—it will answer "no" to that question.

But that is not the answer. The answer is: "The Government will give careful consideration to the Chief Scientist and Engineer's recommendations to build knowledge and information about the catchment". Mr Acting-Speaker and I understand, more than most members in this place, just how precious the Sydney water catchment is. But it is not just precious to our communities; it serves millions of people across this great State, particularly the large populations in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra. Today we expected members opposite to do what they should have done a long time ago. When John Robertson introduced legislation to ban CSG in water catchments those opposite should have had the nerve to back us in. Yet today we see more wishy-washy words.

Mr John Sidoti: Where were you at the last election?

Mr RYAN PARK: The member for Drummoyne asks where I was.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Drummoyne will come to order.

Mr RYAN PARK: As I have explained already, the day after my preselection I said publicly that we got this wrong. I will not have Government members challenge my credentials on this issue. I have said multiple times that the previous Government got this issue wrong. But it should have been easily cleared up. Since that failure was acknowledged the Government has had 3½ years to right that wrong. Legislation introduced by John Robertson and the Labor Party to protect our precious water catchment areas could have had bipartisan support. Today, the fourth last sitting day of the Parliament, a bill is being rushed through without any consideration for communities. The people of Keira, Heathcote and Wollondilly still are not sure whether their water catchments will be protected.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [1.39 p.m.], in reply: The Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (NSW Gas Plan) Bill 2014 is part of the package of reforms set out in the NSW Gas Plan—this Government's blueprint for developing a safe and sustainable gas industry, and securing reliable and affordable gas supplies. To put it simply, this bill is about ensuring that future petroleum exploration is undertaken on our terms. A key priority in the NSW Gas Plan is to pause, reset and recommence gas exploration. In line with this, the bill amends the Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 to wipe the slate clean of new exploration applications. Currently, there are 16 outstanding applications for new petroleum titles in New South Wales. These applications are a legacy of a licensing framework that gives companies free rein to apply for petroleum exploration titles whenever and wherever they please. Taken together, these applications cover almost half the State, including large parts of the North Coast, the Riverina district and the western part of the State.

The bill extinguishes these applications. Effectively, this will reduce the land covered by petroleum titles and applications from 60 per cent of the State to 15 per cent. In short, the bill will extinguish areas that cover almost half the State. By rolling back these areas, the bill lays the foundations for a strategic release framework, which we will introduce next year. Importantly, no new applications will be considered until the strategic release framework is in place. Strategic release will give the Government control over the areas that are released for petroleum exploration and production. Strategic release will enable the Government to identify the most appropriate areas for gas extraction and ensure community consultation is conducted up front. New exploration licences will be issued only in areas released by the Minister for Resources and Energy after a careful assessment of economic, environmental and social factors.

Title areas will be put out for public expressions of interest so that the Government can identify the most suitable and capable proponents. We recognise that a reset of the Government's approach to gas exploration and development is required. The bill achieves just that. It lays the foundations for a transparent, informed and strategic approach to allocating our petroleum resources. The bill is an intrinsic part of the NSW Gas Plan—our blueprint for a safe and sustainable gas industry, and reliable and affordable gas supplies. If the Labor Party is serious about fixing the legacy it left behind, it will wholeheartedly support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Anthony Roberts agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.42 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery Andrea Duthie, Wakehurst electorate officer and her mother Mrs Linda Ahearne from London, guests of the Attorney General and member for Wakehurst. I also welcome Maria Katsogiannis, a Marrickville electorate officer who today was acknowledged with a Parliamentary Service Award for 25 years service, guest of the member for Marrickville. I welcome Marilyn Cameron, North Shore electorate officer who received a Parliamentary Service Award for 20 years service, guest of the Minister for Health, the member for North Shore. I also welcome Melva Gee, mother and guest of the member for Orange. I also welcome 30 year 12 legal studies students and their teachers from Callaghan College Jesmond Campus, guests of the member for Wallsend.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery Senator Ricardo Lara from the California State Senate, United States of America, representing the thirty-third district, and Daniel Harris from the United States Consulate. I also welcome Councillor Peter Cavanagh and Councillor Luise Elsing from Woollahra Council, guests of the member for Sydney.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Electricity Supply Amendment (Bush Fire Hazard Reduction) Bill 2014
Work Health and Safety (Mines) Amendment Bill 2014
Marine Estate Management Bill 2014
Regional Relocation Grants Amendment Bill 2014
Water NSW Bill 2014

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I advise members that the Minister for Planning, and Minister for Women, will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Local Government and also the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.20 p.m.]

MEMBER FOR SWANSEA AND MEMBER FOR PORT STEPHENS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I direct my question to the Premier. It has been reported that the Premier promised to sack any Minister and member of Parliament who leaks information to the media. Will the Premier sack the member for Port Stephens and the member for Swansea as his candidates or does he believe leaking information to the media is more serious than corruption or taking illegal donations from property developers?

The SPEAKER: Order! I warned members yesterday about the nature of political questions. The member for Fairfield will come to order. The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Are you kidding? That is what the Opposition asks after four years in Opposition; that is the best they have got. That is the issue they bring to the Parliament and challenge this great State. I will not listen to anything the Leader of the Opposition says. On those matters I have made my position very clear in this House over the past few weeks.

Mr John Robertson: So leaks are more serious than corruption?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked his question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: You can put whatever spin you want on it. I have answered the question and said that the Leader of the Opposition needs to understand PO box 1158 in Auburn. Why is he happy to throw away democracy for everyone but the member for Auburn?

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the Leader of the Opposition asks a difficult question he will get one back. Does the Leader of the Opposition want an answer to that question or does he want to raise another spurious point of order?

Mr John Robertson: No, it is relevance under Standing Order 129. With respect—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked. The Leader of the Opposition asked the type of question I have been warning him about all week.

Mr John Robertson: He is required to remain relevant and Auburn and some post office box has nothing to do with his views.

The SPEAKER: Order! And nor is anything the Leader of the Opposition asked in the question. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He said it was N40; it is N41 apparently. He is happy to use that in Strathfield, he is happy to use that in Gosford, he is happy to use that in Burwood but for some reason he is against Auburn. Why is he against Barbara?

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member about taking spurious points of order. The nature of the question that was asked will elicit the response that the Premier is giving. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Guy Zangari: My point of order is under Standing Order 129.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Now the Secretary of the Labor Party is against Barbara; so the Leader of the Opposition is against Barbara, Jamie is against Barbara—

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 75. The Premier should address the member by her proper title.

The SPEAKER: Order! The point of order is upheld.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Mount Druitt makes a good point. Who supports the member for Auburn?

[Interruption]

There he goes, and that is one of the challenges because we heard a speech this week from the former Premier. That is the sort of leadership they saw.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 73. If the Premier wishes to reflect on the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition he should do so by way of substantive motion.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is not just me reflecting; the Leader of the Opposition is also reflecting on his own leadership because he is worried that if his preselection does not go the right way, his leadership after the election might actually be challenged. We are saying to him, "Get on with the job of leading your party. Get on with the job and put some good policies together. Start listening to the speech of the member for Toongabbie." He gave sense to the Labor narrative. He gave sense to what every single person is looking for. They thought, "Hang on a second. This guy had something."

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: Madam Speaker—

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

Ms Linda Burney: The Premier is not being relevant.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked. The member will resume her seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition might explain to the member for Auburn why she is not supporting the member for Auburn herself. The Government is happy to get on with policies that look after the people of this State. We are improving services, building infrastructure, making responsible decisions and looking after the vulnerable. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to come in here and ask a sensible question he should do so.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The hilarity will cease.

NSW GAS PLAN

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: My question is addressed to the Premier. How will the Government use world's best practice to secure the State's gas supply for the future?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is a sensible question from a good member, a Parliamentary Secretary, who is doing a great job. They love him in the north-west. He is doing a fantastic job. Over the past 3½ years there has been a lot of work to clean up the mess left by those opposite—every portfolio and the economy experienced that mess. The good news for the people of New South Wales is that we are rebuilding the State. The State was at the bottom of the pack; the good news is it is now leading the nation again. It is about time but a lot of hard work has gone into that.

Today we have outlined a clear and comprehensive strategic framework for the gas sector. It has been a long time coming because the mess left behind by those opposite was something to be seen. They were happy to hand out licences from one end of the State to the other. Was there any protection whatsoever? No, there was none whatsoever. Did they care who got them? No, they did not care. That is what was left behind. The good news is that the Minister for Energy has outlined today a plan that draws a line in the practice of the past. It takes us forward and that is a positive thing. Previously 60 per cent of the State was covered by coal seam gas [CSG] licences and applications. Under our gas plan that will be reduced to 15 per cent.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Even the Leader of the Opposition seems to—kind of, maybe, who knows—understand that the State of New South Wales needs gas to support businesses, the millions of households and jobs. It is important for the economy. The question is: how does one provide a framework to deliver that? That is what we have outlined today. Importantly, we thank the Chief Scientist for her very comprehensive report. We have asked her to look at the challenges and make recommendations on how we can go forward in a safe and sustainable way that protects water, looks after the environment and enables the industry to develop in the way it should. That includes better science.

We will adopt all of the Chief Scientist's recommendations on the need to improve the science and understanding of the sector as we move forward. It also has a pause, reset and recommence for gas exploration on our terms. That is an important point. We cannot go forward until we have it on our terms. As we get the science and regulation in place, they will be our terms and our terms only. That will ensure that we protect our communities, it will ensure that we protect our water and it will ensure that we have a very clear understanding that we do this properly with the right basis and all the appropriate science.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will not have the position like those opposite where at \$1,000 a pop whoever wanted to come along could go and get a licence wherever they wanted. They could come from any part of the State and say, "We would love a licence"; "Off you go; knock yourself out." That is over. We have announced also that we will be sharing the benefits with landholders. It is pretty simple. Why should our landholders in any way get anything other than the best they can in terms of the compensation they receive for co-existing with gas? We are asking IPART to transparently provide a framework and information to the community so they understand what sort of arrangement they can negotiate in their interests and at the same time put additional community benefits together.

As the benefits come forward they go to the landholders and the broader community and provide a basis for co-existence. We will also remove the CSG licences from national parks for good. That was something

that those opposite certainly were happy to do—put licences wherever they wanted. This is strong and certain regulation and we are proud to appoint the Environment Protection Authority as our strong regulator in this space. You need to have a strong regulator and that is what we are providing: the strongest possible regulator in the State we can. We want world's best practice. We need to have world's best practice in this State. We have the toughest regime. We have taken strong action, and we will continue to do it.

Finally, we are securing the gas supply. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition kind of talk about this, maybe. But we do need to have gas supply in this State. It is important. We do it on our terms and not Labor's terms. We do it on the right terms and not Labor's terms, and that is the only way to go forward. Regarding the key projects underway, the expectation is they can provide up to 75 per cent of the gas in the State. This is in addition to the memorandum of understanding we put in place with the Northern Territory to look at private sector opportunities. We are about taking this State forward. We are about handling gas in the right way, not in Labor's way and it is about time we had this policy rather than the mess that was left behind.

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

MEMBER FOR MENAI

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Premier. In October the Premier said:

Breaking donation laws is not an administrative oversight, it is corrupt conduct.

Will he sack the member for Menai as his candidate for Holsworthy, given she was found guilty of breaking donation laws in 2012?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This is what you get. Does anyone wonder why there is such disunity on that side around the current leadership? I am not going to grace your grubs and your smears with any form of direct response because they deserve nothing less. What we are determined to do is to get this State moving. We have got the State's economy moving. We are delivering record infrastructure. We are delivering better services and I look forward to the election because the election will be—

Mr John Robertson: Bring it on.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: You can do whatever you like. You can take populism from one end of the State to the other—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will take the right policies with the right principles. What you do is take calls from union mates and stand attention to union mates. We stand up for the people of New South Wales. That is what we do. We stand up for the people of New South Wales and we are proud to do it, we will continue to do it and we will seek a mandate to continue to do it in March.

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

NSW GAS PLAN

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State. How will the New South Wales Gas Plan ease cost of living pressures on New South Wales families?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for his question. He is interested, as are those on this side, in putting downward pressure on costs for families and households in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government is committed to safe and sustainable gas development and a secure gas supply for New South Wales households, businesses and manufacturers. There are over 500 heavy industrial users, 33,000 small businesses and more than 1.2 million households that use natural gas in this State each and every day. We understand the needs of our households and businesses, and the Government, I am proud to say, has delivered.

Today, along with my colleague the Deputy Premier, I had the pleasure of announcing the New South Wales Gas Plan. The plan is a clear strategic framework to deliver world's best-practice regulation of the gas industry while securing vital gas supplies for this great State. Our plan will fix the mess that Labor left in its wake, allowing us to pause, reset and recommence gas exploration on our terms.

In March 2011 petroleum titles or applications covered 45 per cent of the State, without any adequate protections. Today I am pleased to inform the House that changed. The New South Wales Gas Plan completely resets the approach to gas development in our State. We have built on the scientific evidence and set a clear direction for exploration and production to deliver a world-class regulatory regime. Under the plan the Government has outlined 17 clear actions to overhaul our gas sector and ensure New South Wales sets the standard as to how this industry must operate.

We have accepted all 16 recommendations of the New South Wales Chief Scientist in the independent review. We have announced a strategic release framework to ensure any future gas exploration is done on our terms. We have introduced legislation to extinguish all current petroleum exploration licence [PEL] applications. We have established a one-off buyback scheme for existing licences. We are removing all exploration titles from national parks. We are implementing and enforcing a "use it or lose it" policy to ensure titleholders develop resources or risk losing their title. We have appointed the Environment Protection Authority as the lead regulator for gas exploration and production in New South Wales.

We are introducing new minimum standards for industry to ensure world's best practice environmental and regulatory standards are adhered to. We are providing whole-of-government coordination for strategic energy projects, ensuring the efficient and safe progression of projects that provide substantial amounts of gas to the New South Wales domestic market. We are providing greater clarity for industry and communities by making clear who is responsible for approving gas development. We are ensuring that landholders share in the financial benefits of gas exploration and production.

We have commissioned the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to provide independent expert advice on benchmark compensation rates for those landholders. We are establishing a community benefits fund to provide for local projects in communities where gas exploration and production occurs. We are working with other States, Territories and the private sector to explore possibilities for new gas pipelines to New South Wales. We are asking gas companies to demonstrate how projects that develop New South Wales gas reserves will benefit New South Wales consumers. We are commissioning an independent review of royalties to ensure we have the right settings to develop a competitive gas industry. We are supporting households and businesses to use gas more efficiently to help reduce their bills and reduce pressure on overall gas supplies.

The Government is delivering real change. We are delivering a clear plan for this great State, a clear plan for the future of the State's natural gas industry and a clear plan for securing gas supplies for the households and businesses of the State. Let us contrast this to those opposite. Where we have a clear plan, those opposite have a poor press release and a couple of bad sound bites. The Leader of the Opposition—who was at the Cabinet table that handed out 39 petroleum exploration licences with none of the protections that we have put in place—is now trying to rewrite history. While we are securing gas supplies for New South Wales he is shutting down industry, destroying jobs, starving regional economies and locking in higher prices.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: On that side of the House you have the man who delivered the PELs over Sydney. St Peters was in there somewhere, where they were going to start drilling for coal seam gas. There were none of the protections that we put in place. Compare and contrast—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The Minister is using maps as a prop.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is not using the maps as a prop because he cited the source. They are petroleum exploration licence maps and they are based on factual information. Opposition members would like the Minister to show them the maps. They are complaining that they cannot see them.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: This is the Sydney Basin now under this Government and this is the Sydney Basin under the Labor Government. I ask members to note the difference. Again, these maps will be available for all members to peruse.

Mr Richard Amery: You have finally worked out what State you are in.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mount Druitt is not funny.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: We have opposite the man and the party that delivered this.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If it is the same point of order—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Holding up a map for the audience to see is using a prop.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is not being used as a prop. It has been sourced from a document. The Minister has said that members will receive the maps this afternoon.

Dr Andrew McDonald: In that case he should table them and not use them as props.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister may table them. In fact, he has offered to table them.

Dr Andrew McDonald: He is using them as props.

The SPEAKER: Order! They are not props.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: This is what this Government has delivered: compare and contrast. The best thing the Leader of the Opposition could offer this State would be an apology. He should also promise that he will get out of the Government's way so that it can get on with the job of cleaning up the Labor Party's mess. This Government is delivering for New South Wales households and businesses. It is delivering a clear plan for a safe and secure future. [*Time expired.*]

ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I direct my question to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer tell the House whether the \$20 billion he has been bandying around as the revenue that will be raised from privatising the State's electricity assets is real or nominal?

The SPEAKER: Order! That is stretching the standing orders relating to questions. Opposition members know what I am talking about. I direct them to the standing orders, which they breach almost every day. The member for Kiera will be removed from the Chamber if he argues with me. He should go back to biting his nails.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The Government has a \$20-billion plan. What do members opposite have? They have absolutely nothing. The shadow Treasurer's obsession with the Government's infrastructure plan is somewhat concerning. It makes me question whether he supports the transaction.

[*Interruption*]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. We are not interested in what she has to say. The member for Maroubra asked the question and the Treasurer is answering it.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The Government has a very clear direction—a \$20 billion infrastructure plan to rebuild New South Wales that will revitalise this city and this State. We have a plan.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiera will come to order. It was a ridiculous question and the member should not keep repeating it.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: What do we hear from members opposite?

The SPEAKER: Order! If Opposition members do not come to order they will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: They ask questions about the structure of the transaction and the infrastructure fund. We know that the Opposition's policy in this area ultimately will result in higher electricity prices, no infrastructure plan and the protection of union rorts. That is what this is all about. Members opposite should not come into this place in advance of any scoping work—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: You do not know the difference between real and nominal.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I am waiting for order in the House. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time. I direct the member for Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber until the end of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 2.43 p.m.]

NSW GAS PLAN

Mr DONALD PAGE: I address my question to the Deputy Premier, and Leader of The Nationals. How is the Government safeguarding our precious land and water resources?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is on three calls to order. If he continues to interject he will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr TROY GRANT: The Leader of the Opposition is a joke. I thank the member for Ballina for the question and for his ongoing interest in what interests all regional members: the safety, security and prosperity of New South Wales, and particularly regional communities. In his valedictory speech, which he made a couple of nights ago, the member for Ballina flagged his desire to make his electorate coal seam gas free. The parochial and paranoid coal seam gas debate that has polarised this State was ignited by members opposite. Today the Government has a strategic plan to realise the aspirations of the member for Ballina and other regional members.

We know what is required and we do not rely on headlines. The Government wants to take the fear out of this debate. We want everyone to stop yelling and to accept the science as presented by the one person I trust in this debate—that is, the Chief Scientist and Engineer. The Government has produced comprehensive safeguards and regulations that will protect our precious land and water resources. What protection did members opposite provide when they blanketed the State with petroleum exploration licences? None—zero. The Government's plan delivers that protection.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: I make it clear to my colleagues and to the wider community—and particularly those affected by the coal seam gas debate and the paranoia that has been generated—that if a proposal is not safe, sustainable or compliant, it will not proceed. This Government has the plan to deliver that outcome. This Government has today started to clean up the mess left to it by the Labor Party. It comes down to one simple point: Who has credibility on this issue? Did members opposite have credibility when they blanketed this State with petroleum exploration licences?

Government Members: No.

Mr TROY GRANT: They had zero credibility. The Leader of the Opposition has the credibility of a breadcrumb. The Coalition was elected to grow jobs and it has credibility because that is what it is doing. Members on this side of the Chamber were elected to put downward pressure on the price of energy for businesses, families and industry across this State, and that is what we are doing. We have a track record after 3½ years that members opposite could only dream about after 16 years. The reason they could never achieve that—

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

Mr TROY GRANT: This Government has done what the people of New South Wales wanted it to do. Members opposite simply focus on themselves. I heard a great interjection from the member for Clarence.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: It was about dairy enterprises. Did the Leader of the Opposition stand up for them when he was in Cabinet? No, he did not.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The Deputy Premier does not need their assistance.

Mr TROY GRANT: I trust the Premier and the Minister for Resources and Energy because they have credibility on this issue. Members opposite have no credibility. Where was the Leader of the Opposition when his Government blanketed the State with petroleum exploration licences? Did he stand up? No, he did not. Did he stand up to Ian Macdonald and Eddie Obeid? No, he did not. He was the Marcel Marceau of the Labor Government; he said absolutely nothing. I am proud of this Government's response to the coal seam gas crisis. Members on this side of the Chamber have worked tirelessly with the community and industry to come up with a strategic, specific plan not only to secure gas supplies for this State into the future but also, and most importantly, to protect our land and water resources. Members opposite are shameless. They will say and do anything to get elected. They are interested only in headlines. We have seen headlines about the northern rivers. Where is their plan? Do they have a plan? Has anyone seen it?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who are not interested in the Minister's answer should leave the Chamber.

Mr TROY GRANT: This Government has started the long job of cleaning up the mess left behind by Labor. The Government has a comprehensive set of regulations designed to safeguard our precious land and water. If a coal seam gas proposal is not safe or sustainable, I assure the House that it will not proceed.

RESTART NSW

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. According to the latest Auditor-General's report into the finances of New South Wales, Restart NSW earned just 1½ per cent interest last year, which was lower than the rate of inflation. Is it not the case then that the value of the funds invested in Restart NSW is actually going backwards in real terms?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has the call and does not need the assistance of Government members.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The shadow Treasurer seems to be obsessed with what is real and what is nominal. The Government has a real plan funded by Restart NSW, and his support for the Leader of the Opposition is nominal.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those opposite should have no interest in a fund they do not support. They should have no interest in the recycling capital initiative the Government has put in place that is designed to revitalise the great city of Newcastle and rebuild infrastructure across the State. If those opposite want to ask smug questions—

Mr Michael Daley: You don't know the answer.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I know the answer, but I am not going to respond to stupid questions.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 130. The Treasurer is seeking to debate the question, which is out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have made the comment in the past that if members ask an argumentative question they will get an argumentative response.

Mr John Robertson: How is it an argumentative question?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. If Opposition members ask questions that comply with the standing orders then I will make sure they get the relevant information.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those opposite are getting agitated about my answers, so I must be doing something right.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has the call and has not said anything since the last point of order was taken. Does the member for Maroubra have a different point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, which states that questions should seek information. The information I am seeking from the Treasurer is confirmation—

The SPEAKER: Order! Factual information, that is correct.

Mr Michael Daley: —that Restart NSW earned \$71 million in interest on \$6.2 billion of investments.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is correct.

[Interruption]

Mr Michael Daley: That was the Treasurer's credibility falling through the floor. I am seeking information, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am not criticising this particular question. The Treasurer has the call and will return to the leave of the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The shadow Treasurer made light of someone falling down the stairs.

The SPEAKER: Order! The behaviour of Opposition members this afternoon is deplorable and juvenile. If Government members were behaving in that way, as they often are, I would say the same thing to them. I do not like bullies.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The question related to the billions of dollars in the Restart NSW fund that are being put to work in the interests of the people of New South Wales. I point out to those in the gallery that 3½ years ago, under Labor, according to the CommSec State of the States report, New South Wales was ranked eighth and we have now been ranked first. Those opposite do not like that.

Mr Clayton Barr: The Treasurer does not understand the State's finances.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The bottom line is that the Leader of the Opposition is nothing more than "Wreck-It Ralph".

NSW GAS PLAN

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: My question is addressed to the Treasurer. How does the Government's gas plan support economic growth?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for his question. The proposed gas plan for New South Wales is a positive step.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! I have asked Opposition members to come to order. The Treasurer is answering a question. I direct the member for Maroubra to remove himself from the Chamber under sessional orders until the conclusion of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Maroubra left the Chamber at 2.54 p.m.]

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The proposed gas plan for New South Wales is the first positive step in many years for the New South Wales energy sector. It is an unambiguous win for families, employment, the environment and farmers. It is a plan which, according to ACIL Allen Consulting, releases billions of dollars in investment, creates hundreds of ongoing jobs, supports thousands of construction and manufacturing jobs, and makes an enormous contribution to gross State product. More importantly, the 1.2 million households in New South Wales that rely on gas will finally start to get cost-effective energy. The 33,000 businesses in New South Wales that rely on gas deserve a government that is not determined to force their businesses overseas.

As Mike Kane of Boral said, high energy prices will eventually force Boral to import cement from overseas and close operations in Australia. Already in New South Wales we are seeing manufacturing jobs

reduced from 37,000 to 34,000, and some of those opposite will not be happy until that figure is zero. However, this Government is determined to bring jobs back and create more jobs. What self-respecting New South Wales political party would be happy with importing 95 per cent of our gas while exporting jobs to other States? Who would be that stupid?

[Interruption]

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Let us not forget what those opposite did when they were in government. They granted exploration licences over the entire State, including in Sydney, to companies you could not find on Google, companies backed up by \$1 in capital. Even the goldminers of Ballarat would have been proud of that laissez-faire attitude. Once in opposition, having blown up the sector and hired a cool DVD from Blockbusters, they have decided they are opposed to it. Nothing better demonstrates the difference between the once great Labor Party and the rabble now sitting on the benches across from the Government than their response today to the Government's gas plan. Quite frankly, those opposite know that in the past members of their party might have stood up for economic development and jobs. These words are particularly telling:

The plan to do that is being developed ...

Who said that? It was the Leader of the Opposition at the Beyond Coal and Gas conference in Kurri Kurri, in the Hunter Valley, when he said he was working with the Hon. Luke Foley, a member of the Legislative Council, to phase out coal and gas in the lead-up to the 2015 election. The member for Cessnock knows those words were said and there is no backing away from them; mining was alright under Labor as long as it involved Eddie Obeid. The bottom line is that the Government has now brought to this State a transparent and open system that is being worked through by reputable companies with undertakings on the environment, employment and local communities.

I note the Leader of the Opposition said earlier in relation to increasing prices and price constraint, "Let us demand that 15 per cent of production is protected for domestic consumption." If we suspend reality and pretend this might work, although it would not, the same people who advocated this policy have also promised to shut down the gas industry. They should explain how they can promise to reserve 15 per cent of the production of an industry and at the same time shut it down. How would that work in the interest of households and businesses across the State?

The SPEAKER: Order! If members do not want to listen to the answer they should leave the Chamber.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those opposite want to reserve supply, but they also want to shut down the industry. Having seen the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal reports on increasing prices, they know there is an enormous challenge ahead that will affect manufacturing and industry across this State. What is their answer? It is to close down the industry and at the same time have a national reservation policy. The bottom line is that this State needs gas, and today's plan is welcome news that this Government will work with businesses across the State to secure the economic prosperity of New South Wales.

WYEE SEWERAGE

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western NSW. Will the Minister update the House on recent developments in the long-time campaign to provide sewerage connection for the residents of Wyee?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question and for hosting us this morning in the terrific community of Wyee. I will comment on two particular projects. Just over 25 years ago Landcom released land in the Wyee district. For 25 years the community has been lobbying for a reticulated sewerage system. Today, hosted by the member for Lake Macquarie, at Karen O'Connor's Wyee Child Care Centre we announced that the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals are committing \$26 million to connect the community of Wyee on the Central Coast to a sewerage system to ensure that that community gets the services and infrastructure it deserves. The question was asked: Why did it take so long? Why were we able to make this announcement today and why were we not able to do this previously? For 16 years members lobbied the former Labor Government but that went nowhere; the Labor Government treated the Wyee community like second-class citizens.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: It is a shame that the shadow Treasurer is not in the Chamber to hear what I am about to say. It is all about being disciplined in government and being able to make the savings that enable reinvestment in the infrastructure that our communities deserve. The community of Wyee deserves infrastructure, particularly a reticulated sewerage scheme. I thank Hunter Water for doing a fantastic job in putting this project together. Hunter Water provides the cheapest and most efficient water delivery of anywhere in Australia to communities of more than 100,000 people. It has done a good job and it has made its savings. The New South Wales Government has tipped in additional funding to make that project happen. At the Wyee Child Care Centre today Karen O'Connor said to me:

Small businesses in Wyee have to juggle pump-out costs and septic maintenance among other overheads, which can make doing business in the area incredibly challenging. Knowing we'll get sewerage here is a huge relief which has already lifted the spirits of the community.

With a proper sewer connection will come young families and a better future for the local Wyee kids we care for.

There were some pretty excited locals in Wyee today, including other businesses and a nursery. The pump-out costs are \$13,000. This is a fully costed scheme and there will be no additional start-up costs to the community, which is fantastic news. If we are going to redevelop areas of the Central Coast earmarked for growth, Wyee is one of those places that will be a beneficiary of this infrastructure. Whether it is affordable housing, employment outcomes, attracting young families or boosting commercial investment in the area, Wyee has certainly got a green light to go ahead.

In the Hunter some of the other projects we have funded for water include \$25.5 million for the Boulder Bay Waste Water Treatment Works upgrade, which will allow for growth in the Port Stephens area—the good member for Port Stephens has done a great job on that front; \$30 million for the Farley Waste Water Treatment Works upgrade to support growth in the fastest-growing regions in and around Maitland, and I acknowledge the good work of the member for Maitland; \$5 million for the Maitland North Rothbury Water Supply upgrade to improve the reliability of water supply in that area; and \$20 million for the Burwood Beach Waste Water Treatment Works stage two upgrade, to cater for continued growth in that region. I am pleased to say that plans are underway for the next stage of that upgrade as well as a \$27 million ultraviolet disinfection upgrade at the plant. The Liberals and Nationals are delivering for the lower Hunter and, in this case, for Wyee. I congratulate the member for Lake Macquarie on his work. It is a shame that the shadow Treasurer is not in the Chamber—

The SPEAKER: No it's not.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: We are in agreement on that. A lot of the money from the Restart NSW fund is being reinvested to help drought-proof communities. No-one sees drought more in the far west of the State than people like me and the member for Murray-Darling. Communities such as Broken Hill will run out of water in 12 months if we do not take drastic action, which we are doing. We are instigating a \$5 million groundwater drilling program to secure that community's water into the future. It is the Liberals and The Nationals that are delivering for the regions and the State. We have a disciplined government and we are making the savings so that we can reinvest in our community. I congratulate the member for Lake Macquarie and I thank the good people of Wyee.

REGIONAL LAND USE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I would like to hear more about the regions. My question is addressed to the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western NSW. What is the Government doing to effectively manage competitive land use in regional New South Wales?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: All good things with water. We either have plenty of it or do not have enough of it. Certainly it is the Liberals and Nationals Government that has been committed to protecting our natural resources, particularly our precious water resources, whether that is on the coast, in the regional areas or in the far west of the State. Today we heard from the Minister for Energy and Resources about the gas plan and about how we are moving forward responsibly to deal with what we inherited. Granted all governments leave legacies, but I hope we leave a legacy instead of the mess that was left by the Labor Government.

This side of the House understands that there are competing land uses across regional New South Wales, in particular, but we are taking steps to implement a comprehensive framework to manage them safely and effectively. The approach the Government has taken is building on accessing best scientific advice, collecting and sharing the key information we need and recognising the potential impact of all land uses, be they agricultural, mining or energy related. While we inherited a landscape devoid of protections for our water resources, we now have the strongest protections ever seen in this State. The Aquifer Interference Policy released in September 2012 details the process of assessing projects that have a potential impact on water resources, particularly on water quality, water pressure and water connectivity.

In addition to ensuring that all water taken is properly accounted for, the policy sets minimal impact considerations so that impacts on an individual activity and the cumulative impacts of multiple activities within a water resource can be considered. With the Water Monitoring Framework the Government has developed a groundbreaking framework to map, monitor and protect groundwater resources across New South Wales, which has never been done. This initiative will allow us to analyse where industries such as agriculture and mining draw down water, and it will provide us with the information we need to identify threats to water resources and tackle the causes to prevent any future problems.

This approach is in stark contrast to the approach of those opposite. There is a lot of difference between rhetoric on the other side of the House and reality on this side of the House. Can those opposite explain why 39 coal seam gas exploration or production licences were approved when the Labor Party was in power? No, they cannot. Were these petroleum exploration licences released with any reference to a regulatory regime that provided the most rudimentary safeguards for our precious water resources? No they were not. Can the Leader of the Opposition explain why six petroleum exploration licences were granted during his period as Minister? No, he cannot. Did the Leader of the Opposition stand up for prime agricultural land or move to protect the State's water resources? No, he did not.

Under Labor, petroleum exploration licences were handed out without any consideration for either the technical or financial capability of any of the proponents. Petroleum exploration licences were handed out on a first-in, first-served basis for a fee of \$1,000—a figure that, coincidentally, equated to the well-publicised Eddie Obeid housekeeping fee: \$1,000 a week cash. Did Labor members ever publish their diaries and disclose the people who happened to be served first? No, they did not. In retrospect, this approach to petroleum exploration licences seems to resemble the way in which Labor issued coal and water licences, which is why the system had to change. Despite all of that, there is one member sitting in this precinct who finally came clean in declaring that the former Labor Government was completely irresponsible when dealing with coal seam gas. Is it the man who issued six petroleum exploration licences during his period as Minister, known as the \$3 million man?

Mr John Robertson: That's a lie.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate. The Leader of the Opposition is being argumentative. The Minister was asking a question as part of his answer. The Leader of the Opposition has had an opportunity to ask a question.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: No, it was not the Leader of the Opposition.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: Yesterday the shadow Minister for Energy, the Hon. Adam Searle, admitted on ABC 702 that a safe and viable coal seam gas industry can only be achieved if the Chief Scientist's recommendations are implemented.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: Throughout the process the Liberal-Nationals Government has committed to taking on board all the recommendations in the Chief Scientist's report.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: Let us take it a little further. What did the Hon. Adam Searle say on ABC 702? He said:

Any responsible government should put these measures in place—

referring to the Chief Scientist, Mary O'Kane—

before allowing the industry to progress.

Members on this side of the House have credibility.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: The lies and irresponsibility are coming from members opposite.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Liverpool and the Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting. The member for Wollongong will come to order.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: The Liberal-Nationals Government is on the path to developing a world-class regime that is built on the Chief Scientist's recommendations, not rhetoric or scaremongering from the Labor Opposition. We have done it before, we will do it again and we will work our way through it. We are building a future where we will deal with competing land uses. We can be assured that they will be based on science, not scaremongering. The Government is listening and responding to the people of New South Wales.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: Members opposite are ignoring the people of New South Wales.

Question time concluded at 3.12 p.m.

PETITIONS

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

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Elizabeth Bay Marina

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

Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital Parking Facilities

Petitions requesting additional parking facilities at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock** and **Mr Gareth Ward**.

Berry Ambulance Station

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

Same-sex Marriage

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

Inner-city Social Housing

Petition requesting the retention and proper maintenance of inner-city public housing stock, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

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**.

Pursuant to sessional order government business proceeded with.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2014

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

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendment.

Schedule of amendment referred to in message of 13 November 2014

No. 1 **Oppn No. 3 [C2014-151A]**

Page 20, Schedule 3 [17]. Insert after line 42:

- (4) The Secretary is to establish on a departmental website an alert facility to enable members of the public to register for the purposes of receiving electronic notification of selected new planning decisions and matters.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [3.16 p.m.], on behalf of Ms Pru Goward: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendment.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [3.16 p.m.]: The Opposition does not oppose the amendment. Indeed, the amendment is a welcome addition because, under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, it requires the establishment of an electronic facility to enable members of the public to register to receive electronic notifications—it could be notification by either email or SMS; I anticipate it will be email—of particular planning proposals or development applications, or issues in which they are interested. Currently, in terms of planning proposals, someone must try to follow convoluted procedures on various websites. Planning proposals can be considered by the Planning Assessment Commission, the Joint Regional Planning Panel or the department. To try to find an application that might impact on a person can be a difficult, convoluted process—

Mr Brad Hazzard: It's a heck of a lot better now than it was under Labor.

Mr RON HOENIG: The former planning Minister's planning proposals were so atrocious he should not be interjecting. Under this proposal, anyone who has an interest in a development proposal—

Mr Brad Hazzard: You don't deny it is a lot more transparent now.

Mr RON HOENIG: That is exactly what I am saying. If the Attorney General listened he might learn something that he did not learn when he was planning Minister. This provision will enable anyone who is interested in a planning proposal at any jurisdictional level to be constantly notified as to the process of that

application so that they can be heard or determine the result. The real key in its success will be the ability of IT people to implement it effectively. I think that will be the major difficulty in implementing this provision. It is a worthwhile suggestion from the Legislative Council. That is why there is a House of review. The Opposition supports the amendment.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendment agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

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

SURVEILLANCE DEVICES AMENDMENT (POLICE BODY-WORN VIDEO) BILL 2014

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendment.

Schedule of amendment referred to in message of 12 November 2014

No. 1 **Oppn No. 1 [C2014-141B]**

Page 4, schedule 1. Insert after line 19:

[9] Section 64

Insert after section 63:

64 Review of Surveillance Devices Amendment (Police Body-Worn Video) Act 2014

- (1) The Secretary of the Department of Justice or delegate is to review the operation of the provisions of this Act inserted by the *Surveillance Devices Amendment (Police Body-Worn Video) Act 2014*.
- (2) The review is to be undertaken as soon as practicable after the period of 12 months from the operational commencement of that Act.
- (3) The Secretary or delegate is to prepare a report of the review under this section and furnish a copy of the report to the Minister as soon as practicable after the expiration of that 12-month period.
- (4) The Minister is to lay (or cause to be laid) a copy of any report furnished to the Minister under this section before both Houses of Parliament as soon as practicable after the Minister receives the report.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.20 p.m.]: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendment.

Having heard that wonderful dissertation from the member for Heffron I do not think I can add anything more.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I think the comments to which the Attorney General referred related to the previous bill.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: They did.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [3.21 p.m.]: The Opposition supports the amendment, the genesis of which was an amendment moved by the Opposition in the Legislative Council. The Government made some suggestions in relation to that. I am happy to record there were sensible discussions between the Government and the Opposition and the end result is a proposition on which we both agree.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendment agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

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

COMMSEC STATE OF THE STATES 2014 REPORT

Debate resumed from 6 November 2014.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.21 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak in debate on the report released last month by CommSec on State and Territory economic performance. The main economic indicators that suggest New South Wales is number one again are economic growth, retail spending, equipment investment, unemployment, construction work, population growth, housing finance, et cetera. This Government has runs on the board. I am pleased to report that New South Wales has topped the charts again as the country's strongest performing economy.

Mr Kevin Conolly: As it should be.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: As it rightfully should be. Construction is considered one of the key economic indicators and one of its most important components. As a result of the Government's policies, the State welcomed the news that new home starts were 36 per cent higher than the decade average, which is great news. When we have responsible economic management in this State more money is able to be allocated for the services that we all demand and want. In my electorate transport, education and infrastructure are being delivered by this Government because of its hard decisions three years ago. We are now reaping the benefits and rewards.

In my electorate alone we have extra bus, ferry and train services and a new ferry wharf. The hospital in Drummoyne now has a palliative care ward and other amazing things. This Government made hard decisions but the Opposition at every turn opposed all its savings measures. The report prompted one CommSec economist to observe that the New South Wales economy would become even stronger over the next 12 months. He further added that it had been well over a decade since New South Wales was as strong as it is now.

It is appropriate for this House to recognise the efforts of this Government. Hospitals in this State are being upgraded, thanks to the health Minister, and major infrastructure projects including WestConnex, NorthConnex, the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link will provide economic benefits to this great State. 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 which is why this Government made it a top priority to reverse years of neglect by those opposite. This Government has gone about restoring the economy and investing in the key drivers of this great economy.

In a further vote of confidence since the release of the report, international ratings agency Standard and Poor's upgraded the outlook for the State's triple-A credit rating. At the 2011 election this State was on a knife's edge and close to losing its triple-A credit rating. However, that has now been secured because of this Government's economic and fiscal management. The CommSec report shows that low interest rates have become a positive for this State's heavily indebted households. There has been a significant increase in the number of jobs, which is due largely to the big spend on infrastructure projects.

The State's unemployment rate is now well below the national average. In addition, the report shows that retail spending is 15.4 per cent above the decade average. This Government has acted responsibly in reversing the negative trend instigated by the Labor Government. In 2012 it introduced the Fiscal Responsibility Bill which is now enshrined in law. Under that legislation the Government has the ability to maintain its triple-A credit rating—a milestone in Australian law-making and the first time an Australian Government had legislated to protect its credit rating. Under this law, the maintenance of a high credit rating minimises interest expense and maximises the amount available to spend on services and infrastructure.

It also provides a buffer so that when a government finds itself in tough economic times, a high credit rating automatically makes it possible to raise debt readily. It also gives confidence to business, consumers and the community. For example, a few years ago Queensland lost its triple-A credit rating, which meant that its borrowing costs were over half a per cent higher than the figure for New South Wales where the triple-A credit rating remained. The report card delivered by CommSec on the State of the States shows that the economic management of New South Wales is in extremely good hands. We are on top and we intend to stay there. I emphasise that at every step of the way those opposite opposed every savings measure but they are the first to put out their hands when they want money and infrastructure for their electorates. On the infrastructure front right across this State we are in great hands. We are creating employment, delivering services and making our economy strong.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [3.29 p.m.]: I will make a couple of comments on this self-congratulatory motion that the Government moved to pad out its lack of a legislative program. The Government has named the motion after the CommSec report and appropriately highlights that New South Wales has come out reasonably well in the report. However, the question must always be asked: What contribution to this report did the New South Wales Government make? For example, the report talks about employment trends. I always find it interesting when a Government Minister says, "Since we have been in office X thousands of jobs have been created in the State or in the country." But on an analysis how many were created by the State Government? Generally the economy of the country will fluctuate depending on whether it is a resources- or housing-fed economy or a housing- or consumer-driven economy. When a government talks about unemployment or job creation, the question must be asked: What did the Government do to contribute to that?

The job situation in New South Wales has improved to some extent despite the efforts of the State Government. Every budget handed down by this Government and proudly spoken about by Ministers has included references to the numbers of jobs being removed from government departments. The Government abolished 5,000 in its first year, moving to 15,000, despite some improvement in the private sector. So the Government can take no credit for job creation. The shadow Treasurer highlighted the basis on which the New South Wales economy has been running and 16 years has been referred to many times in this Parliament. For 15 years we ran a surplus in New South Wales and New South Wales retained its triple-A credit rating during the global financial crisis that crippled the Western world. New South Wales was probably the most successful economy through that process because of 16 years of Labor Government. Government members referred selectively to the report. We have heard many times the old cliché that New South Wales is number one again. The report does refer to New South Wales doing extremely well at the moment. Indeed, the report states:

NSW has the fastest annual economic growth rate in the nation, up by 6.3 per cent on a year ago, ahead of Western Australia ...

The question must be asked: But what component did the State Government contribute to that improvement? Page 2 of the report states:

NSW is top of rankings on population growth and dwelling starts and second on retail trade.

Government members did not mention that New South Wales was second on retail trade. It is also second in business investment and unemployment. The Government is trying hard to get the unemployment rate up—it can take some credit there. The State Government has been doing its bit to shed jobs from virtually every government agency since it came to office so no-one can criticise the Government for not doing its bit towards increasing unemployment in this State. New South Wales is also third on housing finance and fourth overall on construction work and economic growth, which are big drivers of employment in this State.

For the past four years in question time the Government has said it is driving major infrastructure projects yet it only talks about two or three projects, such as extensions of motorways around Sydney and the North West Rail Link. How many times has the North West Rail Link been mentioned as virtually the only project that the Government can say it owns? The Government has talked about the South West Rail Link but everyone knows that millions have been spent and that project was well underway before the Coalition came to office. Even if the Coalition wanted to, it could not stop that project; it was already contracted, tied up and had commenced. If Coalition members had wanted to stop the South West Rail Link they could not do so because it was legally bound up.

As the real estate sector knows, in the area of housing starts the report states that this is driven greatly by the low interest rates that have been available in this country for years. I focus now on first home buyers, who have driven the housing sector and finance sector—and New South Wales is not number one again in the finance sector. That is because the Government, as a money-saving initiative, changed the scheme so that first

home buyers cannot receive the benefit previously available under the Labor Government for an existing home. Quite cleverly, the Government has focused on new homes. The significant new housing construction in the north-west and south-west of Sydney was commenced by Labor. Labor released those areas; Labor identified what was commercial, industrial and residential. They were Labor Government projects, and that activity is flowing on, assisted by low interest rates.

The big losers are first home buyers who cannot afford a \$600,000 or \$700,000 new home in Kellyville or places like that in the north-west sector. First home buyers, who are on a lower budget and lower income, have been robbed by the Government. The Government has focused attention on the economic growth in new housing construction at the expense of low income earners, who can only get into the property market by buying older and existing homes. They have been robbed by this Government. Members should stop focusing on the "number one again" type slogans and read the whole report. Economies around the country change, depending on the mining boom and overseas markets, and the economies of States like Western Australia and Queensland that are resource rich will show improvement.

[Interruption]

The Treasurer and the member for Riverstone should get the Treasurer's briefing notes and read them. There is clear evidence from question time that the Treasurer and some members—to use an English term—are not doing their red boxes; they certainly are not using the briefing notes supplied to them by their agencies. This self-congratulatory motion focuses on the CommSec report. Housing starts will be affected, depending on the shift in the economy where interest rates could go up. If there is an improvement in overseas investment or mining, some States will do better than others. The New South Wales economy has been greatly assisted by a booming resources sector but it has moved up and down the charts. I conclude by stating that we should always welcome the fact that New South Wales is improving. However, the question remains: What is the State Government doing to take credit for that? I think someone quoted Gandhi who said that lots of people do things but lots of people take credit for it. This Government is not the former in that it does not do things but it certainly takes credit for it. This report is a good example of that.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [3.39 p.m.]: When the member for Mount Druitt made his valedictory speech the other day I thought it would be his last speech. Unfortunately, he has just blotted his copybook. It is probably just as well that he is leaving this place, because of his distortion of the truth and the unfortunate negativity he just displayed. The motion we are debating is a take-note debate on the CommSec State of the States report. It is not a self-congratulatory motion; we are taking note of a report. It is important to take note of this report as this is the first time that New South Wales has been in the top spot, as assessed by CommSec in its report—that is, since it started State rankings in 2008. The last time New South Wales was the nation's clear economic leader was in 2000 following the Sydney Olympics. Unfortunately, the advantage we had then was squandered by the Labor Government.

Let us examine the State of the States report and the rundown of the different States and Territories on which this report essentially focuses. The CommSec report assesses each State according to economic growth, retail spending, equipment investment, unemployment, construction work, population growth, housing finance and dwelling commencements. The latest level of each indicator is compared with the State's decade average. Coming in at eighth spot is Tasmania. Not too far away is the Australian Capital Territory at seventh. South Australia is sixth and Queensland is fifth. At fourth are our southern neighbours in Victoria. Third—perhaps somewhat surprisingly but encouragingly—is the Northern Territory. Second, having recently fallen from top spot, is Western Australia. And, of course, New South Wales is now leading the nation.

Undeniably and factually the Liberal-Nationals Coalition came to government in March 2011. Since then we have seen a transformation of this State. When we came to government economic growth in New South Wales had been the slowest of all States, not just for a year or two but for a decade. In 2010 under Labor, New South Wales was ranked last in the nation for the January, April, July and October CommSec State of the States reports—it came eighth. Now New South Wales is first. At the time it was described as the nation's basket case. The New South Wales economy was the worst performing in the nation. As we have seen—and according to the latest CommSec State of the States report—New South Wales is now ranked number one overall. When we ran on that platform in 2011 to make New South Wales number one again we meant it. This Government continues to deliver on its promise. The latest CommSec State of the States report says:

For the first time since the July 2011 report there is a new leader at the top of Australia's economic performance rankings, New South Wales.

As I said, it is the first time we have been the leader since the release of the first report in 2008, which demonstrates the strong economic management of this Government. Let us look at some of the key indicators that are relevant to the report. The member for Mount Druitt asked what the Government had done, what were the key performance indicators, and whether it was just luck or interest rates—interest rates that apply equally to every State and Territory in Australia. For a decade under Labor we saw the slowest growth in jobs of any State. Labor governments always emphasise, correctly, the importance of giving people jobs and creating employment for people. According to its own measure the Labor Government was the worst-performing government in Australia. New South Wales is now generating the second highest number of jobs, and has done so since April 2011.

Since coming to office this Government has created 132,000 new jobs—the second highest number in the nation since April 2011, behind Western Australia. We continue to have the second lowest unemployment rate in Australia partly because we increased payroll tax rebates, lifted the payroll tax threshold and provided incentives to businesses to create jobs. The second indicator I want to touch on relates to economic growth. Again, economic growth in New South Wales was the slowest in the nation for a decade under Labor. New South Wales is now the strongest of all the States. For five years to March 2011 New South Wales had the lowest level of business confidence of all mainland States. Positive business confidence has now been measured for 14 consecutive months. In retail trade New South Wales had the lowest average annual growth of any State under Labor. Now, depending on what measure is used, New South Wales comes second.

Finally, I touch on housing supply. Under Labor we had the lowest level of all new dwelling starts per capita for five years. The number of new dwellings approved in New South Wales in the past 12 months to September is 41 per cent higher than the decade average. We have seen 106,000 homes built from April 2011 to the June quarter of 2014, with dwelling completions at their highest level since 2006. For the first time the threshold for first home owners has been raised from \$100,000 to \$750,000, making it easier for first home owners—a fact not acknowledged by the previous speaker. The fundamental question we have to ask ourselves—a question asked also by the previous speaker—is what role the State Governments has in these outcomes. To any reasonable person looking objectively at this, the answer is: a substantial role. The question I ask is: Who is the better and more competent economic manager of this State?

Mr Andrew Gee: We are.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: It is not a hard question but it was well answered. That is demonstrated by the facts—by the objective key performance indicators that have resulted in New South Wales being acknowledged by CommSec as the number one State in this nation. I do not want to brag about these things just for the sake of it. It is important to acknowledge also the importance of economic growth and a healthy economy in a societal and social sense because economic growth is vital for an inclusive society. It generates employment, raises tax revenue, provides hope for future generations and supports our ageing population. Without economic growth governments are limited in their ability to provide services to people who are unable to participate as fully in the workforce as we are in this place, or people who are dependent on government services such as health care or emergency accommodation, or other forms of social protection. The advantages we have seen are social benefits for those in need of assistance and those who are vulnerable in society. That is very important.

I conclude my contribution to this debate by examining some of this Government's financial achievements that have contributed to those impressive key performance indicators. The State's triple-A credit rating was recently affirmed by Standard and Poor's. In fact, it was strengthened; it was acknowledged that the State's economy is stronger. This Government inherited a \$50 billion infrastructure backlog and out-of-control expense growth. We have addressed that and accepted that we must reduce our expenses and live within our means. New South Wales is one of only two States that has retained its triple-A credit rating according to all the credit ratings agencies. The State's net debt is now \$15 billion less than was forecast at the end of the Labor Government's term in office in March 2011.

The Coalition Government inherited an unsustainable fiscal position—expenses were continually growing faster than revenues. Indeed, from 2011 to 2017 cumulative savings and efficiency measures amounted to \$23.7 billion in reduced expenses. That is a positive for this Government. It has delivered four budgets that have resulted in lower than forecast expenses. I ask members to compare that with what we saw under the Labor Government. The Labor Government spent \$20 billion more than it budgeted over a sustained period. That money could have been spent on many valuable infrastructure and societal projects that would have benefited New South Wales today and into the future.

Since this Government came to office 2,800 additional nurses, 755 teachers and 550 police officers have joined the State's workforce. The Government has been able to pay for them because of its improved economic management and savings. The Government has also delivered historic educational reforms that have delivered more resources and a fairer system. More than 9,500 new public transport services are being provided every week and the Opal ticketing system is now available across Sydney. New South Wales was the first State to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Despite protests from some, that is celebrated and it is supported by both sides of politics. Unfortunately, what is not supported by both sides is the celebration of the CommSec "State of the States October 2014" report. It should not be celebrated in a partisan way but by the entire State because it is good news for New South Wales. Let us celebrate the report by noting it in an appropriate manner.

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

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I acknowledge in the Speaker's gallery the Mayor of Cabonne, Michael Hayes, and the general manager, Andrew Hopkins, who are guests of the member for Orange. It is also very pleasing to see the former member for Davidson, Andrew Humpherson, in the advisers area.

Pursuant to resolution valedictory speeches proceeded with.

VALEDICTORY SPEECHES

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal) [3.54 p.m.] (Valedictory Speech): The Roman God Janus is the god of new beginnings and is depicted in sculpture with one head looking forward and one head looking back, because he is also the god of endings. There are no beginnings without endings. A valedictory speech is thus both an ending and an indication of a new beginning. In my inaugural speech in 1988, I quoted Henry Kendall, the poet of the Central Coast:

When Gosford gleaming like a bright little Athens
Shall be as a star over the Waters,
Its elders may often point out to their children
Spots massed with its old tradition.

But more significantly for me now is the quotation in classical Greek that is on his memorial, which is located only a few hundred metres from here in the Royal Botanic Gardens. The quotation reads in English translation, "I soar through the skies and I look down even upon the sun." A valedictory speech is an opportunity to soar through the skies, and in my case to look down on my impressions of some 27 years in this House. I am sure that members will indulge my reading this speech. Apart from second reading speeches as Minister, the only other speech I have read in this House was my inaugural speech in August 1988.

I stand in this House as its longest-serving Liberal member. I am the only survivor of the 1988 Greiner-slide in 1988. There are many stories that I could tell, but there are many that I will not tell. I will share only some insights today. We all know what it is like to be a local member. However, its extraordinary nature is never well articulated. In 2008 my electorate office was located two doors away from a Westpac ATM. During the night it was blown up in a botched robbery. Glass and debris were scattered everywhere and the area was sealed off by the police. Bystanders and the media were gathered around and forensic teams were summoned. Radio stations ran special bulletins.

Conscientiously in this post 9/11 world, I rang the Parliament House security office to report that my office had been the subject of a bomb attack. The person at the end of the line said, "That's great, mate. Can you ring back after 9.00 a.m.?" I recall taking a telephone call from one constituent who said, "There's a black snake curled up in my barbeque." Another constituent who rang lived in public housing accommodation. She insisted that she could not speak to my staff; she had to speak to me because she had been told that she should ring her local member if she had a problem with her accommodation. I asked what her problem was and she told me that the washing machine was not working. I know other members have similar stories to tell.

My electorates—Gosford from 1988 to 2007 and Terrigal from 2007—have been wonderful areas and it has been an honour to represent them. In 27 years on only one occasion has a constituent called uninvited to my home, even though my home address is well known. I cannot recall a single unpleasant incident, even on

polling day—although of course on occasion there have been vigorous exchanges of opinion. The people of the Central Coast are warm and friendly and have always been supportive of me as a person, even if not always politically. When I was elected Gosford was unsewered, it was the only major regional town with a single carriageway entry, and the schools were crowded with demountables. That was evidence of the rapid growth of the Central Coast in the 1980s, which had outpaced infrastructure. One school alone had 32 demountables.

In our term of government until 1995, the area was sewered as part of a huge public works program. The water supply was guaranteed by completion of the dam, a new high school was built and a primary school, which comprised only demountables, was fully rebuilt. The road into Gosford was upgraded to a four-lane highway, and Gosford Hospital, which was originally little more than a cottage hospital, was massively rebuilt. I give credit to both the Greiner Government and the Carr Government for that.

The Liberal Party branches on the Central Coast have been outstanding to work with, and I acknowledge some hardworking branch members who are here today. They have carried me through every election since 1984—an election of course in which I was defeated—and were enthusiastic to carry me forward to 2015 had I not decided to retire. I express my gratitude to each and every one of them for their work, their loyalty and their friendship. From 1984 Ray Carter was my campaign manager and from 1988 to 2012 my senior electorate officer. He took great pride in his work. He was efficient, and well regarded by constituents. He rightly described himself as "unorthodox but effective".

Mike Gallacher, my Central Coast colleague in the Legislative Council, I first met as a young highway patrolman after the 1984 election. As a lawyer I would see him in court and one day he rang me and said, "I would like to join the Liberal Party." I invited him to an inaugural meeting of the Central Coast Young Liberals. He became its foundation president and for me he has been a true and loyal friend, both in and out of political life. Two people outside the Liberal Party have assisted me in every campaign since 1984. They are my two school friends, Michael Shanahan and Peter Hesky—a big commitment over 30 years. Also, I acknowledge my mother's family friends the Campbells.

My commitment to the Liberal Party has been and remains unabated. I joined as a Young Liberal at 19. When I moved to the Central Coast it was strongly Labor, with Labor holding all State and Federal seats. I became regional president and sought to build the Liberal Party as an alternative force. It was said of the Emperor Augustus that he found Rome built of brick and he left it built of marble. I am happy to say that I started my political career on the Central Coast in an area built as a Labor stronghold and I leave it, hopefully, built as a Liberal stronghold. Both Federal seats and all four State seats are now held by our party. It has been a long journey to transform the Central Coast politically, and I certainly do not claim all the credit. Demographic changes have helped, as has the enthusiasm of Liberal Party members and supporters. In my time as regional president and as State member I have founded no fewer than 11 branches to lay the foundations for Liberal victories at a State and a Federal level.

From 1992 to 2011 I was the only State Liberal on the coast—a lonely role at times. But in 2011 I was joined by three wonderful colleagues, Chris Spence, Darren Webber, and Chris Holstein. I acknowledge each of them and thank them for their friendship. I believe the retirement of Chris Spence and Darren Webber is a genuine loss to this Parliament. Both worked hard and effectively. Both had a real future in politics. I am saddened at their retirement and I wish them well in their post-parliamentary life.

I would be remiss in my political journey if I did not acknowledge the part played by my late father, Bede Hartcher, who rose from humble origins in Marrickville to become the Federal Director of the Liberal Party in Canberra. His own father was a railway worker, and my father left school at 14 also to work on the railways. Keen to better himself, he went to night school, matriculated to university and studied economics at night. His enthusiasm so impressed the head of the department, Professor Bland, a senior Liberal Party figure, that he was offered the position of research officer in the newly formed Liberal Party secretariat. He was surprised and replied that, while it was a good job offer, he had two problems: He came from a Labor family of railway workers and, even more significantly, he was a Catholic and the Liberal Party then did not have anything to do with Catholics.

The professor said, 'Leave it with me' and came back a few days later. He said the offer still stood, the Liberal Party was open to Catholics and as long as he was a loyal employee his Labor background would not be held against him. My father accepted the position and dutifully served, rising as I have said to be the Federal director in 1969. He was especially proud of the honour of being the first Catholic to rise so high in the Liberal Party. Tragically, like so many others in those days, his early years in the asbestos-ridden railway sheds meant he died early at the age of 59, a victim of mesothelioma and asbestos-related disease.

I previously acknowledged to the House in this year of the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War my two grandfathers, Benjamin Brodie and Bede Hartcher. My mother's father, Benjamin Brodie, was killed in action on the Western Front in March 1918 leading a raid on the German trenches. My father's father, Bede Hartcher, was seriously wounded and as an invalid spent many months in hospital in the United Kingdom before being able to return to Australia. Along with my father, I owe to each of my grandfathers a tribute for the example they set of service to our country.

Parliaments come and go. In 1991 the Coalition was reduced to minority government dependent upon the goodwill of three Left-leaning Independents. Nick Greiner had been my classmate at both primary and high school and under him I became Government Whip. Every division was a plunge into the unknown as the Independents were largely unsympathetic and unpredictable. I recall one occasion when we were in government we lost no fewer than seven divisions in a row. For a Whip responsible for the numbers it was not exactly a heartening experience but, as they say, it was character building. Subsequently, I had the honour of serving as a Minister in both the Fahey and O'Farrell governments. Notwithstanding the fact that John Fahey knew I had not voted for him as leader when Nick Greiner resigned in 1992, he showed his magnanimity in appointing me his Environment Minister. It was to be a wild ride in a minority Government, culminating in a much-publicised rebellion by sections of our own backbench on the issue of wilderness proclamations.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Hear, hear!

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Which the Cabinet had authorised me to make. On an easier note, New South Wales instituted lead-free petrol and surged the number of national parks to reach the then desired target of 5 per cent of the State. John Fahey was a fine leader and a fine man and would have made an outstanding Premier in a majority Government. To Barry O'Farrell I also owe a debt of gratitude. In 2007 he took over the leadership of a divided parliamentary Liberal Party. He united it and led it to great success in 2011. I was impressed with his leadership post 2007 and I was honoured that he selected me for the Cabinet. Barry had a no-nonsense style and a vision for the infrastructure development of New South Wales. Like John Fahey, I believe he would have made a worthy Premier had he had the opportunity to continue in office.

My favourite comment about Barry is personal and I hope he does not regret my recounting it. I stayed at home hoping to receive a call from him, which came. He said, "I am offering you resources and energy." I said, "Before you say that, I want to say something." He said, "What?" I said, "You are the Moses who has led us into the Promised Land." He said, "Well, why don't we talk about that later, Chris." He was always modest. As energy Minister my first priority was to bring spiralling electricity prices back to the consumer price index. This was successful. I also strove to avert what I believed will be an impending gas shortage in 2016-17. This work was never completed, but I acknowledge the great work being done by the Premier and my successor, Anthony Roberts, to achieve gas security for the 1.2 million households and the hundreds of thousands of jobs dependent upon an affordable gas supply.

No Minister past or present can fail to acknowledge the excellent public service we have in New South Wales. It is one of the achievements of our democracy that we have such dedicated and efficient people serving this State. There are many public servants to whom I would like to express my appreciation, but two made a particular impression on me: Neil Shepherd, the then Director General of the Environment Protection Authority, and Brad Mullard, the then Executive Director of Mineral Resources. They represent the best of the best. As Minister, I was blessed with loyal and enthusiastic staff, and I single out for special praise my two chiefs of staff, Peter Shmigel and Andrew Humpherson.

The highlight of my political career, however, was not to be in Parliament or even in New South Wales, but far across the seas in Greece. As shadow Minister for the Olympics in the lead-up to the 2000 Olympic Games I served on the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games [SOCOG]. Thanks to my Jesuit education, I had the chance to become a student of classical Greek and I was always fascinated by ancient Greek culture and history. I expected that SOCOG would choose a high-profile sportsman or a very distinguished Australian to go to Greece to receive the Olympic flame. Imagine my surprise when Michael Knight, the excellent President of SOCOG, rang me one day and asked, "Would you like to be Australia's representative to accompany the Olympic flame after it has been lit from the sun at Olympia?"

The Governor-General flew to Greece to represent Australia at the lighting of the flame and I was to represent Australia as it travelled through Greece and then to receive it at a gala ceremony in the original Olympic stadium at Athens. I had no idea what it was to be like. The Olympic flame ran through central Greece, northern Greece and the Aegean islands in a cavalcade of cars and with runners. In every village, in every town

and on every island in the Aegean Sea, I spoke to thousands of people who cheered the Olympic flame on its journey. I spoke originally in English but then, somewhat pretentiously, in Modern Greek. I hasten to add that I had to have things translated for me. The crowds were enormous and the cheering was incessant and I thought, "No politician can ask for more than this", until that final night when I stood alone in the Olympic stadium before the vast crowd.

There was the President of the Greek Olympic committee and thousands of Greeks. The writer of the music for *Zorba the Greek*, Michael Theodorakis, had composed a special fanfare. I stood there accompanied by two Special Branch officers of the New South Wales police. In came the last runner holding the torch. He did a circuit of the stadium and then presented the torch to the President of the Greek Olympic committee. The band played the fanfare and then the national anthems of Australia and Greece. The President of the Greek Olympic committee and I stood on the podium. The president made a speech and presented the flame to me. I then received the flame on behalf of my country.

In my speech of acceptance, in English—and it was the largest crowd I had ever addressed in politics and will ever address in politics—I was anxious to summarise what it meant to me and, I thought, to my country to receive the Olympic flame in the very country where the Olympics originated, the very country that gave us democracy, the very country that gave us our Western culture. I ended with the words: "This ancient land gave us the light of culture and democracy. It now gives us the fire of the Olympics." Nobody in that vast stadium knew who I was and nobody cared. For me, however, it was an experience. The flame was then placed in a lantern and, escorted for the first time and only time in my life by the New South Wales Police Protection Squad, I carried the lantern out through the vast crowd to what I thought would be a simple trip to the airport, holding the lantern. How wrong I was.

The police left me and I stood alone on the tray of an emblazoned ute, holding high the Olympic flame in a lantern. Before our vehicle and after our vehicle I counted a convoy of no fewer than 19 police cars with sirens wailing and revolving lights flashing, and thousands of Athenians lining the streets cheering our journey from the stadium to the airport. It was heady stuff indeed. However, at that moment, as the crowds cheered and as the Olympic flame was held high, I could only think of one thing: not what would my mother think to see this but what on earth do I do if the flame goes out? It was a surreal moment never to be repeated in my lifetime.

In leaving this Parliament may I say that it has been an enormously rewarding experience, if at times a tough one? I have had the honour of being subject to no fewer than two censure motions moved by the Australian Labor Party; I have had the honour of being subject to no fewer than nine personal Labor Party gags—as many as two in a single day—and on one occasion, a Thursday afternoon, a special sitting of the New South Wales Parliament was held, from 4.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., after the suspension of standing orders to debate a motion critical of me. I was enormously flattered. The next day the *Daily Telegraph* estimated that it had cost \$100,000 in staff overtime. I have no problem with that. This is the bear pit. This is the place where the two political parties meet in an adversarial sense so that they do not meet out in the streets, and they can acknowledge that they can debate their differences rather than fight their differences.

As a member of Parliament I always took the view—and I have told everyone I ever met, inside and outside of Parliament—when you put the jersey on and you run on the field expect to get tackled. And, let me tell you, I have been tackled. Despite a lot of media to the contrary, in 2000 and 2001 I never sought the Liberal Party leadership. I watched all seven Liberal leaders from 1988 to 2014 end their political careers unhappily. Similarly, of the four Labor leaders from 1988 to 2011, only one ended his career happily. Political leadership in New South Wales is a poisoned chalice. I pray that the present Premier breaks the mould and ends his career happily, and I wish him well. I acknowledge the many friends I have made in parliaments both past and present. I appreciate each one of them. They all know who they are and I express my gratitude to them.

Above all, I wish to pay tribute to my wife, Elizabeth. Next week we celebrate 40 years of marriage. She has been my rock and my support in good and in bad. Unbelievable though it may sound, we have never had a serious argument or disagreement. When I told my father I had proposed to her he said, "That's the smartest thing you've ever done". Time has proved him right. I thank you, Elizabeth; I genuinely thank you. I thank and acknowledge my two sisters, Caroline and Mary. When I went into Parliament my children were very young. They have stood by me at every election and have backed me always unfailingly, although none of them are interested in politics. Two of them are now fathers themselves and have given me four beautiful grandchildren: Alexander, Kate, Sophia and Ollie. My son Anthony is a chemical engineer, my son Mark is a police officer and my son Luke is establishing a business in East Africa while, at the same time, working extensively on his deepest passion: to help underprivileged children. My appreciation goes to each of them. I have been truly blessed in having them.

As I look back on my political career I am reminded of the words of the Roman poet Virgil, "Olim Haec Meminisse Iuvabit", which translated means, "One day it will help to remember even these things". Facing the future I am happy with the past. I commenced my inaugural speech with a quotation from Henry Kendall; my inaugural speech closed with a reference to John F. Kennedy. As a teenager I admired him enormously and his death when I was at high school shocked me deeply. The only words in English that were spoken at his funeral in 1963, as the service was in Latin, was a reading from the book of Ecclesiastes, which says, in part, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven". This is for me the season. This is for me the time.

For me, the political season is truly complete and the political purpose fulfilled. While those Old Testament words are wonderful, they were expressed ever more meaningfully in the New Testament in the words that Paul wrote to Timothy: "The time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight until the end, I have run the race to the finish, I have kept the faith." Mr Deputy-Speaker, I thank you and all honourable members for their indulgence this afternoon.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): On behalf of all members I thank you for your long contribution, not only as the member for Terrigal but also as Minister and shadow Minister during your time in Parliament. I was a little disappointed; you might have said that George Souris was in the crowd as you drove through the streets. As the member for Lismore I give the regards of Kyogle to your wife, Elizabeth. We wish you and Chris well, and trust that God will bless you both with health and happiness.

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland) [4.21 p.m.] (Valedictory Speech): I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and pay my respects to elders past and present. I thank them for their custodianship. It is our shared responsibility to pass on this State to future generations in a better condition than we found it. We must remember that responsibility to be the change we want to see in the world. Not many people get to give two valedictory speeches, and I am lucky to have this opportunity. I will not be back for a third. It is almost 12 years since I began my parliamentary career as part of the class of 2003, together with Madam Speaker. You are the first female Speaker and I am the first female member for Maitland. It is great to have you in the chair. We have done pretty well for a couple of—I will not say old—schoolteachers from regional New South Wales.

When I walked in today—we had a secret party room meeting early this morning; no-one knew about it—I looked up and thought about how I felt coming in here. I had goosebumps, and I have had goosebumps every time I have come into this building. I looked up, and out the front at the door is a portrait of Millicent Preston-Stanley, there in all her glory with her fur stole and pearls; the first woman elected to the New South Wales Parliament. I wondered what she would make of me. Indeed, I wonder what I would make of Millie, as she looks fairly formidable. But it has been an amazing journey and a proud one. Over the years people have questioned me about why I joined the Liberal Party. Some of them have been a bit more direct, "What's a leftie like you doing in the Liberal Party?" For me, it is important to recognise what Menzies said when he formed the party. He said it was a Liberal Party, not a Conservative Party, but a party that was progressive. He deliberately called it "Liberal" because of his long-term vision, making sure that we were progressive and not reactionary.

In my first or second inaugural speech—I am not sure which one it was—I spoke about the basic tenets of the Liberal Party philosophy. That has been instrumental in shaping my political philosophy. It is about equal opportunity, freedom of choice, a commitment to care for the disadvantaged, and a balance between economic growth and environmental protection. In a way my journey has been a personification of those ideals and the belief that hard work and self-sacrifice deliver reward. I entered Parliament with the support of those who believed in me. Many people encouraged me to realise my political dreams, and many of them are here today, still mentoring and supporting me. During the last election campaign I called my supporters my blue army. They looked more like an army of smurfs: They had light blue shirts and light blue caps. But I could not have got here without them, and I owe them a great debt.

Election to Parliament is only the first step. I never would have managed to navigate my way round without the guidance of my colleagues, in particular former Premier Barry O'Farrell. It was a great honour to serve in the O'Farrell Cabinet. Barry led our Coalition with conviction. He fostered discipline, energy and focus—I think we heard that at every party room meeting. He deserves to be remembered as a great Premier and the driving force behind making us number one again. Jillian Skinner has been there throughout, supporting me and being a shoulder to lean on. Over the years I have enjoyed the support, friendship and camaraderie of Gladys Berejiklian in particular and Pru Goward. Of course, I thank all my colleagues and former members of Parliament, including the very special Andrew Tink, Patricia Forsythe, Mr Maitland, Milton Morris, and the Mayor of Maitland, Peter Blackmore, all of whom have provided sound advice, measured guidance, support and friendship, and occasionally yelled at me when I needed it.

There is insufficient time to thank everyone who has helped me along the way, but I especially acknowledge the friendship and support of the wonderful Marise Payne. With the reins of government handed to a new team, New South Wales is in safe hands. Premier Baird's commitment and enthusiasm for the task shines through. His genuine warmth, engagement and interest in people are ever present, and he will go on to be one of the great leaders of our State. I wish we could clone him and roll him out to every electorate daily. Members opposite would not have a chance—not that they have a chance anyway. The Deputy Premier, Troy Grant, is the real deal; he is a great talent. I believe The Nationals are reinvigorated with this new leadership team.

When I was elected I asked my children for their advice. Two of them are here, and one of them is here virtually, on the internet. They said, "Keep it real, mum." And I have tried to do that. But the reality for them of having a mother in public life is something that many cannot fully appreciate or understand. There is no such thing as family friendly hours when you live two hours away. My children learned quickly that the Liberal Party was not about cakes and balloons—except the balloons with my name on them. They have rarely complained, apart from the fact that I cooked too many meals before I came to Sydney for a week in Parliament. By Thursday night on a sitting week the wheels had usually fallen off the cart. I felt like I was part of the television program *Thank God You're Here*: I would turn up at home and open the door to absolute chaos, but it was great to be home, no matter what. We all survived, and now when I get home I am usually greeted with a glass of wine and a home-cooked meal.

Our families do not choose to be in the spotlight but they do live through the highs and lows of it all. While the rough and tumble comes with the territory for us, they often feel deeply aggrieved when they perceive a media report to be unfair criticism. That said, I think my children have grown up with a broad understanding of diversity and social justice. They have great self-confidence, and high ethical and moral standards, and they are actively involved in contributing to those less fortunate than themselves. The past 12 years have seen great changes in their lives. Heath no longer wears superman suits, except at home. Chelsea, Heath and Dylan are brilliant young adults. All three of them are already making a mark on the world in their own way. They simply take my breath away. I could not be a prouder mum. The other part of Team Parker is my husband, David. He is my greatest supporter and quite often my greatest critic. He has been beside me every step of the way. I cannot ever begin to thank him for his love.

Politics is, of course, adversarial and the genuine respect and genuine care for each other as individuals and colleagues is something other people probably do not understand. But I have appreciated that over the years across the political divide. When Dylan was very ill I felt that groundswell of support from both sides of the political divide, and it certainly helped me through some tough times. I have no doubt that medical intervention played its part in his recovery, but the power of prayer from so many people was really the miracle of Dylan's recovery as far as I am concerned.

I know this is hard to believe but lots of people do not really understand what the Legislative Council does. It is amazing. I recall one meeting I went to and a lady approached me afterwards and poked my name badge, which said, "Robyn Parker, MLC". She said, "You know a lot about politics for someone who is in finance and insurance". I still do not know much about finance and insurance, and some days I am not sure that I know anything about politics. But the Legislative Council committee process is democracy at its best. During my time in the Legislative Council many members of the community shared their lives with us and bared their souls in the hope that recommendations from our inquiries would lead to changes in their lives, and an improvement for their families or those they represented.

I felt that the work of those inquiries was valuable and even from Opposition inquiries I chaired, such as bullying in schools, the Ambulance Service and the provision of education to children with a disability, made an impact. As an Opposition team we were formidable—I think the Opposition is learning a few of our tricks with SO 52—but we were a great team and I was pleased to be able to play a part in the Legislative Council. On a personal note, I played a part in legislative changes to support victims of sexual abuse.

I follow a number of other Liberal women into Parliament, and I have great admiration for all their achievements. I thank them for blazing a trail and setting the path for me to follow. I have worked hard to mentor, train and support women in leadership roles. I think that is what I want to do: I want to contribute more to doing that in the party in future. I want to continue to encourage women to take up the challenge of political representation. Through my role as the New South Wales Representative on the Commonwealth Women's Parliamentarians Association it has been an honour to assist many women across Australia and the Pacific region. I whinge about travelling for two hours down the M1, but some women in the Pacific walk for four days through their villages to get to Parliament.

We must strive to have more women in Parliament because Parliament needs to be representative of our diverse society. I will defend with every fibre of my being the need for equal political, economic, cultural, and social rights for women. That includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment. I do call myself a feminist and I think some people should actually just get over it because it is important. It infuriates me when women who achieve high office pull up the ladder behind them when they should pave the way for those who follow.

The analysis of women in public life is all too often reduced to a simplistic discussion about their appearance, rather than their substantive contribution. More than one person lately has said they will miss the different styles of shoes I wear into Parliament. I am serious! I have no idea what shoes they mean, but coming from my electorate, a day might start with me wearing boots walking through paddocks and finish in heels at a formal function. As an environment Minister, I can add in hiking boots, steel-capped boots for industrial sites and waste facilities, and pretty soon I have a crateful of footwear in the boot of my car. As clichéd as it sounds, we really should wear only the shoes of those we seek to represent and walk in those each day.

Maitland is the fastest-growing regional city in New South Wales—the centre of my universe. It is a thriving aspirational community with a desperate need for infrastructure to meet rapid growth and maintain our wonderful rural lifestyle. Time does not permit a long discussion of the many infrastructure achievements over the past four years, but the improvements to roads, particularly to manage congestion, a site identified and planning underway for a new public teaching hospital, refurbishment of many school facilities especially at Rutherford Technology High School and the complete rebuild of Hunter Community School are just a few. I was also able to help deliver two new rural fire stations for the Maitland community.

The small things we deliver on the ground are the things that really do make the difference. They are not the things that get the headlines. Australia Day is bigger than Ben Hur in Maitland, but this year on Australia Day when I left the stage after congratulating volunteers and welcoming new citizens I was almost crash-tackled by lady. She said to me that I had changed her life. Since I met her in a shopping centre we had been able to completely turn her life around. She stood there with a 50-pack of cigarettes and her phone tucked into her singlet, tattoos and piercings everywhere, but what struck me were the tears streaming down her face. We had managed to find her a home for her and her children and got her some domestic violence counselling. She had the confidence to begin a TAFE course. To me, that is what this job is all about.

But those results are often attained with the assistance of our staff in our electorate offices. I have been blessed to have wonderful staff, and I acknowledge and thank all of my current and past staff, especially Garry Blair, Leanne Kruger, Melissa Dial, Kim Stone and Kate Schouten. My aspiration as Minister for the Environment was to encourage what I call "practical environmentalism", where everyone is given the opportunity to rise to the environmental challenges that confront us. I took on the role knowing the legacy of previous Coalition governments. Good environmental policy is more than just rhetoric, it is about sustainability and responsibility, and making sure that it is not forsaken in terms of economic competitiveness. It is about balance. We delivered on our commitments to work with the community to protect local environments while providing more opportunities for people to enjoy parks, gardens and natural bushland.

We worked with landowners, to revegetate, protect and improve land, to manage pests and weeds in national parks, and to deliver better outcomes for biodiversity and threatened species. We strengthened environmental regulation and actively tackled pollution, waste and illegal dumping. We drove down costs for households and businesses through reduced energy use and efficiency. Early in my tenure it became apparent that notification of serious pollution incidents had been ignored too often. Insufficient attention had been placed on requiring some industries to function as responsible corporate citizens—I am thinking of one industry that some members may know about. There were days when it felt like I was the Minister for that company as it lurched from one event to the other. The focus and attention on hazardous industry was fair enough, but the media beat-up and hysteria whipped up was a whole other thing. According to some you would swear I was single-handedly flying an ultralight over the Stockton community dripping hexavalent chromium over them as I went.

What do you do about that? There are a couple of things you can do. You can notch it up to experience and weather the storm or do something about it. Those who know me know I will not walk away from a fight. It was clear what we had to do. We got in and did as much as we could straightaway. It is the legacy I am very proud of. The Environment Protection Authority [EPA], which was established by a former Coalition Government, had lost its focus. I re-established the EPA as an independent regulator with the toughest environmental laws in Australia, returning the EPA to a watchdog instead of a lapdog: It morphed from a Maltese terrier into a pit bull terrier on steroids.

We improved pollution incident management and responses, with requirements for immediate notification, increased penalties for organisations that failed to do so and established a dedicated specialist team to support EPA responses to serious pollution incidents. There is now a renewed focus on air quality monitoring. New South Wales has the most comprehensive air quality monitoring network in the country. We transformed waste and recycling in New South Wales with the largest funding package in the State's history to support recycling programs to develop waste and recycling infrastructure, reduce litter and combat illegal dumping. I was also proud to champion the banning of solariums, making New South Wales the second jurisdiction in the world to do so, and encouraging other States to follow that lead. I was also responsible for the management of our national parks and finding new ways for the community to enjoy the New South Wales environment.

We established nine new parks and reserves, two new national parks and massively increased hazard reduction activities across our national parks. These and other initiatives resulted in record visitations to our parks and gardens. As a result of my tenure I think our landscapes and threatened species are better managed and better protected. I was delighted to increase support to Taronga Zoo's conservation program and secured a future for some of our threatened species. Reforming our parks and gardens was something that needed to be done. We amalgamated back-office operations, providing efficiency between the Royal Botanic Gardens and Centennial Park, Western Sydney Parklands and Parramatta Park. When I visited Parramatta Park for the first time I was disappointed that Australia's history was so neglected, so I am delighted to see the largest capital investment in the park's history coming to fruition and hearing people tell me how great the park looks now.

We established the first ministerial portfolio dedicated to heritage since 1988. In that portfolio I was responsible for providing increased funding for heritage projects throughout New South Wales as well as listing State significant items and declaring new Aboriginal places. There is more to be done in the environment space. As I speak, 5,000 delegates from across the world are gathering at a once-in-a-decade event I secured—the World Parks Congress in Sydney. With the world watching we need to focus on grappling with human impact on the environment. The science is unequivocal and it is my belief that bold governments should not walk away from targets. We can do more to protect our coastlines and marine environments, and we should prioritise and plan for a Sydney region marine park.

During my time as Minister I began the process of reforming the legislation that protects Aboriginal culture and heritage in this State by developing a stand-alone Act that respects Aboriginal culture, defines who speaks for country, and delivers legislative balance and certainty to celebrate, promote and protect cultural values. I look forward to the day when that outcome is reached; it needs to happen soon. I was fortunate to be supported by a great ministerial team, Team Parker—now Team Stokes—and I am delighted they are here. They are very talented and very dedicated people, and I just love them so much. They are just awesome—Tony Chappel, John McCormack, Ed Stean, Mitch Hillier, Jacqie Cope-Williams, Alistair Tomlison, Michael Duffy, Mick Murphy, Kathryn O'Regan and Nicole Buskiewicz.

I thank also my departmental liaison officers and, of course, Jason Stuttle, who drove me for thousands of kilometres and put up with my backseat driving. I cannot thank them enough. I will continue to champion and support their brilliant careers into the future. Sally Barnes, who led the Office of Environment and Heritage, followed by Terry Bailey, are great communicators and problem solvers. We formed really strong bonds working in some fairly challenging times. At one point Sally and I were called "Thelma and Louise". It may or may not have had something to do with guns and maybe a policy about shooting in national parks, but I think it was unfair because neither of us could agree on who would get Brad Pitt had we been in that movie. However, we were sure we were not going over the cliff together with our guns blazing.

One of the greatest pleasures in my role was to meet the wonderful Office of Environment and Heritage staff. It was a joy to hop in a car and travel into the bush while they bent my ear, leaving very nervous staff standing by worried about what was to transpire. I think they enjoyed it; I certainly enjoyed it. The only time they were even more nervous was when I decided to go swimming in a marine park and some sharks were circling nearby. It is certainly not a career-enhancing move to have your Minister gobbled up by a shark. However, it was not as scary as going into The Nationals party room to talk about native vegetation, but I survived. Barry Buffier, Mark Gifford, Steve Beaman, the board and staff of the EPA embraced change as we worked hard together to deliver outcomes.

Today I have talked of communities, of people, of life philosophies and of journeys. I have talked about some of the things that I believe are important in life. It has been an incredible honour to be a member of this Parliament, to have had the opportunity to work towards a better quality of life and to be a custodian for all the

people of New South Wales. I tried really hard not to take this opportunity for granted. I have stayed strong, I have maintained my integrity and I leave with my head held high. They tell me the significance of a valedictory speech is not only a farewell to the Parliament, but that it is the speech most often quoted at a member's funeral—so if you are reading this, I might be dead!

At the end of my days when people discuss me I hope they will say—my kids have had epitaphs written about me for quite some time but they are not allowed to disclose what they say—"She was enthusiastic about life, about people; she cared. She worked tenaciously to make a difference and at the same time she was a wonderful wife and mother." To the staff of the Parliament, thank you for your support over 12 years. To my colleagues across this Parliament, thank you for your hospitality and indulgence in allowing me to present my second valedictory speech. I wish you all the best for the future. I hope you will all keep in touch. I will watch your progress with great interest. I never had an alcoholic drink in this place in 12 years—I have made up for it outside—but I would be delighted if everyone were to join me in the staff bar for a drink.

The SPEAKER: I congratulate the member for Maitland on her contribution in this House and in the other place. She is an exceptionally beautiful person who will be missed by members on both sides of the Chamber.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (ELECTIONS) BILL 2014

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

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

SHELLHARBOUR CITY HUB PROJECT

Discussion of Petition signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [4.52 p.m.]: I welcome to the Parliament of New South Wales the Stop the Hub Community Group who are in the gallery and thank them for coming to listen to this debate. It is no easy task to obtain 10,000 signatures on a matter of concern to a local community. I again acknowledge the Stop the Hub Community Group, led by Diane Quinlin, which achieved an important objective in lodging a petition that was tabled on 6 August 2014. The Shellharbour City Hub proposal is one of the more controversial issues that has had to be dealt with by Shellharbour City Council. I have met with representatives of the Stop the Hub Community Group twice since its campaign against this proposal.

I have always maintained a consistent position throughout this entire debate. I state again today that the Shellharbour City Hub proposal has to be resolved by only seven people. I have made direct representations to the mayor and to council on behalf of all those constituents who approached me on this issue. In each case I asked council to consider carefully the views of all those who oppose the project and those who support it. Unlike others, I will not misrepresent or inflate the expectations of the Stop the Hub Community Group or any of the 10,000 signatories to this petition by claiming that I have more power than I do. As this petition clearly states:

Stop the construction of the City Hub and the sale of community assets.

This petition should have been put before Shellharbour City Council. I have no greater authority for this view than the Minister for Local Government. In responding to the petition, he said:

Ultimately the issues raised in the petition are essentially matters for Council to deal with at the local level.

In the long term, the local community can demonstrate its support or dissatisfaction with the performance of individual councillors or the Council when voting at council elections.

There is not much difference between the Minister's response and my views on this issue. It would be helpful if the people of Shellharbour city could directly elect their highest civic office holder at the 2016 election—something for which I have been calling for the past four years. Government members, including the member for Kiama, voted to remove that right of direct election just months after the 2011 election. The City Hub proposal has now been considered directly by council on 20 separate occasions since 13 November 2011. Every resolution has been either carried unanimously by all councillors or opposed by only two councillors.

There are two councillors who represent the Labor Party, one represented the Liberal Party but is now an Independent, and one councillor is a Liberal and a former mayor. Three councillors are Independents, one of whom is now contesting the State election as a candidate for The Greens. Simple arithmetic makes it completely fanciful to claim, as some do, that only two of the seven councillors represent a Labor majority. It is also noted that this whole process was kicked off by then Liberal mayor and councillor Kelly Marsh. She said in a gushing press release on 26 April 2012, "This is an exciting project." She went on to say:

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

On 22 August 14 she told the *Illawarra Mercury*:

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

The member for Kiama and the Liberal Party in Shellharbour have been desperate ever since to airbrush Councillor Marsh's key involvement in this project. I am sure that the contribution of the member for Kiama to the discussion on this issue will be like the Goodyear blimp—full of hot air and no show. But despite his empty words council has advised me—

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

Ms ANNA WATSON: —he has not made a representation to council on behalf of a constituent on the hub issue. I lay this letter on the table. It is the easiest trick in the book for members to be "all care no responsibility" politicians in this place. If the member for Kiama is as strongly opposed to this project as he suggests, I challenge him to introduce a private member's bill to give legislative effect to the demands of the petition and to stop the project in its tracks. If the member for Kiama, whose party has a substantial majority in this place, was serious we could vote on such a bill by the end of the year. I know that the member for Kiama agrees with that view. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

On 28 July 2014 the member for Kiama told the *Lake Times*:

At no stage have I said that this petition will stop the hub ... the decision for the city hub rests with the Shellharbour councillors.

I have proposed that the Stop The Hub Community Group should meet with all councillors and senior council officers to negotiate the concerns it has in relation to the hub proposal. I urge the Stop The Hub Community Group to revisit its decision not to do so. I also call on all the seven councillors to be far more proactive in their direct consultations with the local community. This is a big project and it is incumbent on those who support it to put the case directly to the community and to persuade residents of its necessity. If the case for the project cannot be sustained because of community opposition, then the council should revisit the scope and financial viability of the whole endeavour. Councillors Marsh and Moran should stop outsourcing their dismal failure to persuade five of their colleagues to the merits of their argument.

Instead, they try to shift responsibility for their failure to other levels of government and this Parliament. I say to all councillors: This project is a matter for your council to resolve. You were all elected to make these hard decisions. If you support the project, convince the residents. If you oppose the project, convince your colleagues to vote with you against it. I will continue to call for talks, negotiation and compromise by the council and community stakeholders as part of the decision-making processes that the council must undertake in ultimately determining the hub project's future.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [4.59 p.m.]: I had a speech that I intended to make on this issue. However, after the member for Shellharbour's appalling performance there is no need for me to bother. It is no wonder her branch members did not want to re-endorse her. She had an opportunity to come into this place and to acknowledge that 11,400 people in Shellharbour oppose the hub. All she has done in this debate and previously is to blame someone else. Rather than demonstrate community leadership and stand up to her to Labor colleagues on the Shellharbour City Council, she squibbed it in this House again today. The member for Shellharbour gave us the numbers on the council. It has more Labor lap-dogs than Buckingham Palace has miniature Welsh corgis. The member tried to explain why the council voted the way that it did. Let us consider so-called Independent David Boyle. He was a Labor candidate for the seat of Gilmore and is a branch member of the Labor Party. Paul Rankin was a Liberal, but he is now voting en bloc with the mayor and her colleagues to maintain control.

I make it very clear that I oppose the Shellharbour City Hub project. I hoped that the member for Shellharbour would do the same today for all the reasons that the community has outlined. The project involves new council chambers costing \$57 million. No-one wants new council chambers and no-one has asked for them. The largess is appalling. The joint regional planning panel rejected the project because the car park did not meet the council's own requirements. The original proposal included terraces between the mayor's office and the general manager's office, a cardio room and a yoga room for staff. It was a palatial, opulent, expensive project that would mortgage the ratepayers of Shellharbour for years. The member for Shellharbour called for a referendum on the mayoralty. Councillors also proposed holding a referendum on the project, which has been subject to no consultation. Who voted against having the referendum? The Labor councillors voted against it. It is all well and good for a referendum to be held to suit the political interests of the member for Shellharbour and her colleagues on the council, but it is not good enough to hold one on a \$57 million project that will mortgage the community's future.

I congratulate the Stop the Hub group and all those involved in the campaign—particularly those who are in the gallery today. They have stood up to the ruling clique on the council and said that the community wants a better deal. Instead of spending money on new council chambers, they want better footpaths, better roads and better community facilities. The people of Hillside Drive in Albion Park come to mind. They want roundabouts constructed to make their streets safer by slowing speeding vehicles. Council has told them that the required resources are not available. That is understandable when it is spending money on projects like the hub. We will ensure that a referendum is held on this issue: It will be the next State election. The voters of Shellharbour will have an opportunity to use their judgement and cast their vote on the behaviour and leadership of the member for Shellharbour on this issue.

That is why I will be supporting Mark Jones at the next election. Unlike the member for Shellharbour, he has fought against this project. The member has been asked to fight against it, but she has failed to step up. The member for Shellharbour recently released a brochure entitled "Fighting for a Fair Go". It seems that it is all well and good to take credit for the Shellharbour Hospital, despite the fact that the Labor Government shut down maternity services, and for the West Dapto access, which she voted against because the money came from the long-term lease of the Port of Port Kembla. She also takes credit for the Albion Park rail bypass despite delivering nothing for 16 years.

However, when it comes to something that requires leadership, she is all at sea. The Shellharbour City Council is proposing a 40 per cent increase in rates over four years. At the same time, it is engaging in what I believe to be an egregious abuse of public policy without consultation. Despite that, the member for Shellharbour would rather side with Labor interests than stick with the community. I will back the community and I will continue to use every opportunity I can to ensure that people know where I stand. Once again, the member for Shellharbour has failed the very Labor Party members who did not want to endorse her. No wonder she had to be M40-ed in by the national executive. I am disgusted with the member's contribution to the debate today.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [5.04 p.m.]: I thank the member for Shellharbour for her contribution to this debate. Just as importantly, I thank the residents of our beautiful region who have come to Sydney to see the oldest Parliament in Australia in action. I will not rip up any paper; I will leave that to my grandstanding friend the member for Kiama. Getting 10,000 signatures on a petition is no mean feat. It takes an enormous amount of time and it requires an enormous amount of work. I extend my thanks to those who have worked so hard on the campaign—both those in the gallery and those who could not be here today. As someone who has been involved in a 10,000-signature petition dealing with the Bulli Hospital, I know that it takes a great deal of leg work convincing and advocacy by many people.

Obviously, the Shellharbour City Council will have to consider the views of the people of Shellharbour. It would be foolish not to consult or engage with the community. Nor should the council ignore such a petition. The comment by the member for Kiama about making this a referendum issue at the State election is misleading. The men and women who become councillors for one of the fastest-growing cities in New South Wales have a responsibility to make decisions. None of the ratepayers held a gun to their head and forced them to become councillors. They took on that responsibility without any pressure from anyone. Therefore, they must not try to pass the buck or to deflect decision-making. Making difficult decisions in the community interest is part of being a leader at all levels of government.

Like the member for Shellharbour, I am calling on Shellharbour councillors to pause and to ask themselves why they are doing the job. If they are doing it to play party-political games, they are in the wrong occupation. If they are doing it to advance the community, they should get on with it. They should engage with

people like the petitioners and others. For heaven's sake, they should make a decision. As Gough Whitlam said, we are in this place to do stuff. Sometimes we will get it right and sometimes we will get it wrong. Being a leader involves making decisions. It does not involve contracting out decision-making to another level of government. I urge councillors to take a long, hard look at themselves and to ensure that they engage with their local community and that they make an honest and appropriate decision.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [5.07 p.m.]: The Shellharbour Hub appears to me to be a \$57 million white elephant. It sounds very palatial, but unfortunately for the poor ratepayers of Shellharbour all they will get is a palace for councillors. Councillors in the fast-growing Shellharbour district should be concentrating on gutters, garbage and other core business. They should not be worrying about a \$57 million council palace. The local residents should be their first priority. They are definitely pulling the wrong rein with this palace. There were 11,400 people who opposed this development and they spoke out loudly to say they do not want money spent on it. For the council to consider going forward with this plan after that sort of response is ridiculous.

The member for Shellharbour has brought this petition to the attention of the House. I do not know why she is grasping at straws as it is a local government issue and as such should be kept in the local government arena. It is up to the people of Shellharbour to say whether they want it, but the decision was that we look at the Shellharbour council hub. What is a hub? Will it have sporting facilities? It sounds fantastic, but the member for Kiama colourfully explained the overindulgence of this development. As a member of Parliament who represents parts of the northern Illawarra, I think this money would be better spent on things other than accommodation for council people. However, the money should be spent within the council area.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

TAREE AMATEUR SWIMMING CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.11 p.m.]: I inform the House of the great work of the Taree Amateur Swimming Club, and in particular Taree swimmers Marcus Smith, Jordan Smith, Olivia Dew, Max McKillop-Davies and Bevan Smith. They competed in 38 events at the Crescent Head championships. Nine members of the swimming club achieved 40 personal best times and came away with five gold, 11 silver and 10 bronze medals. The club is excited to host a carnival at the YMCA Manning Aquatic and Leisure Centre on 29 November, which I will attend. The club will also host one of the Swimming NSW Country Regional Championships on 10 and 11 January 2015.

HUNTER ARTIST SARAH STEIN

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [5.12 p.m.]: Our artists have a vital role in our culture, in making sense of the world we live in and in enriching our everyday lives. It can be a tough job for emerging artists to carve a niche, and those who do through hard work and perseverance deserve a great deal of support and encouragement. That is why today I recognise the achievements of Hunter artist Sarah Stein, who is both a talented barista at Peaberry's coffee in my electorate in New Lambton, and a great up-and-coming artist in our region. Sarah thrived during her four-year Advanced Diploma in Fine Arts at Hunter TAFE, developed a love of sculpture and has found a market for her wall-mounted, three-dimensional works. Sarah has the discipline to devote daily hours to her sculpture and drawing work, even after long hours at the coffee machine. We congratulate Sarah on her success and wish her all the best for the future.

WAVERLEY COUNCIL REMEMBRANCE DAY CEREMONY

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [5.13 p.m.]: Recently I attended Waverley Council's Remembrance Day ceremony held at Waverley Cenotaph. The cenotaph is one of the eastern suburb's finest war memorials, holding local ceremonies for the people of my electorate. Remembrance Day is a day to reflect on the sacrifices made by our service men and women in conflicts of the past and more recently. We will remember them. It was a pleasure to hear a poignant address by Captain Richard Thapthimthong of the Australian Army, in which he touched on the enduring legend of the Australian soldier based on his experiences fighting for our country in Afghanistan.

The recitation to the Ode of the Fallen was read by Mr Bev Hopkins, President of Eastern Suburbs Legion Club, and my constituent. It was good to see young representatives there to pay their respects from local schools in Vaucluse such as Rose Bay Secondary College, Kesser Torah College, Bondi Public School, Bondi Beach Public School and Reddam House. I thank Waverley Council for holding this wonderful ceremony and all the members of my local community who paid their respects. Lest we forget.

SYDNEY SANSKRIT SCHOOL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.13 p.m.]: I acknowledge the achievements and the activities of the Sydney Sanskrit School. The school was established in 2006 and has an annual celebration day called Samskrutotsavam. The 2014 celebration occurred on Saturday 8 November and was held at the Marsden Road Public School at Liverpool. The celebration featured rhymes in Sanskrit and Dharawal—being the Indigenous language of Western Sydney, so an interesting cross-cultural connection. It also featured Vedic chanting and various cultural performances. Also at the event the fifth edition of the annual school magazine "Medha", was launched, with much of the work having been done by students.

The school is not just a good example of Sydney's multiculturalism but also special because of its focus on Sanskrit, which has enormous cultural significance in world history, being a foundational language in the way that Latin is for Europe. I pay tribute to the school and the students, teachers, parents and volunteers involved with the school. I acknowledge, in particular, the role of Ms Meenakshi Srinivasan and Karthik Subramaniam.

DEBBIE ROGERS, NSW CARERS AWARD

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.14 p.m.]: Today I recognise Debbie Rogers, a recent recipient of a New South Wales Carers Award. Debbie cares for her sister, Michelle Bishop, who has had continuing speech and movement disabilities after suffering a stroke. She also cared for her other sister who was diagnosed with cervical cancer, and currently cares for her husband, Greg, who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. On top of all this extraordinary responsibility, Debbie also looks after her nine-month-old great-niece and four-year-old great-nephew after their mother was unable to look after them. Debbie is a true hero. She has selflessly devoted her life to caring for those around her. She lives her life by example, and is an inspiration to us all. I congratulate Debbie on her tireless efforts, and wish her husband, Greg, and her sisters, Michelle and Dianne, the very best for the future. We thank Debbie for the incredible work she does on behalf of our community.

DARREN GALIA, BREAST CANCER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.15 p.m.]: I commend Mr Darren Galia, a local resident in Canley Heights, who has taken it upon himself to raise awareness for breast cancer in our local area. Darren began his campaign to wear pink every day this November as part of the National Breast Cancer Foundation's "Real Men Wear Pink" campaign, to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer research and investigation. Darren is a true local hero for taking a "pinking up" this November, supporting his sisters and other women through advocacy and support of breast cancer research.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.16 p.m.]: I congratulate owner Tracey Spencer and manager Lisa Allan of Shire Travel, Caringbah, on being crowned the most Outstanding Holiday and Travel business at the 2014 Sutherland Shire Business Awards last week. Shire Travel won the same award in 2012 and was a finalist in 2013. This is a remarkable achievement for Shire Travel.

I congratulate owner Peter Andrews and the team at South Beach Seafoods, Cronulla, on winning the Outstanding Takeaway Food Award at the 2014 Sutherland Shire Business Awards. South Beach Seafoods has been serving the Cronulla community and visitors for a long time. The award joins the previously received 2007 Business of the Year Award and other accolades. In 2011 the *Daily Telegraph* named South Beach Seafoods as one of the top 10 delicious fish and chip destinations. This shop has become a Cronulla institution.

I congratulate Scott Evennett and Rhys Dowden and the team at Commando Tough in Caringbah on winning the Outstanding Fitness Service award at the 2014 Sutherland Shire Business Awards. Scott and Rhys are former special force servicemen. Commando Tough is modelled on providing the layperson with military-style training aimed at strengthening people both physically and mentally.

I congratulate the team at Blooms the Chemist in Cronulla on winning the Outstanding Pharmacy Award at the 2014 Sutherland Shire Business Awards. Blooms has been serving the local community for a number of years. For example, every Monday it provides a free baby health service to offer advice to parents and to help with queries, supporting parents in a challenging period of adjustment.

GREEK OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK OF BANKSTOWN PINK RIBBON DAY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.17 p.m.]: In October I had the pleasure of attending the Greek Older Women's Network of Bankstown Pink Ribbon Day fundraising morning tea in support of breast cancer research. For a number of years the Greek Older Women's Network has raised much-needed funds for Pink Ribbon Day. The ladies put on a great spread of delicious Greek sweets and homemade food, and guests were entertained with traditional Greek dance performances. The morning tea raised funds for the Cancer Council's Pink Ribbon Day to fund important research work. I take this opportunity to commend the volunteers of the Greek Older Women's Network, in particular the coordinator, Voula Kerr, for organising a successful fundraiser for a worthwhile cause.

THEA ZWIEBEL, SCOUTS AUSTRALIA RECOGNITION AWARD

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [5.18 p.m.]: I commend Armidale resident Mrs Thea Zwiebel who has recently received recognition from Scouts Australia for her 30 years of outstanding commitment to Scouting in Armidale. She has held a number of positions as a leader, including Cub Scout Leader, Group Leader, District Joey Scout Leader and Regional Leader (Development). Thea has fulfilled all her roles with drive and enthusiasm, which has ensured their success. Currently Thea is the driving force behind a plan to build a new scout hall, following the loss of the original hall to fire some years ago. She is working in close partnership with Armidale Rugby Union Football Club and Armidale Scouts to make sure this becomes a reality. Thea's award, the Silver Wattle, recognises her excellence and her commitment to the ideals of scouting and the development of young people. Congratulations, Thea.

ANNE LOMAS, CESSNOCK ELECTORATE OFFICER

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [5.19 p.m.]: Earlier today staff service awards were presented to the wonderful staff who work for the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council and the Department of Parliamentary Services. I am extremely lucky to have the services of Mrs Anne Lomas in the electorate office in Cessnock; she is my Electorate Officer 2. Anne has been the electorate officer at the office of the member for Cessnock for 25 years now. She has worked for four different members of Parliament, one of them Liberal, three of them Labor. She transcends the political divide and she knows just about everything there is to know about what needs to happen in an electorate office.

Of the many thousands and thousands of people who have contacted the electorate office of whoever the member for Cessnock happened to be in the past 25 years, there is no doubt that Anne has been both a shoulder for them to cry on and a strong advocate for their needs. She has gone about her work diligently, carefully and patiently, getting the results she needs for the many thousands of people across the electorate of Cessnock. I thank her so much for continuing her great work for me.

MANILDRA HARWOOD SUGARS

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [5.20 p.m.]: Today I offer my congratulations to the management and staff of Manildra Harwood Sugars, which celebrated 25 years of production last month. Anyone who lives or passes through the Clarence Valley will be familiar with the thousands of hectares of sugarcane that, once it is fully matured, is cut and taken to the mill and refinery at Harwood. In its 25 years the refinery has produced more than five million tonnes of refined sugar and related products, and the refinery still has 34 members of staff who have been employed since the beginning.

The mill is the oldest operational mill in Australia and it makes a huge contribution to the local community and economy. It supplies up to 25 per cent of the refined sugar market in Australia and was the world's first refiner to be awarded Bonsucro certification—the global metric standard for sustainable sugar production—and is also the only 100 per cent Australian-owned refinery. I wish the management and staff continued success into the future.

MOUNT DRUITT FIRST WORLD WAR CENTENARY COMMEMORATION

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [5.21 p.m.]: I would like the Parliament to recognise that this weekend the Mount Druitt Chamber of Commerce and the Mount Druitt Historical Society will commemorate 100 years since the First World War and the chamber will celebrate 50 years of service to the community. The celebrations will include an address by Mayor Stephen Bali; Lester Morris, a descendant of a First World War stretcher bearer; and the President of the Chamber, Reg Murray. I take this opportunity in one of my last contributions in this House to recognise Reg Murray. He has been a true pioneer for the Mount Druitt area, a successful businessman, and a good friend and supporter of me, both personally and as the local member. Congratulations to all on this event.

TRIBUTE TO BRUCE RAMSAY

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.21 p.m.]: I was deeply saddened by the passing of Bruce Ramsay on Friday 31 October 2014 after a battle with a debilitating lung disease. Mr Ramsay was internationally renowned for his bridge engineering work and is responsible for many of the fine structures we see in Europe and Asia today. One of his proudest achievements was the \$3 million structural renovation to the Kangaroo Valley Hampden Bridge, which is Australia's oldest suspension bridge. Bruce rallied against the then Roads and Traffic Authority to have the renovation done pretty much to his specifications. In this he succeeded and ensured that the iconic 1898 bridge will survive for another 100 years.

Add this to the many other community projects that Bruce involved himself in and one will find a unique, selfless individual who was much admired and will be greatly missed. The Stay Cable design concept for Sydney's Anzac Bridge was proposed by Bruce Ramsay as the manager of the Engineering for VSL Specialist Engineers. The final design was carried out by the Roads and Traffic Authority and was opened to traffic on 3 December 1995. Bruce is survived by his wife, Chris, and his two adult daughters, Justine and Karina. He will be deeply and sorely missed.

WALLIS LAKE FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.22 p.m.]: The Wallis Lake Football Club recently held its Premier League presentation night at Club Forster. The club celebrated a memorable year after being crowned the Football Mid North Coast Premier League champions for 2014. The first grade side had their most consistent season to date, winning 18 out of 20 games and netting 56 goals in the process. The side was unbeaten throughout the finals and secured the championship by beating rivals Port United 3-2 in the grand final. Captain Beau Wynter and striker Peter Masterantonio shared the honour of Player of the Year. Striker Roan Whiteman played his best season, claiming the Golden Boot award. Young Player of the Year was Ethan Perry. Herb Klemperer awarded young midfielder Ryan Foles the Coach's Award.

The Wallis Lake reserve grade also had a great year, being minor premiers but not making the grand final. Sam Ravell was awarded Player of the Year. Ethan Perry secured the Golden Boot comfortably. Captain Chris Cheers was awarded Most Goal Assists. Young Player of the Year was Jarryd Gear and Tony Russ awarded Matt Cheers the Coach's Award. Stopper Luke Debrincat was the deserving winner of the Dane Ellis Trophy for 2014.

LIAM WOOD, DIVING CHAMPION

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [5.23 p.m.]: I am proud to acknowledge a very talented Hunter athlete, 14-year-old Liam Wood. Liam, a Fletcher-based diver, has been participating in water sports since he was two years old. Liam has already had a distinguished career, winning a sporting blue award from his school, St Pius X, and placing second in 14/15 years boys' platform and three-metre events at the New South Wales Age Diving Championships. He recently received a \$500 sporting scholarship from Pat Conroy, the Federal member for Charlton. I look forward to seeing where Liam's career takes him in the future, and I wish him all the very best.

ELEANA XU, PREMIER'S SPELLING BEE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [5.24 p.m.]: I congratulate Eleana Xu from Hornsby North Public School for coming third in this year's Premier's Spelling Bee. Eleana had to compete in school and regional spelling bee competitions before making it through to the State finals, where she competed

with students from years 5 and 6 from across the State. Eleana was asked to spell incredibly difficult words such as "miscellany", "nacreous" and "isthmus". Those are words that most people have never heard of and can barely say, let alone spell. Eleana has done an incredible job and she could definitely teach me a thing or two about spelling. I congratulate Eleana on her success and I look forward to witnessing her many successes in the future.

I also congratulate Marie Sumpton and the dedicated staff at Hornsby North Public School. Eleana's success is just one example of the outstanding education delivered at Hornsby North. It is a school that sets the standard in academia and extracurricular excellence. I am looking forward to celebrating the success of all the students as I join them for their upcoming presentation day in a few weeks.

SPEARS SPORTS CLUB

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.25 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge the achievements of the Spears Sports Club, which held its 2014 annual presentation and awards night at Al Amanah College in Liverpool last Saturday. The club was established 14 years ago with much support from the Islamic Charity Projects Association [ICPA]. The club puts particular emphasis on soccer and karate, and there was a great deal of discussion about that on the night. Present at the function were Sheikh Fawaz, Dr Gayeth Al Shelh, the president of the ICPA, Mohamad Chams and Councillor Ali Karnib from Liverpool Council. This club is yet another concrete example of the diverse and exciting multicultural society of south-western Sydney.

NETBALL NSW HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE VICKI KERR

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.26 p.m.]: I congratulate Vicki Kerr on her recent induction into the Netball NSW Hall of Fame. Ms Kerr has been a shire resident all her life. She began playing netball as a junior with Cronulla RSL, in the Sutherland Shire Netball Association. She was a member of the New South Wales open team from 1971 to 1978. She captained the team in 1973 and was vice-captain from 1974 to 1977. Between 1982 and 1990 Mrs Kerr was the 21-unders head coach, during which time the team won six national netball championships. That remains an unbeaten benchmark to this day. Mrs Kerr has coached Sutherland Shire Netball Association representative teams across all age divisions. In 1985 she became a life member of the Sutherland Shire Netball Association and in 2000 she was awarded the Australian sports medal for services to netball.

FAIRFIELD WISHING TREE APPEAL 2014

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.27 p.m.]: K-Mart at the Fairfield Forum is playing host to the 2014 Wishing Tree Appeal. This initiative was launched by Jade McDonald, a 23-year-old go-getter who aims to make a real difference to the lives of those who are less fortunate. Last year this initiative saw more than 1,000 gifts donated from generous businesses, residents and general passers-by, with the number expected to increase this year. I commend Jade, our local K-Mart management and all our generous community donors for brightening up the lives of many less fortunate families in our area.

CHARLIE DOLBELL AND RORY O'NEILL, SHORT FILM CHALLENGE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [5.27 p.m.]: I commend Holy Trinity School, Inverell, classmates Charlie Dolbell and Rory O'Neill, who recently presented a cheque for \$2,000 to the Inverell East Rotary Club. Charlie and Rory developed a short film about the work of Rotary and Rotary International and entered it in the 2014 North West Film Festival. The gala night was held at Bingara's Roxy Theatre. They won second place overall in the Mad at Heart Short Film Challenge, winning prize money of \$2,000 for themselves to help fund future films, and \$2,000 for Inverell East Rotary Club.

Inverell East Rotary Club president, Paul Alliston certainly appreciated the donation presented by the two young men. I compliment them on their maturity and also on their strong belief in service to community, their support of Rotary International and the professionalism of their short film, which was absolutely excellent. Well done, Charlie and Rory.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MILLER TAFE PLUMBING COURSES

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.28 p.m.]: I inform the House of the situation surrounding Miller TAFE, which is located in my electorate and attended by many of my constituents. It is a component of the South Western Institute of TAFE, and is an important and valuable element of our local community. I have been to the TAFE on many occasions and in more recent years my most frequent activity there seems to be addressing groups of teachers and students at the entrance on Banks Road about proposed changes to courses and fee changes resulting from State Government decisions. About 10 days ago I spoke to a gathering of students and teachers about changes to plumbing courses. The proposal is that for next year face-to-face teaching hours for some plumbing courses at Miller TAFE will be dramatically reduced—by up to a third. This will occur at the same time as fees will increase. Prior to the meeting I received an email from a Miller TAFE teacher. To avoid possible retribution towards that teacher I will not identify them. Part of what I was told by the teacher is as follows:

One week ago our section was directed by faculty to reduce our Certificate III plumbing course from 864 hours to 574 hours. That is reducing the course by 33%!

We are told this needs to happen to meet the reduced funding under the "Smart and Skilled" reform commencing January, 2015.

There is a range of concerns about this, not only in terms of the number of jobs at Miller but the quality of the plumbers who emerge from the course. I was also told this:

My colleagues and my own concerns are of the educational soundness which will be dramatically compromised from the massive reduction of face to face teaching and that the students will have to pay approximately \$500 more to be taught less.

Our other concerns are fraught with worry on the integrity of the plumbing, draining and gas fitting industry. There is a serious responsibility the industry has to the community providing clean drinking water, hygienic sanitation and safe operating gas installations.

Already people have died from contaminated water supply and sub-standard gas installations. Environments have been polluted and sewer treatment plants overloaded from trade waste pre-treatment incorrectly handled. This is a major concern that will become much worse from lack of training.

These are obviously serious issues and involve quite broad considerations with quite significant consequences. I was also told this:

Also there are jobs at risk. The plumbing discipline stands to lose one third of their teachers when this model is implemented.

A 720 hour model has been suggested but faculty want to run with the 574 hour model.

I understand the need for change, but I really feel the 574 hour model will cause many negative implications as explained above.

It is apparent that plumbing sections in other institutes across the State will run with the 720 hour model. This is not ideal, but would be significantly better than implementing the 574 hour model.

The teacher completed his comments with these thoughts:

Under the 'Smart and Skilled' funding allocation from NSW Education and Communities Office of Education-State training services, it is interesting to note that certificate III in plumbing has a qualification price of \$10,550 per students, and certificate III in picture framing has a qualification price of \$11,030 per student. I find this quite perplexing.

The problems are serious. Obviously there are fewer jobs. Equally obviously, less face-to-face teaching at Miller than at other TAFEs can only lead to less qualified students issuing from Miller. That can only disadvantage them in their future employment. Clearly that is a result to be deplored. Less rigorous qualifications also have an effect on the quality of the industry generally. That is equally a consequence to be deplored. These changes to the plumbing course came on top of some proposed changes to engineering courses. Those proposals involve some courses finishing early in November. That early finishing would have prevented students qualifying and gaining their competencies. To complete the course they would then have to re-enrol to get in next year and pay fees again. I am happy to say that, within 24 hours of the *Sun-Herald* being told of that story, the decision was changed. It should not take that sort of action to stop patently stupid decisions being taken. Miller TAFE is an incredibly important part of my local community. The damage that has been done to it is entirely reprehensible.

ZOE'S LAW LEGISLATION

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping) [5.33 p.m.]: I lament the fact that the Legislative Council is unlikely to debate and vote on the important private member's bill, the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No 2). Several of my constituents have raised this bill with me recently. The bill, which was introduced into the Legislative Assembly by the member for the Entrance, Chris Spence, with the full support of Brodie Donegan, the mother, and Nick Ball, the father, was passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 63 to 26 in this House. The problem sought to be resolved by the bill is one that will continue to inflame the community and haunt grieving parents, governments and parliamentarians for their lack of action in this area of the law. Sadly, cases of unborn infants being killed by deliberate or reckless acts or dangerous driving will continue and penalties will remain inadequate. I note the comments of District Court Judge Paul Conlon in his remarks on sentencing Marco Paulo Silvestri on 22 October 2014. He said:

The impact of the crime upon Ms Sparks has been truly devastating. The account of the impact upon her is detailed. I will not repeat it here. However, she did state as follows:

"My womb had catastrophically ruptured upon impact. The surgeons had to remove all the surround organs to clear out the remains of my womb and my body was stitched back up from pelvis to chest. I have lost my daughter, my womanhood and my chance to ever become a mother naturally."

She also recalled that when a doctor was reciting her list of injuries to a nurse he referred to "the loss of my 32-week foetus". She said:

I remember the anger at those words as she was so much more than that to so many people and to me she was my angel, my ultimate life blessing, the first of many we had hoped ...

Later His Honour said:

The fact that Ms Sparks lost her unborn child is a matter that the Court can have regard to along with Ms Sparks other injuries in assessing the grievous bodily harm occasioned to her. Every case must be assessed on its own merits and I am satisfied that in Ms Sparks' case the seriousness of her injuries fall at the very top end of the range.

Of course it was not possible for the Offender to be charged with dangerous driving causing death as the law at this stage does not recognise the death of an unborn child in these circumstances.

I would be surprised if any member of the community would be able to comprehend the sheer inadequacy of a maximum penalty of seven years for a criminal offence that involved extinguishing the life of an infant. Lest there be any doubt my use of the phrase "life of an infant"—

this is Judge Conlon—

one only has to look at the photograph of Ms Sparks in the hospital bed looking down at her perfectly formed, although dead, baby daughter in her arms.

However, the Court must work within the parameters set by the legislature.

The irony is that by lawmakers ignoring modern advances in medical research, where much more is known about unborn children, a lacuna or gap in the law is created. If assault or reckless or dangerous driving causes a child to be born alive prematurely and the child then dies from the injuries, the perpetrator may be prosecuted and convicted for homicide or other offences against the person. The child may be born very prematurely—say, at 22 weeks gestation—but if born alive it is treated as a person with all the protections the law affords to older persons. But if the child dies in the womb at a much later stage of development—say, 37 weeks—it is not currently recognised as a person.

Cases that bear similarity to those of Zoe and Mai include *R v Harrigan*, 2005; *Queen v Iby*, 2005; and *Queen v Whelan*, 2012. In Iby there was a 38-week gestation but as a result of a collision the baby was born and survived for two hours. The man was convicted of manslaughter. There was question of the born-alive principle in that case. In the case of Jacqueline Sparks, her daughter was 32 weeks. In the case of Whelan it was 24 weeks, and the child died 31 days after the accident. In the 1996 case of *Queen v F*, the Court of Criminal Appeal ruled that where an injury is caused to an unborn child as a result of dangerous driving, if the child was born alive and then died it was a person for the purposes of section 52 (a) of the Act.

In 2001 a man, Harrigan, caused a collision by dangerous driving, injuring and effectively sterilising Renee Shields, who was seven months pregnant with Byron. The government of the day promised to implement the recommendation of Mervyn Finlay, QC, specifically creating an offence of killing an unborn child. Then the

government of the day broke that promise and instead incorporated the death of an unborn child as an aspect of the mother's grievous bodily harm. It is time that these women and their husbands and partners were recognised. In the current case tight provisions have been included in the bill to exempt medically induced abortion, yet opponents ignore the pleas of Brody, Josephine and Renee Shields. They ignore the silent screams of their unborn children.

ANDY MCINNES AND QUEANBEYAN FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Regional Tourism) [5.38 p.m.]: As a member of Parliament I am often made aware of sad times and struggles faced by locals in the community. Today I will share a story that has truly touched and affected me deeply; yet demonstrates that, through tragedy, sometimes the very best in a community can be brought out. Andrew "Andy" McInnes is a 40-year-old Queanbeyan family man; a father of two daughters, Courtney and Taya. For many years he has been a very active member of the community and was heavily involved in Queanbeyan's basketball fraternity. On Saturday 9 August the lives of Andy and his family were dramatically changed forever after he was assaulted by four people outside a Queanbeyan pub. He was hospitalised, and he has spent the past few months recovering from stroke, partial blindness, a broken jaw, and the loss of fine motor skills.

As the father of two daughters, I can imagine the pain and stress that that has caused, and continues to cause, Andy and the McInnes family. As parents, and particularly as fathers, we can feel responsible to take care of those we love most and to provide them with everything they need to give them the best start in life. Andy McInnes was doing this for his family, but his injuries from the assault have unfairly limited his ability to provide for his family and to play basketball—a sport that he loved—and be part of the basketball community.

However, this despicable act of senseless violence has resulted in the people of Queanbeyan banding together to show their support for Andy McInnes and his family. On 17 August the Queanbeyan Top Pub hosted a very successful trivia night for Andy McInnes and his daughters. On Saturday 25 October Queanbeyan Basketball, Walsh's Pub and the Queanbeyan Kangaroos Club combined to hold a fundraiser event "Andy and his Girls". The night was a fantastic success and sold out, with approximately 250 people attending and raising thousands of dollars to support Andy and his girls during this time and to raise money for the family and for medical treatment to help aid his recovery. The night was not your average fundraiser either. There were games and phantom horse races—something I have never seen before—that really got everyone involved and in having a good time for a great cause.

I express my thanks for their hard work to a few people who were instrumental in making this all happen: Jan Brown and Queanbeyan Basketball, for their involvement and work in making the event a reality; Walsh's Pub, for getting behind the family and sponsoring the event; the Kangaroos Club, for holding the event; Kaylee Rutland, for playing a major role in organising the event, and her two sisters, Ashleigh and Teagan McInnes; Rocky Burnell, for organising all the prizes that were donated for the evening—he deserves special thanks for his huge effort—Jo Vidotto and her daughter, Courtney, for organising the kids club for the evening, which I know helped so many families to attend and show their support; and Andy's two daughters, Courtney and Taya, for their strength, courage and hard work since the tragedy.

Another way in which the community has supported Andy and his family is through the Facebook page "For Andy and his Girls", which has amassed almost 1,000 likes in past few months. I know that Andy and his girls have been really touched and feel so grateful for the way that everyone has come together to help them in their time of need. When I see people banding together to support those in need like the McInnes family, I feel so proud to be part of such a great community in Monaro and in the city of Queanbeyan. The night was a huge success and more than \$50,000 has been raised to support Andy and his family. A portion of the money has gone to the Hancock family, who were also victims in the assault. Helping families in need by supporting events initiated by the community is some of the most important work that we do as parliamentarians. I urge all representatives in this House and leaders in communities to get behind those who face tragedy in their lives. I conclude my speech by citing John Wesley, who once said:

Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.

WEAR ORANGE WEDNESDAY

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [5.43 p.m.]: I acknowledge an event that occurred yesterday, Wear Orange Wednesday, when all members of this House acknowledged the great State Emergency Service [SES]

volunteers. Today I will speak about a particular individual who acknowledged Wear Orange Wednesday whose name is Ploddy. Who is Ploddy? Many Australians and overseas visitors are familiar with some of this country's famous giant roadside icons, such as the Big Banana at Coffs Harbour, the Big Pineapple on Queensland's Sunshine Coast and the giant merino ram at Goulburn. However, few realise that the first of those landmarks to be constructed was Ploddy. In 1963 the Australian Reptile Park's founder, Eric Worrell, decided to put the park on the map by commissioning and designing construction of one of his most ambitious projects: a 30-metre concrete replica of a giant dinosaur. Weighing in at almost 100 tonnes, the design is based on a dinosaur called a diplodocus—hence the name "Ploddy" was coined.

During the 33 years that Ploddy was located at Wyoming he had several colour changes but is most remembered for his bright and cheerful golden yellow. He became a favourite of locals and visitors alike. He was loved by children and he was a magic photo opportunity for anyone visiting the Australian Reptile Park. Needless to say that when the park owners, John and Robyn Weigel, decided in 1994—20 years ago—that the park would have to be relocated to Somersby there was never any doubt that Ploddy would go there as well. Ploddy was Australia's first giant roadside icon. She now has an even more prominent vantage point. She sits atop a hill that is adjacent to the Sydney-Newcastle freeway, the M1, and is seen every year by more than 40 million passing motorists.

Last week Ploddy got a new paint job. Ploddy was painted bright orange with the letters "SES" on her side to be seen by everybody who travels along what was formerly the F3 and is now the M1. Ploddy was painted orange in acknowledgement of our wonderful State Emergency Service volunteers. I take this opportunity to recognise our Central Coast State Emergency Service volunteers who have contributed more than 47,000 hours. Last night in this House the good members representing the electorates of Myall Lakes, Heffron and Bankstown paid tribute to our State Emergency Service members and referred to the 229 emergency service units and 10,000 members that operate throughout New South Wales. The SES units contribute significantly to their community and they are well identified by their orange overalls. We all know the time that volunteers and members of emergency services contribute when they are involved in bush rescues, motor vehicle accidents, searches for young children, and providing assistance in fires, floods, storms and tempests.

While their formidable service is well known and well recognised, let me inform the House about other things that our State Emergency Service personnel do. On the Central Coast, we have many festivals and celebrations. The community celebrates a number of events, such as Australia Day and the Oysters Birthday and a number of other events, but they could not happen without crowd control and traffic control provided by volunteers from the State Emergency Service. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Gosford SES, Maurice Fitzgerald, his deputy, Werner Klumpp, and all the Gosford volunteers not only for what they do in times of need and when assisting their community but also for the assistance they provide during community celebrations. The SES is a great organisation served by a group of volunteers. As a Government, we should be very proud of the SES and take the opportunity, as we did yesterday, to acknowledge the work they do and thank them for the contribution they make to our communities.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.48 p.m.]: First and foremost, I commend the private member's statement made by the member for Gosford that acknowledges Ploddy and the great vision for creating an enormous tourist attraction of the late Eric Worrell, but importantly also acknowledges the State Emergency Service [SES], which cares for property and life in times of emergency. I also have an SES headquarters in Wilberforce in my electorate and Kevin Jones and his great team are equipped with the best resources and the best equipment. They look so professional when we see them on our television screens but I remind those who may be misled and take them for granted that these people are volunteers. They are the salt of the earth, and they receive not one cent in funding for the job they do. I am very proud to say that this Government supports them and will do so long into the future, as every person in New South Wales should.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): My uncle Tommy Johnson used to paint Ploddy. It is nice to hear Ploddy and the State Emergency Service mentioned in this place.

AGEING, DISABILITY AND HOME CARE SERVICE

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [5.49 p.m.]: Approximately 47 minutes ago I finished a phone call with my constituent Mrs Suzanne Rasmussen, and I have a matter of concern to share with the House. I certainly hope that media personnel have not packed up their pens and typewriters because they may well have a story coming their way right now. The Rasmussens adopted their son from foster care several years ago. He has

certain needs and disabilities and is in the high care category. He was adopted under a funding arrangement known as Young People Leaving Care, which was designed specifically to assist families who had put up their hand to take on young people with high needs, get them away from the foster care scenario of being bounced from house to house and family to family, and to give them a more permanent, loving and caring relationship as well as a home.

Unfortunately, earlier this year Ageing, Disability and Home Care [ADHC] gave service providers who were managing the funding for a young person leaving care just nine days to submit a review proposal. In the midst of that, ADHC changed the criteria. Having asked for an urgent and sudden reapplication, between the months of April, May and June there was no further contact, conversation or funding coming from ADHC for special needs foster children who had been adopted. Indeed, to this day in November—some 10 months later—the provider, who manages the child adopted by the Rasmussen family, still has not received a response from ADHC in relation to the application process. However, late in June funding resumed.

While I acknowledge resumption of the funding, it is important to note that it was slashed significantly. The money that would be made available to the Rasmussen family to look after their high needs adopted son, whom they had taken in willingly and knowingly from foster care, had been drastically decreased. Finally, contact was made with ADHC but, unfortunately, the only way that the Rasmussen's could achieve that was to take on an advocate to act on their behalf.

At that time ADHC was no longer talking to the Rasmussen family nor was it talking to the officially funded provider that was handling the money. ADHC has at no stage offered any explanation or opportunity for the family or the provider to understand what led to the cut in funding, what criteria were used or how the funding will operate and where it will go in the future. As of 31 December 2014, ADHC will force all families in this situation onto an entirely new program and package. We are less than six weeks from that date and there has still been no understanding, explanation or conversations whatsoever with the families of these needy young people who were adopted or taken out of foster care and put into loving homes. It is completely unacceptable.

Indeed, the advocate who was engaged by the Rasmussen family managed to obtain the single piece of formal written correspondence from ADHC. In that correspondence they were assured that there would be a psychological and case manager assessment of their son sometime during September, but it has still not happened. The Rasmussen family go online to talk to other families across the Hunter, and as far as Taree, about the changes and the changing circumstances of need, as they too have had their funding severely cut, withdrawn or altered. These families want to make the best possible life for the young people they have taken care of after taking them out of the enormously expensive system in New South Wales. They want to do the right thing by these young people whom they took under terms and conditions of having some support and funding made available from the New South Wales Government.

It is one thing to take money away from these people and another to slash the funding in half. The very least we can do is to offer them an explanation so that they can understand the reasons behind it, the assessment process used and the future direction. As of 31 December these families will go onto a completely new funding model about which they know nothing. They are entitled to an explanation from ADHC. I will be advocating for the Rasmussen family in this House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.54 p.m.]: Governments will be judged by the way they treat those less fortunate—the aged, the frail and the weak. In that respect this Government is justifiably proud because not only will it invest billions of dollars in the National Disability Insurance Scheme but also, under the previous Minister for Community Services, it has made the process of adoption of foster children so much easier. This Government has focused on reform in that area. I thank the member for Cessnock for raising this very important issue. I ask him to refer this matter to the Minister for Family and Community Services, who will be more than happy to assist in any way she can to rectify any outstanding issues.

COFFS HARBOUR PRIORITY HABITAT AND CORRIDOR STRATEGY

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.55 p.m.]: I want to read part of my five-page letter dated 12 March 2010 to Coffs Harbour City Council into *Hansard*. It states:

At a public meeting held at Nana Glen Hall on 9 February, attendees were given a presentation by Coffs Harbour City Council officer, Mr Nigel Cotsell, in relation to the Coffs Harbour Priority Habitat and Corridor Strategy (PHACS) 2010-2030. The meeting overwhelmingly voted to reject the Strategy on numerous grounds and I fully supply the resolution of that meeting for a number of reasons that I shall detail in this submission.

Firstly, the Strategy was put together by Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC), the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, the Department of Planning, the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and 17 other persons, none of whom represented private property owners or primary producers. This I believe is a slap in the face for primary producers and ratepayers in the Coffs Harbour local government area.

When the Strategy was first released I was advised by Council employees that it was developed in order to meet the Standard Instrument (Local Environment Plans) Order 2006.

Having studied this 86-page document I cannot accept that this Strategy complies, or is required, by that Standard Instrument, in fact on page 47 of the document, Section 32, it clearly states that any inclusion of a strategy for the preservation of trees or vegetation in a Council's LEP is optional. The *Native Vegetation Act* 2003, clearly provides very severe, if not, in my opinion, draconian measures in relation to native vegetation.

Coffs Harbour City Council has again put forward this strategy, which was overwhelmingly rejected by the regional community at another meeting that was held at Nana Glen Hall last Monday night. Unfortunately I could not attend because of my parliamentary commitments but I have been told that once again the hall was packed with local residents. It was attended by the President of the NSW Farmers Association, Fiona Simpson. Once again, that meeting overwhelmingly rejected this strategy on the basis that native vegetation is protected in all areas of New South Wales under the Native Vegetation Act, and other instruments.

The lunacy is that they are trying to lock up native vegetation on private land when 70 per cent of the Coffs Harbour local government area is covered by native vegetation which is either national park or State forests and managed by the national estate, and I sometimes question whether it is managed properly. Why Coffs Harbour City Council needs to attack private landholders by having connectivity corridors across the landscape is beyond me. Coffs Harbour City Council also has a Koala Plan of Management. As a result, dual consent is required for any person living on a property with vegetation which is identified by the council as koala habitat—not habitation. They can lodge a property vegetation plan, have that approved by Local Land Services these days and then find that their application to clear land is rejected by council because it needs a development application under the Koala Plan of Management—and it is always rejected.

It is high time council started getting on with what it should be doing—rates, roads, rubbish and other things—and stop placing imposts on local landowners who are trying to manage the land for production in Coffs Harbour. Blueberry production is going ahead at a rate of knots in Coffs Harbour, as it is in the electorate of Clarence.. In the past council has offered rate relief to landowners but the reality is 100 per cent of councils' budgets are received from ratepayers. If a council applies discounts to some landowners its rate revenue will decrease. Therefore, council has to rearrange its rates and increase them.

At the end of the day a person's rates will be adjusted to where they are at the moment. Whilst ratepayers may be given an artificially reduced rate, their rate will have to be increased in the future so the council maintains its income. I ask Coffs Harbour City Council and the Minister for Planning to reject this Priority Habitat and Corridor Strategy because the owners of properties with native vegetation are already covered by the Native Vegetation Act. They are protecting their own property and this strategy is nothing but a superfluous local environment plan which is not supported by the community and will do no good for the environment.

RIVERINA CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.00 p.m.]: The Riverina Conservatorium of Music [RCM] began in 1981 as part of the Riverina College of Advanced Education, now known as Charles Sturt University. It has been housed on the old college south campus under a longstanding agreement of support from the university through housing and financial assistance, and continued after the administrative separation of the two organisations in 2000. The Riverina Conservatorium of Music has grown and prospered. It is acknowledged as a leader in regional New South Wales and is a key institution in the Association of New South Wales Regional Conservatoriums that has grown with the support of the New South Wales Government through the Department of Education and Communities.

The organisation is now ready to expand. The facilities provided by Charles Sturt University [CSU] at south campus have served the RCM well for over 30 years but there is an ongoing problem for the RCM, as the suburban location of the campus isolates the RCM from the city's cultural centre. To offset the effects of the geographical isolation, the RCM has worked for many years to raise its profile in the community through various central business district initiatives and performance projects and the time has come for it to move.

At the regional level there are some important opportunities. As the leading New South Wales regional conservatorium, the RCM serves an operational area that embraces Tumut and Tumbarumba in the Snowy Mountains to Deniliquin in south-western New South Wales. It has developed over the past decade into one of the most effective regional music education resources with more than 1,200 students. The RCM works for students from over 40 Riverina public and non-government schools and is a national leader in the delivery of distance education. Rural and remote students access the RCM through information and communication technology-based teaching programs from as far away as Bega, Tamworth, Young and Deniliquin.

The Riverina conservatorium concept is to develop a new centre for the Riverina Conservatorium of Music, together with a multi-purpose arts centre. The suggestion is that this new conservatorium should be located in the Riverside precinct, which would fit with the Riverside Wagga Wagga Strategic Master Plan. The proposal has been developed under the Rebuilding NSW initiative for the New South Wales Government. It does so with a reference to the strategic priorities for funding for sport and cultural infrastructure and in response to the NSW 2012 plan to make New South Wales number one again, the Riverina Regional Action Plan. It has the support of Wagga Wagga City Council, along with local members and, indeed, it fits neatly with the Riverside Wagga Wagga Strategic Master Plan 2010. It has the support of the Charles Sturt University and fits in with the objectives of the Committee for Wagga Wagga, which is charged with developing the city and its surrounds.

This proposal has drawn upon similar projects across Australia. Examples include the University of Southern Queensland's arts theatre, Southbank Brisbane and Southbank Melbourne. These centres also support an arts community with a high-quality concert space that can serve a range of performing arts. It is an exciting project that the Riverina Conservatorium of Music, the board and Hamish Tait, the Chief Executive Officer, are embarking upon. I met with the Chairman, Dr Andrew Wallace, and I have supported the Conservatorium of Music since before I became the member for Wagga Wagga.

Music is an important part of the social fabric of any community. A strong cultural and arts community is important for cities such as Wagga Wagga and its surrounding towns and villages. We must nurture and encourage the youth and the talent in our cities and towns to explore better educational opportunities. A conservatorium of music spreading across the Riverina is one way to do that. I am an enthusiastic supporter of this concept and wish the Riverina Conservatorium of Music well with its funding applications. I will do all I can to support this wonderful initiative.

ALBURY ELECTORATE INDIAN COMMUNITY

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.05 p.m.]: People who trace their heritage and ancestry back to India are making an increasing impact on Albury and the towns of my electorate. Each year I see the numbers growing, with architects and accountants setting up business and the doctors who are developing businesses such as the Holbrook Medical Centre, which I opened earlier this year. Of course, there are the restaurants too. In so many ways the Indian community has become part of the rich fabric of our regional towns. More and more Indian nationals in Albury are taking the big step to Australian citizenship. This is a welcome sign, and something I have observed when attending these important ceremonies.

Now it is the Indian culture on show. On Sunday 2 November I attended Albury's first annual Raunak Mela—an expression which means "a joyous fair". The venue was a public park in Albury and the organiser was the Punjabi Heritage Association. This is a new not-for-profit group in the life of the border community, representing people who have come together to make a collective effort to promote the Punjabi language, its sports, art and culture. But this event was not just for those whose heritage traces back to the subcontinent. This was an opportunity for all of us living on the border to gain a better understanding of the culture and activities of the Punjabi community.

A highlight of the fair was the Kabaddi tournament. This is a high-energy, seven-a-side running game a little like tip, where players try to tag members of the opposite team, running as far as a single breath can take them while dodging the embrace of opposing players who try to prevent them from escaping. The runner shouts "Kabaddi" repeatedly on their raiding run. In this way they can demonstrate to the referee that they have not inhaled a second time. In the Albury tournament, however, the requirement to call "Kabaddi" was waived and players instead had 20-seconds to make their raid and get back to the safety of their own side. Getting into the spirit of the games were players from Griffith, Coffs Harbour, Melbourne, Sydney and a team from New Zealand. This is evidence of the enthusiasm which these fairs generate. There was freestyle wrestling, a tug-of-war, a soccer competition, and an exhibition of Gatka—a Sikh form of martial art.

Bhangra and Gidha dances were performed by performers in wonderfully colourful costumes. Gidha is a dance for women. Derived from the ancient dance known as the ring dance, it is a very elegant and graceful dance. Bhangra has a long history and is associated with the harvest. Men and women take part in this style of dancing. We also had the opportunity to observe children's games such as Pitoo and Khokho. Of course, it would not be an Indian fair without fabulous spicy food. It was an alcohol-free event, which is yet another way in which the Punjabi and Indian communities are making a subtle but valuable contribution to our society, demonstrating that you do not need alcohol to have fun.

When I arrived at Alexandra Park I was struck by the energy and excitement of the fair. Events were happening simultaneously at all corners of the park, with athletes moving through the crowd on their way to or from the soccer and kabaddi tournaments. Children were running through traditional Indian games and the smell of food cooking wafted over the fields. Elsewhere women in beautiful saris were preparing for their exhibition of dance on the main stage. There was a high degree of participation in the different activities and sports. A similar event is held in Griffith. I understand it now attracts more than 4,000 people and has expanded to stretch over three days. Accommodation is booked months in advance as people travel and then settle in to enjoy the program. Clearly this is a very desirable outcome for any regional town or city.

In August this year I was fortunate to attend an Indian Cultural Afternoon, called Tarang, which was also held in Albury, at Holy Spirit Hall in Lavington. It was a terrific afternoon of entertainment which showcased music and dance ranging from classical Indian traditions and Garba to the phenomenon that is Bollywood. At the cultural afternoon I was told that, while many Indian people come to the regions of New South Wales, there is an inevitable drift back by many to the capital cities. The way to prevent this loss of talent, skill and economic activity is to develop a cultural life in our communities that connects with Indian people and makes them feel welcome and at home in a new land.

The Indian Cultural Afternoon and the Punjabi Raunak Mela fit the bill, representing the welcoming face of Albury to the people of India. We hope they feel that spirit and make their home in Albury and its region. I would like to thank Harneet Gill, Rajwinder Sandhu, Sony Dhillon, Jugraj Singh and Kuldeep Singh of the Punjabi Heritage Association. For the Indian Cultural Afternoon I thank the President of the Albury Wodonga Indian Australian Association, Aruna Ghandi, and its public coordinator, Padma Ayyagari. They are doing great things for all of us when they call the border home.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.10 p.m.]: As Parliamentary Secretary for Communities, I am delighted to hear that the member for Albury enjoyed the Raunak Mela festival in Albury. Knowing Albury well, I would have loved to be there because nobody knows how to throw a party like the Punjabi community. I am glad to see that the Albury community is celebrating its diversity because the Indian community in New South Wales numbers about 150,000 and whether in Albury or Alexandria, Hornsby or Holsworthy, the Indian community makes an enormous contribution to this State and to our country. This Monday the Indian diaspora will play an important role as they prepare for the visit of Indian Prime Minister Modi. It is the first time that an Indian Prime Minister has come to Australia since 1987. The Indian diaspora in Albury will play an important role in building those strong links because India presents an enormous opportunity for Australia's economic growth.

CAMDEN AND NARELLAN MEN'S SHEDS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [6.11 p.m.]: Today I speak about my local men's sheds. My electorate of Camden has two men's shed organisations, one in Camden and one in Narellan. Camden Men's Shed has been operating for the past six years. Founding members Stephen Butler, Colin Calver, Alan Withers and Peter Standen remain active members and have guided the organisation to be one of the most active men's sheds in New South Wales. The Camden Men's Shed is fortunate to have its facilities on the Bicentennial Equestrian Park [BEP] in the centre of the Camden township. The BEP is a 200-acre property owned by Camden Council and overseen by a section 355 committee.

The park caters for many and varied equine activities such as equestrian, camp draft, polocrosse, recreational riding and pony club. The park currently has bookings every week until 2016. The property, which is at the entrance to Camden, is the most pristine property in Camden—due only to the very active men's shed. The men meet each week for social discourse, men's health advice and fellowship while actively working on the BEP site. The membership and work has increased so much that they meet every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, diligently maintaining the BEP. With the many and varied skills of all the members there seems to be no job that cannot be undertaken. Over the past six years equipment has been

supplied through several grants to the point that the men's shed is currently being extended. Some of the activities the men undertake include bridge repairs, shelter construction, earthworks, drainage and general park maintenance, to name a few.

The men have also assisted Camden Hospital by repairing its garden furniture. Once a week the men host members of Campbelltown Disability Services Australia, giving them the opportunity to learn skills on the park. The men have also built large models of historical buildings in the Camden township, including the courthouse, St Johns Church, the fire station and the Camden Hotel. They are working on more models to be scattered in and around the entrance of the park. One of the major users of the park is our wonderful Olympic Equestrian, Shane Rose, who finds the park perfect for his eventing and especially his training for the Rio Olympics. Next week Olympic Equestrian Andrew Hoy will utilise the site for private workshops and training in his attempt to compete at the Rio Olympics. Once again, without the dedication and skills of the men's shed the park would never be able to offer the standard required for our Olympic equestrians.

I thank all members of the Camden Men's Shed for their ongoing support to the park and the local community—Don Allen, Bob Brown, Neil Burns, Gary Butcher, Stephen Butler, Colin Calver, Luke Cavanagh, Ron Childs, Bryan Coates, Wayne Couley, Jeff Dye, Stan Ellis, Lawrence Farrington, Tony Katon, Neville Kennedy, Phillip Kennedy, Geoff Lees, Les McDonald, John Marinovic, Ron Mayhew, Raymond Monahan, Peter Munns, James Norris, Clem O'Brien, Bob Page, Peter Standen, Ron Taylor, Ken Wallace, Graeme Watson, Robert Wheeler, Garry White, Patrick White, Terry Wilbourn, Alan Withers and Ross Wylie.

The Narellan Men's Shed is still in its infancy, but has achieved so much in the short time it has been established. With the assistance of the Narellan Rotary Club, the Narellan Men's Shed was established at the Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living at Mount Annan; its membership has grown to more than 50. President Bruce Holz says giving back to the community is at the core of the group's activities. During the devastating 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires the men rallied to assist. Within no time the men had five trailer loads of goods for the families and community who had been affected by the fires. Like the Camden Men's Shed, the focus of the Narellan Men's Shed is on giving back to the community while building things to sell to raise money for more equipment to assist with their projects.

Both men's sheds are happy to welcome anyone who would like to join, even if it is just for a chat and some friendship. I commend both organisations for their community spirit and wish them all the best for many years to come. I am excited by the work of both men's sheds. If the Government had to pay volunteers for the work they do in our communities, we could not afford to do so. These men give of their time and companionship. They provide mentoring to the community. They are wonderful, outstanding stalwarts within our community and I commend each one of them to the House.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.16 p.m.]: I commend the member for Camden for the support he gives men's sheds. They do incredibly important work, not just in Camden and Narellan but also in communities across New South Wales. We heard about the contributions that the local men's sheds make in the Camden and Narellan communities. They also help with mental health issues and provide much-needed fun and friendships for men who are often retired and isolated, and in need of camaraderie. I note that the member for Camden enjoys regularly attending men's sheds. I place on the public record for the benefit of the Camden and Narellan men's sheds that he would like to go as often as possible so they should extend many invitations to him to go along and express the gratitude and delight that he has shown in the House tonight. I say to the men's sheds of the region: Please invite the member for Camden because he enjoys it so much.

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S GAMES

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [6.17 p.m.]: Tonight I talk about the International Children's Games about which I spoke briefly in my inaugural speech. In 23 days Lake Macquarie will host the International Children's Games. The people of the Charlestown electorate are getting excited about the games and the visitors from 80 cities representing 30 countries across the world. The International Children's Games is the largest multisport youth games in the world and is a recognised member of the International Olympic Committee. Approximately 1,500 athletes between 12 and 15 years of age and their coaches will participate in this prestigious event. It is a competition between cities, not between countries, which really enhances the feel of cultural understanding that the games seek to foster.

The International Children's Games goes back to the Cold War in 1968 when a physical education teacher living in Slovenia, which was then part of Yugoslavia, had a vision to encourage peace and goodwill

amongst children of different cultural backgrounds. From the inaugural games in which nine towns took part, the International Children's Games has grown into an impressive event, with more than 400 cities from five continents participating, and embracing the original idea to promote peace and understanding. Lake Macquarie was the first Australian city to participate in the International Children's Games, competing in San Francisco in 2008, and is the first city in the Southern Hemisphere to host the games. The sports that the athletes will compete in include swimming, gymnastics, track and field, football, sailing, water polo, golf, and, in an International Children's Games first, BMX in Argenton, which is in the electorate of the member for Wallsend.

In addition to competition there will be a significant social component to allow the young athletes to get to know one another and to learn about each other's cultures and, in particular, our Australian culture. They will enjoy an evening at Blacksmiths Beach, an outdoor movie night, an Olympic-style opening ceremony with fantastic Australian talent, and a closing ceremony with entertainment and dancing. There is a requirement for the accommodation to be an Olympic-style village, so the accommodation will be at the University of Newcastle and Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Camp. I thank both of those organisations for their support. A few weeks ago the torch relay really enthused a lot of the schoolchildren in the area—26 schools from the Lake Macquarie region participated. Schools from Charlestown included Cardiff North Public School, Charlestown Public School, Eleebana Public School, St Kevin's Primary School at Cardiff, St Paul's Primary School at Gateshead and Windale Public School. The schools and schoolchildren certainly are excited about the International Children's Games being held in the region.

Last weekend the International Children's Games Technical Commission visited Lake Macquarie and gave the Forty-eighth International Children's Games the tick of approval after its site visit. The International Children's Games Secretary General, Richard Smith, the Vice-President, Igor Topole, and the Chairman of the Technical Commission, Zlatko Kauran, were extremely pleased with the preparations for this event. After meeting with the games' technical directors and touring the facilities where athletes will compete, the Technical Commission signed off on our preparations for the games. This is a very exciting result for the people of Lake Macquarie and Charlestown as the hard work and preparation has paid off. We now just have to wait until the athletes, coaches and supporters from around the world descend on our region.

To give the House an overview of those coming, they include the following numbers of cities to be represented: 14 from Australia; six each from Canada, Mexico and the United States of America; four each from Pakistan, Slovenia and Switzerland; three each from Hungary, Israel and Russia; two each from Austria, China, Germany, Greece, India and Taiwan; and one from each of Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, England, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Singapore, Scotland, South Korea, Thailand and Ukraine. It truly is an international event. The local people are getting excited about the games being held in only 23 days, and we have over 600 volunteers who happen to be receiving training tonight. The local media is promoting it really well. I encourage members to be part of the International Children's Games being held for the first time in New South Wales and the Southern Hemisphere.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.22 p.m.]: I am delighted for the House to note that the International Children's Games are heading to the Hunter region. It is a great opportunity to showcase that wonderful community. I take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Charlestown on her election to the Parliament. Anyone who puts themselves forward for public office deserves the respect of us all. The member for Charlestown clearly cares about her community and wants to make a difference. Regardless of her politics, I wish her the best of luck in this place in fighting for the services, infrastructure and results her community seeks.

SANDY POINT QUARRY

MOOREBANK INTERMODAL TERMINAL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [6.23 p.m.]: I am not sure that two petitions I have presented to the House will reach the appropriate number of signatures to enable debate before this parliamentary session concludes, so I take this opportunity to make sure the concerns and issues of those signatories are noted in this place. I have spoken previously about both concerns. The first is Sandy Point quarry on Heathcote Road that causes much concern, justifiably, for my local residents. I am honoured to present that petition to the Parliament on their behalf and make sure their concerns are heard tonight. I am aware that the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, to whom I have spoken many times, and his office, expects a briefing on the quarry soon from the Crown Lands office.

The Minister is well and truly aware of our concerns. Along with the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and council we are looking at ways to either restrict the licence and business operating from the site or cancel the licence and revoke the tender, if that procedure is available to us. Obviously, that would be a hard and long process that must be done correctly, but it is one for which my community and the East Hills community of Glen Brookes are crying out. Much information has to be worked through before such a step could be taken. I reassure my community that this cause has not lost momentum and we will be working on it further throughout the year.

The other petition relates to the proposed Moorebank intermodal. I am sure this House is well aware of my strong opposition to the proposal, which is to be operated by a private consortium and the Federal Government. Moorebank is not the right spot for intermodals, and I will repeat that time and again. The recent game changer presents from the proposed Badgerys Creek airport. The Federal member for Hughes, Craig Kelly, Liverpool City Council and its mayor, Ned Mannoun, want the intermodal to be located at Badgerys Creek. We believe it would be great for the road and rail intermodal and the airport to have proper freight hub and transportation links all in one place. The Planning Assessment Commission report for the Sydney Intermodal Terminal Alliance [SIMTA] intermodal recognises that key intersections on Moorebank Avenue and the Hume Highway will need significant investment and redesign. Obviously, that will be incredibly expensive, and I am still concerned about pollution levels and our natural river.

I had the opportunity to traverse the Georges River in a small boat with the Liverpool mayor and a representative of one local newspaper to look at this stunning, clean and naturally pristine environment. Moorebank Barefoot Water Skiers have one of the top five sites in the world along this pristine river. I cannot fathom why anyone would ever consider putting in a dirty big freight intermodal on this river's shores. The wheel squeal from the up to 1.8 kilometre trains 24 hours a day has not been addressed for the residents, particularly of Casula or Wattle Grove. Other opportunities would work better, such as Badgerys Creek, or the expansion of the Chullora or Enfield sites. Those sites are far better, more strategically located and big enough to accommodate the intermodal. They also do not require the investment Moorebank requires. These sites also would not impact on Moorebank and its local residents.

As I mentioned, Moorebank Avenue would require upgrading to accommodate the intermodal, as would Glenfield causeway, which would be an incredibly expensive project and one that I am sure the locals do not realise its impact. Should Moorebank Avenue be relocated, the entry into Holsworthy Defence base also would be impacted. Recently, this road was closed, causing 40-minute queues for people to travel from one suburb to another in my electorate or to the railway station. This proposal is nuts and we can do something about it. I call on all my colleagues to help. The land at the Moorebank site would be worth approximately \$482 million. If utilised as a residential area, it could have beautiful housing, it could provide jobs or it could be used as a business park and be better utilised than an intermodal. I seek the support of our Ministers to hear the call of my local residents and help us fight these proposals.

HORNSBY HOSPITAL

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby-Parliamentary Secretary) [6.28 p.m.]: It is said that a week in politics is a long time. The period since I was elected to this place has absolutely flown. It has been an absolute pleasure and honour to represent the people of Hornsby for the past 3½ years. I am proud to have delivered on the commitments I made to them when I was first elected. Nothing sums up Labor's failure to my community more than the state in which it left our local hospital. The horror stories are there for all to see. Every time it rains doctors and nurses have to put out buckets and towels, and doctors trip over power cords in the operating theatres. The most shocking example of Labor's failure to our community was that it allowed possums to run riot throughout the intensive care unit. Basically, my community was punished for no other reason than for how it voted. Since my election I have fought for and delivered the infrastructure and services we missed out on for too long after 16 long years of Labor neglect.

I am pleased to say that the time of Labor's neglect of our community has since passed. After record investment, I am pleased to say that the hospital's future looks bright once again with the new multistorey STAR building housing surgical recovery services due to open in mid-2015. I am immensely proud of the \$120 million investment I was able to secure for the stage one rebuild of Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital's redevelopment. Rebuilding the hospital was my number one objective when I was running for Government. We are well on the way to finally giving our community the first-class health facilities that it deserves.

We are now heading towards the final stages of designing stage two of the hospital upgrade, which will include increased inpatient beds, a paediatric unit, imaging and ambulatory care services as well as an upgrade

to the emergency department. I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the staff at Health Infrastructure, particularly Jeff Arthur and his team. The New South Wales Government is also committed to a \$36 million investment to build a new mental health facility at Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital. I am particularly pleased with this investment because mental health is increasingly in need of funding. It is essential to helping the most vulnerable members of the community who are most at risk.

I am incredibly passionate about mental health issues. One in four people will suffer a mental illness at some stage in their lifetime. This new facility will provide a 35-bed adult acute mental health inpatient unit to replace the existing 25-bed Lindsay Madew adult inpatient unit. The new building will house a 12-bed child and adolescent mental health inpatient unit as well as an adjacent child and adolescent community mental health service. I have set about improving disability services with a \$10 million rebuild of the Hornsby-based Clarke Road Special School and regular grants to Studio ARTES, an art group that supports people living with disability. I acknowledge the hard work of disability advocates in my area, including Katie Harrington, Diane Robertson, Wendy Escott, Sue Byatt, Emma Donovan and Lynne Slevin, who provide help to those who are less fortunate. Each of these women is an inspiration to me

Since 2011 I have made good on my election promise to deliver sewage facilities to the people of Cowan. Building works are also underway to install sewage facilities for the Galston and Glenorie communities. These are essential services that were neglected by Labor for 16 long years. Labor failed to deliver for our community but finally a Coalition Government is giving them what they deserve. The \$45 million wastewater treatment scheme aims to provide improved wastewater services to unsewered urban villages in environmentally sensitive areas. Once completed, more than 565 households will have access to the main sewage line, which will save each family thousands of dollars in costly pump-out fees. Labor ignored the pleas of these residents for more than 16 years. In my first term of Parliament I have been able to bring forward the sewage connection date for these forgotten residents, with the help of local community advocates such as Kylie Dawson, Ian Best and Jerome Gomez. These residents will be able join the scheme and connect to the main sewer line from 30 June 2015 onwards.

Construction crews have commenced works in Nancy Place, Galston, and on properties in Cairnes Road, Parkview Ave and Old Northern Road, Glenorie. This Government has committed to several major infrastructure projects, which will commence or have ongoing works during the next term of government. The New South Wales Government has committed \$5 million towards building a new railway crossing in Hornsby's central business district. The bridge will replace the current old and crumbling bridge, which is another example of Labor neglecting our community. Construction on the new bridge is expected to start in January and will be completed in late 2015. Streetscaping works will transform Florence Street and provide pedestrians with a safer, more convenient access point to the bridge crossing. For the first time in many years the Hornsby shire is coming alive because this Government cares about the area and is interested in delivering outcomes for the community. It does not ignore them like the members opposite did for 16 long neglectful years.

SHOALHAVEN HEADS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [6.33 p.m.]: I am incredibly proud to represent the beautiful village of Shoalhaven Heads. For many years I have worked closely with local community champions of Shoalhaven Heads who have been tireless workers for so many important causes. However, one issue that continues to frustrate me and so many locals is the closing of the Shoalhaven River entrance at Shoalhaven Heads, the impacts of which are felt on those who love the Shoalhaven River for recreational fishing. Indeed, the Shoalhaven and South Coast are one of the most popular recreational fishing areas in New South Wales, attracting keen fishers from near and far and generating \$395 million in economic output each year.

When I was a councillor on Shoalhaven City Council, I fought hard to establish a working party of local residents to pursue this important issue. Indeed, I was able to convince the council to provide \$50,000 towards a study that was required to pursue the objective of improving the flow of water at Shoalhaven Heads. Like so many, I am frustrated by the endless number of studies and reports required. But what is certain is that any opening of the heads entrance must be done in a way that achieves the best possible outcomes for the community and our unique and beautiful marine environment.

The Shoalhaven estuary at Shoalhaven Heads is gradually shoaling. A significant portion of the flows from the river deviates into Berrys Canal and discharges to the ocean at Crookhaven Heads, resulting in limited flows reaching the lower Shoalhaven River estuary and entrance. The entrance to the river is also mostly closed

to tidal circulation and flushing is also limited. The situation is of concern to residents of Shoalhaven Heads because it limits tourist opportunities such as fishing, boating and swimming. It also impacts on the oyster industry and, in turn, the local economy. All of these industries are important to our local community and the tourist population on which our economy is heavily reliant.

Whilst I have faithfully sought funds from the Government to deliver this outcome, I have suffered many knockbacks, until now. Tomorrow I am joining my friend the Minister for Primary Industries to formally announce that the New South Wales Government will match the \$50,000 put forward by Shoalhaven City Council in order to complete the studies and reports that are needed to progress this important issue for Shoalhaven Heads. I cannot thank Minister Hodgkinson enough for listening to our community and for acknowledging the need to address this problem. It is important that we make the right decisions about the future of this important essential natural resource whilst not compromising other parts of this complex estuarine system, such as Greenwell Point and Crookhaven Heads.

The Shoalhaven River waterway is important to the local community and I am pleased that we have secured funding to keep the ball rolling in finding a solution to the water flow problems, which have been ever present. Further investigations will involve the identification of potential costs and benefits of each option, including flood risks, the impact on water quality, oyster farming and fisheries production. Community consultation will be vital once the options are put forward and I look forward to continuing to work with our local community to find a solution to a problem that has for too long been in the too-hard basket.

I particularly thank Peter Turnell from Fisheries NSW; my wonderful friend Paul Terrett, who is the chief of staff to the Minister; and all the wonderful members of the Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Task Force including Laurie Talbert, Jessica Zealand, Phil Guy, David Lamb, Mike James, Graeme Philpott, Alan Richardson and many others who have helped along the way. Of course, this announcement would not have been possible without the assistance of the Minister listening to the Shoalhaven Heads community and helping us move to the next exciting step. It will unite our community.

I take this opportunity to thank Shoalhaven City Council, its councillors and Mayor Joanna Gash, who has been a stalwart in pursuing this outcome. I thank the President of the Shoalhaven Heads Hotel Fishing Club, Matt Vout, who has been a strong supporter of finding a solution to this problem. I am proud to have represented Shoalhaven Heads. I know the area well and I love the community. The people are diligent in ensuring that we find solutions to the problems that confront our community. Earlier this year I was able to join with the Minister in announcing that we would fund \$1 million for an artificial reef off the coast of Shoalhaven Heads. The artificial reef will improve fish stocks in our local community and will be an important boost not only to the tourist industry but also for locals. This outcome will benefit those who visit our area as well as the residents who love this wonderful village, which was originally a fishing village.

HUNTER STADIUM AND AFC ASIA CUP 2015

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [6.38 p.m.]: Sport is a fundamental part of Australian life. Whether it is long, hot summer days spent out in the sweltering heat playing cricket or suffering the highs and lows of a footy season during the colder months, we Australians love our sport. That is particularly true in New South Wales. Who can forget the Sydney 2000 Olympics? It was described as the most successful Olympics ever and it is still held up as a model for how the games should be organised and delivered. In New South Wales one would be hard-pressed to find a region more committed to sport than the Hunter. We support our local teams, from the big professional teams like the Knights and the Jets to the lower ranks, every weekend. It is safe to say that we have had our fair share of sporting heroes.

Within the Hunter there is nowhere that loves sport as much as Wallsend. Do members not believe me? I will let the numbers speak for themselves. The Wallsend postcode leads the nation in ticket sales for the 2015 Asian Cup. That event will see 16 teams descend on Australia for a hard-fought, nail-biting contest. Matches will be played in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra and, most thrillingly, four matches will be played in Newcastle. Even though I missed out on an invitation to a number of events, I cannot wait for the cup. It will be great for the Hunter. It will bring in precious tourism dollars to our local businesses and will raise the profile of sport in the region. It is without doubt a great opportunity for the Hunter to showcase itself.

On a more local level, I am thrilled about seeing some games. Apparently many of my constituents are equally thrilled. Ross Hicks, a 38-year veteran of Wallsend Football Club and the club's president, said that he was a bit surprised that Wallsend was number one in ticket sales. However, he was not surprised about the

uptake of tickets because, as he said, "This is a real football area, the traditional football area of the Hunter. Not just us, but Adamstown, West Wallsend, we all have over 125 years of footballing history." Unlike Ross, I was not surprised about being number one; I know just how mad my constituents are about football. As he said, football has a very long history in Wallsend.

Wallsend Football Club's home games were played at Crystal Palace, which was considered one of the premier venues in Australia. The club was knocked down in the early 1980s and the club declined. A club that had hosted touring teams from around New South Wales, Australia and even from England was close to folding at one point. The hard work of volunteers and passionate supporters like Mr Hicks has saved it. Club historians consider the period from 1920 to 1968 to be the golden era, and I am sure the club will get back there again. Recently the Japanese soccer team announced that its training base would be in Cessnock. The largest team in Asia will no doubt attract a great deal of attention and many tourists to the town. Morgan Campbell, the Cessnock councillor who first suggested that his town should host a visiting team and a self-confessed football tragic, said, "It's going to be a great thing for football fans and also local business. There are four billion people in Asia and 130 million in Japan. We're going to be on their nightly news!"

Lake Macquarie councillor Chad Griffith told me that it will be fantastic for tourism and business in the Hunter. He said that it would be a perfect opportunity to showcase everything that is best about our region, including our hospitality and service industries. He went on to say that soccer is the most popular sport in the world and for a few weeks early next year we will be the centre of attention in much the same way that Brazil was during the World Cup. Newcastle is scheduled to host the Japan-Palestine match on 12 January and the Oman-Kuwait match on 17 January. They will be sensational matches. I have purchased tickets for both matches for my family and me. It has saved me buying Christmas presents. I do not believe that anyone would object to my wishing the home team the best of luck in the Asian Cup. It is sure to be a ripper.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.43 p.m. until
Tuesday 18 November 2014 at 12 noon.**
