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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 19 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.

CRIME COMMISSION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AMENDMENT (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMPLAINANTS) BILL 2014

HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

MENTAL HEALTH AMENDMENT (STATUTORY REVIEW) BILL 2014

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

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

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

Consideration of Legislative Council's amendment set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

Pursuant to resolution discussions on petitions signed by 10,000 or more persons proceeded with.

WOMEN'S REFUGES

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [10.09 a.m.]: I speak in support of the 15,000 good men and women who signed the petition in defence of women's refuges. This Government stands condemned for the brutal, slash-and-burn tender process that has destroyed our State's network of women's shelters. Valued services that have served this State for decades have been lost overnight. At a time of growing concern about domestic violence in our community this Government has lost sight of the key fact: Women use women's services—services like Kempsey Women's Refuge, Taree Women's Refuge, Bega Women's Refuge and Killara in Randwick. Parts of the State are now without adequate access to refuges for women fleeing violence in places like Cooma, Marrickville and Rockdale.

The greater tragedy is this did not have to happen. The experts in the field of homelessness urged the Government's new Minister not to pursue this course of action. They urged the Government and the Minister for Family and Community Services to take a district-by-district approach. The Minister ignored that advice. The Minister has chosen to use a brutal competitive process against the advice of some of our community's greatest heroes—those who care for the homeless and those who defend women from violence. This needless application of competition policy is being paid for by the most disadvantaged. The losers are the homeless, with 500 beds lost. Deny it as they might, the Minister's first media release on announcing the closures stated clearly:

It is an unavoidable fact that not every current service provider has been successful in the tender process.

The losers are those who have dedicated their career to assisting the homeless and women fleeing violence. Four hundred jobs have been lost, as well as 500 beds, along with years of priceless experience and commitment to

this sector. One hundred and forty-nine individual services have been closed, and that is in the Minister's press release. The Government tries to pretend that this is all a figment of Labor's imagination. I say shame on those opposite. If there were no losses why did the Minister announce a restoration fund to inner-city women's services? You only restore funding when you have taken it away. Those opposite have been forced into embarrassing backdown after backdown. The Opposition has held the Government to account. The Government had to find additional money for the homeless that was so brutally ripped from the inner city.

After service provider and community backlash and relentless pressure from the New South Wales Opposition and the Independents, the Government was forced into an embarrassing backdown and temporarily restored funding to some of the specialist women's services that were slated for closure. It is another temporary reprieve. Many services have no guarantee of funding beyond the election. The Government has remained silent on how the services, funded under Labor's National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, will be preserved. The Government said "it's only the buildings". But the truth is the specialist services delivered within these buildings, specialist services by women for women, are gone. In Bega the building is empty, a relic of 30 years of hard work by women for women.

Women and children who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault need a safe haven. The truth is this Government's ideological commitment to competitive processes has seen specialised services consolidated into generic packages and services lost. This so-called reform of homelessness services is the first example of competitive tendering where charity is pitted against charity—a brave new world where social capital gives way to capital gain, where not-for-profit becomes for-profit, where the market arrives at your community group and volunteering, working together for the common good and caring for each other, becomes a thing of the past.

Those opposite do not see a community centre; they see a business opportunity. If you are a neighbourhood centre you will soon be competing against multinational health organisations for your disability services funding. The list goes on, including the tendering of Home and Community Care [HACC] services. It is undeniable that the Going Home Staying Home reforms have had a devastating effect on women's services across New South Wales. If the Minister does not believe me, she should talk to the women who have used services that no longer exist. In particular, the Minister should talk to the many women who have worked in these services for 30 or 40 years. They talk, with tears in their eyes, about how devastating and disastrous these reforms have been.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [10.14 a.m.]: This petition is built on flawed foundations. The petition is old and there have been developments since the time it was lodged. To save embarrassment, it would have made sense for the member for Canterbury and the Leader of the Opposition to amend the petition, but I take it as it was read onto the record. Under New South Wales Going Home Staying Home reforms there will still be help for women, with or without children, escaping domestic and family violence, and the member for Canterbury knows that.

The member for Canterbury is being misleading in saying that those services are not available to women in our community. It is most important that those services are available. I acknowledge that sections of the community had genuine concerns about specialist services. However, the Opposition preyed on the vulnerable by raising those concerns in the community. Those opposite spread lies in the community, which have increased the apprehension of women in need and may have led to women in need not seeking help when the help was there. That is shameful.

Those opposite rolled out a scare campaign across the State and preyed on the fears of the most vulnerable members of our community, women who are victims of family and domestic violence. Those opposite put politics before people. What did I do? I came to this ministry six months ago. I spoke with those in the sector and realised a decision needed to be made about homelessness services. I remind the member for Canterbury that uncertainty is difficult for a sector helping vulnerable people. I made a decision to restore funding to the inner city.

I thought about the people; I did not create a scare campaign, which those opposite are doing. This side of politics puts people first. The Government is delivering reforms that are long overdue and that those opposite, when in government, did not have the courage, vision or plans to undertake. These reforms were spoken about and the sector embraced them. The reforms were based on the evidence that we need to provide more money to the regions, where the risk of homelessness was rising, and earlier services. That is what these reforms are doing.

The Government asked for a partnership between organisations, so there would be connected services for women or any person in need when they are at risk of homelessness or in crisis. That meant we could help them sooner with more services in the place in which they were experiencing distress. That is the fundamental foundation of these reforms, which I am committed to. This side of the House puts people first. The Going Home Staying Home reforms are smart reforms aimed at what those opposite are raising for contention. The reforms are aimed at helping women and other people who are vulnerable when they need those services.

Writing cheques year after year without thinking about how best to provide those services is not what governments do. It is better to look at the evidence, talk with the sector and make decisions in the interests of the most vulnerable people. These reforms will result in more money being spent on better services delivered to the areas of greatest need. There is half a billion dollars over three years to prevent and to address homelessness across New South Wales.

Yes, there was a competitive tender process. Very good organisations have stepped up to that and are now in partnerships to deliver services for the most vulnerable people, including women, throughout New South Wales. This means quality organisations, like Southern Youth and Family Services, Carrie's Place, Mission Australia, Wesley Mission or B-Miles will deliver those services to people in need at the right time with the right help. That is the responsibility of the Government.

The facts speak for themselves. The member for Canterbury knows as well as I do that domestic and family violence is a key cause of homelessness and the Going Home Staying Home reforms will better support those escaping family and domestic violence. There are dedicated packages for women with or without children. Approximately half the new packages have a discrete, specialist response for women. This petition is deplorable, and I commend my comments to the House. [*Time expired.*]

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [10.19 a.m.]: I join with members in discussion on a petition that has been signed by 15,000 citizens who are concerned about changes to women's and girls' refuges as a result of the Government's Going Home Staying Home reforms. We know that thousands of women and children are homeless for a range of reasons. They may be escaping domestic violence. They may be struggling with the effects of childhood sexual assault, drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness and a whole range of other problems. For nearly 40 years services in the community have supported those vulnerable women and children. Those services have provided a specific and tailored response to the needs of that group of women. Over the past year those services have been thrown into absolute chaos as a result of the Government's Going Home Staying Home reforms.

We have seen services close. We have seen local communities that fought to establish those services lose them in their local communities. There has been a loss of staff and a loss of expertise in a sector that cannot afford to lose staff and expertise. The staff left the system as a result of the chaos caused by the Government's reform. The Minister made the assertion that the Opposition preyed on the community and ran a scare campaign. I reject that entirely. We could not have 15,000 people signing a petition or the type of response we have seen in relation to this issue unless the issue is genuine and grounded in real community concern about the Government's changes. That is what has happened. It is simply sloganeering for the Minister to state in this House that the Opposition is running a scare campaign and that the Government is all about solving problems whereas the Labor Opposition is not. Such a suggestion is simplistic sloganeering that goes nowhere towards resolving the very complex issues that have been created as a result of the Government's reforms.

The Government claims that it has allocated resources based on evidence rather than history and that services will be delivered to areas of greatest need. They are fine aims but the truth is—and the Minister knows this because she has been forced to allocate more funding—that those types of reforms can only ever be delivered in that sector if the funding pot is increased. The Government's reforms can never be delivered by spreading the existing funding, which is already too small, ever more thinly over a growing group of services. It simply does not work. The Minister has found that out. That is why the Government has been forced to allocate more funding. The Opposition welcomes that. The Opposition welcomes the fact that some services that it and the sector have been campaigning for have been given additional funding and will be able to continue, but there is still a long way to go. There are only 14 women services operated by women across the entire State whereas there were 100 before the reforms. This needs to be addressed. [*Time expired.*]

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [10.22 a.m.]: Since my inaugural speech in this Parliament I have made it clear that I want to be a strong voice for those who are most in need—"the homeless, the disabled and members of our communities who have fallen between the gaps". I am pleased to say that I am part of a

Government that is helping the most vulnerable members of our community. Going Home Staying Home is the most significant reform to specialist homelessness services in a generation. It will mean that more money and better services will be delivered to the areas of greatest need. The reforms are the culmination of two years of consultation and collaboration. Over the next three years the New South Wales Government will invest a record half a billion dollars to tackle homelessness head-on. For the first time, the New South Wales Government's funding of specialist homelessness services is based on evidence, not history.

The Government's approach means that our suburbs and our regions finally will get the funding they need. Crucially, there will be specialist services for women, with and without children, who are escaping domestic and family violence. Across New South Wales more than half the new service packages are for women only, or include a discrete specialist response for women with a focus on women and children escaping domestic and family violence. New services will assist more than 11,000 women, which represents an increase of more than 3 per cent, and more than 17,000 family members, most of whom are women and children, which represents an increase of more than 13 per cent. The Department of Family and Community Services is working hard to get the transition right. Newly contracted providers have already begun establishing services. Earlier this year, together with the Minister for Family and Community Services, the member for Kiama and the member for Wollongong, I saw firsthand the incredible work being done by Narelle Clay and her team at the Southern Youth and Family Services in Wollongong.

Under the reforms, Southern Youth and Family Services will provide services to local young people and families who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. The Department of Family and Community Services [FACS] is working with Narelle and her team to secure long-term funding arrangements for the Foyer service into the future. The New South Wales Government will continue to deliver real reforms to specialist homelessness services. That means there will be better outcomes for those who are most at risk in our society and most at risk of homelessness.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will make a general statement regarding members seeking leave to participate in discussion on petitions. There are so many petitions that must be dealt with up until 1.00 p.m. I ask members to bear that in mind when they seek leave.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.25 a.m.], by leave: Women's and girls' refuges in the inner city help vulnerable people to get off the street and back on their feet. They provide shelter and counselling, medical and referral services. There are many reasons why women and children can become homeless, including the need to flee family violence, the need to deal with childhood abuse and neglect, and drug and alcohol addiction. In fact, every year thousands of women and children are homeless in New South Wales. From speaking to homeless people in my electorate, I know they recently have noticed an increase in the number of women who are sleeping rough. The inner city must continue to provide services because people who are escaping violence, trauma and grief always come to the city for anonymity and services so they do not become homeless.

The Government's planned Going Home Staying Home reforms would have resulted in the closure of inner Sydney refuges with funding transferred to outer regions and implementation of a new ongoing competitive tender process for the remaining inner-city services. I understand that in some refuges the tender process resulted in the loss of staff and service hours being cut. Some new operators did not have experience operating women's refuges. I am pleased that the Minister listened to the concerns and acted to keep inner-city services open at the same level. I welcome restored funding to Detour House, Young People's Refuge, B Miles, Stepping Out and the Community Restorative Centre's women's program. Those organisations have demonstrated that they can help vulnerable women and girls through difficult circumstances. Their established expertise will ensure that this assistance is continued.

Compassion and common sense have prevailed in the inner city. The cuts were overturned in response to a strong community campaign that I was proud to support. I commend the SOS Women's Services for its work with the Minister to reinstate funding for inner-city women's refuges. The SOS campaign drew attention to the negative impacts of de-funding specialist services in the inner city and activated the wider community, resulting in a strong parliamentary petition with nearly 15,000 signatures, which we are now discussing. I acknowledge Roxanne McMurray and Kate Timmins from the SOS Women's Services, who are in the gallery today. Signatures were collected from hospitals, sexual assault units, charities, lawyers' offices, Country Women's Association branches, and Probus and Rotary groups across the State. The Minister says that restoring funding will give services more time to adjust to the reforms. This must not mean that services will close in three years time.

I believe everyone in the House values the work of women's and girls' refuges and understands why they must continue to operate. There are still refuges under threat and specialist services still may be forced to close. I hope the size of this petition sends a strong signal to the Government to work to keep those vital services operating. One of the greatest concerns about the Going Home Staying Home reforms was the lack of consultation. While some were consulted, the majority of those who work for, or with, affected services say they were not. They could have raised the alarm about what they saw as flawed and dangerous proposals. I support the contention of SOS Services that future reforms must involve proper consultation with all experts on the ground, not just peak bodies. Specialisation must be recognised and continued. [*Time expired.*]

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.28 a.m.], by leave: Once again in this discussion we have witnessed Labor hypocrisy at record levels. The first matter we need to address in this Chamber is that this petition was presented by the Leader of the Opposition, yet the member for Blacktown is not even present in the Chamber. So much is he dedicated to the question of homelessness in this State that in respect of his own discussion, he fails to show. In respect of his own discussion, he sends down backbenchers who have announced their retirement, which means that they are members of Parliament who will not be accountable to the electorate when we go to the polls in March. The Leader of the Opposition presented this petition, but he failed to come to this Chamber to justify exactly what the previous Labor administration did.

The Leader of the Opposition has failed to come into the Chamber and explain to the people of New South Wales Labor's homelessness policies. There are only four months until the next election but the Leader of the Opposition has remained silent. Going Home Staying Home is long-needed change. As the Minister said so eloquently, reform is not easy, particularly when it comes to homelessness and social policy. I welcome the Leader of the Opposition, who is now in the Chamber. I am delighted he was watching proceedings from his office and I apologise for embarrassing him into coming into the Chamber to participate in this discussion. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that his attack on this policy is Labor simply preying on the fears of the vulnerable.

Because of Labor's fearmongering people in need might feel that no help is available for them. Labor's disgustingly reckless and populist approach to funding will take it nowhere. This Government is providing a record level of funding. Under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition those opposite will do whatever it takes to get into government, even if it means preying on the vulnerable, which disgusts me—a product of public housing. On this issue the Australian Labor Party has no plans or policies. Members of the Australian Labor Party talk the talk but do not walk the walk. On Labor's watch too many people have been falling through the cracks. This Coalition Government will spend \$25 million more than the Labor Party spent the last time it was in office. [*Time expired.*]

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that the sessional order provides for four speakers on petitions signed by 10,000 or more persons. The first two speakers have five minutes and the second two speakers have three minutes. After that, members must seek leave to speak.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.31 a.m.], by leave: On behalf of The Greens I support this petition. Services that deal with women in crisis should never be thrown into crisis. As a White Ribbon ambassador I have sworn to do all I can to prevent family and domestic violence, and sexual assault. That is why I have been disappointed by the disruption, the stress and the impact not only on staff in women's refuges and on homelessness services across the State but also, importantly, on the clients of those services. In my view, the Going Home Staying Home reforms have undermined the advances feminism has achieved over the past 40 years.

I have worked hard in my electorate to support and defend women's-only specialist services and to support those services in my electorate—services such as Detour House, the Young People's Refuge, Elsie Women's Refuge and Stepping Out. It is a tragedy that every staff member at Elsie Women's Refuge—the first women's refuge in Australia that was formed 40 years ago—were discarded and are no longer employed by that service. Because of these reforms all that expertise, care, love and experience are gone.

I acknowledge the role of the Minister in restoring funding for inner-city refuges. The lobbying and campaigning that have occurred as a result of this petition have encouraged, cajoled and finally pushed this Government into making the right decision to restore funding. I acknowledge all those who worked so hard on this campaign including the No Shelter Group, which has convened many rallies and actions that I have attended and at which I have spoken, and SOS Women's Services. In particular, I make mention of Kate Timmins and Roxanne McMurray from the Leichhardt Women's Health Centre who have provided invaluable service on these issues, and represented clients and our community with great vigour and integrity.

This model may well be rolled out in drug and alcohol services in other areas. I make it clear that this is not the way to introduce such services. The Greens are committed to ensuring that women's specialist services—women's services run by women for women—are defended. Much work needs to be done across this State to support these services. These refuges have been run by women because gender-based violence requires a gender-based response. I will continue to speak out in favour of these services not only in my electorate but also across the State, to ensure the retention of these women's services and to ensure that family and domestic violence is a relic of the past.

Discussion concluded.

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL PERITONECTOMY SURGERY

Discussion on Petition signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [10.35 a.m.]: I speak in discussion on the petition put forward by concerned citizens requesting an increase in funding to provide more intra-abdominal cancer surgery at St George Hospital. The procedure, which is called a peritonectomy, is a complex and serious procedure for cancers of the peritoneum and is not undertaken lightly. In New South Wales, public patients can receive peritonectomy treatment at St George Hospital.

Peritonectomy patients are clinically complex, and require extensive use of intensive care units and inpatient beds. Patients have an average length of stay in an intensive care unit of seven days and an average length of stay in hospital of 28 days. At St George Hospital peritonectomy surgery cases are undertaken subject to capacity, taking into account urgency and the needs of all other patients. This is a statewide service. While peritonectomy procedures are performed in Australia and internationally, in the past there has been a lack of robust clinical evidence to guide both appropriate patient selection and treatment.

The Cancer Institute NSW has reviewed the evidence on peritonectomy and provided the NSW Ministry of Health with recommendations to help improve understanding of outcomes for peritonectomy patients in New South Wales. The recommendations of the Cancer Institute NSW are supported by the NSW Surgical Services Taskforce and the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Board and will guide treatment advice for future patients. A key recommendation of the Cancer Institute NSW was the establishment of an enhanced multidisciplinary team to select patients for surgery or other therapies and to convey this information directly to patients to ensure informed consent.

The team has met weekly since December 2013 to determine surgery allocation, to ensure that the most appropriate and urgent cases receive their surgery. To support the gathering of robust evidence, a clinical audit of surgery conducted by the peritonectomy team at St George Hospital since 2008 has also been recommended by the Cancer Institute NSW. The retrospective arm commenced in August 2014, followed by a clinical audit of the management and outcomes of all patients considered for peritonectomy in the future. The South Eastern Sydney Clinical and Quality Council will progress this work in partnership with the Cancer Institute NSW and an external auditor has been engaged.

As a major trauma hospital, St George cares for critically ill patients from throughout New South Wales. For this reason the hospital must ensure it has both operating theatre and intensive care unit capacity to care for its New South Wales trauma patient caseload and other complex surgical patients. New South Wales is currently investigating alternative options for dealing with future New South Wales demand for peritonectomies. The Commonwealth committees that deal with nationally funded centres determined in 2010 that peritonectomy does not meet the criteria for nationally funded centre status. Professor Morris is currently undertaking a renewed application for a nationally funded centre.

All clinical treatment, including a peritonectomy, must be subject to evidence so that patient safety can be assured and new treatments supported properly. This is a critical issue and I am glad to see the cause being advanced to reach a solution for the people of New South Wales. I pay tribute to the driving force behind this petition, my constituent Ms Sara Bowers. Sara has campaigned to bring attention to this issue for more than a year now. Sara is well aware of the need for this medical procedure, having undergone a peritonectomy in 2012. Sara is a remarkable individual. Having faced this terrible disease herself, she resolved to fight not only for herself but also for all those who are confronted with peritoneal mesothelioma. I applaud and support her continued campaign.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [10.38 a.m.]: I also pay tribute to Sara Bowers, a constituent of the member for Lane Cove. The intra-abdominal organs are lined by a sheet of tissue called the peritoneum. At times the peritoneum can be invaded by various tumours: a primary tumour as in a rare condition called pseudomyxoma peritonei—which is what Sara Bowers had—or peritoneal mesothelioma, or there can be a secondary spread from other cancers, such as from the appendix or the colon.

As the member for Lane Cove said, peritonectomy surgery is highly specialised and extremely complex, requiring long operating times, large amounts of blood and fluid replacement, and prolonged stays in intensive care and in the general ward. That is one of the reasons very few centres in the world are able to provide this surgery. St George Hospital is one of those, and Professor David Morris is one of the world's leading surgeons in peritonectomy. St George Hospital has now performed around 830 peritonectomies, and its results are close to the best in the world. People from New South Wales and around Australia who otherwise would have died are alive, thanks to this surgery. About half the operations have been for pseudomyxoma peritonei, where patients have an 85 per cent five-year survival; but even more importantly, there has been considerable improvement in the symptoms of peritonectomy for those who have been operated on compared with standard treatment, as well as improved mortality.

For appendiceal adenocarcinoma, there is a 60 per cent five-year survival, compared to zero per cent with standard treatment. For peritoneal mesothelioma, there is a 50 per cent five-year survival, compared to zero per cent with standard treatment. For colonic cancer, the results depend on the amount of tumour, but they now have a 60 per cent five-year survival for low-volume disease. These are world's best practice results. That is why around the world there are only about 600 performing this surgery, which is now the standard of care in many countries for conditions such as pseudomyxoma peritonei, appendiceal cancer and mesothelioma.

At St George Hospital, the mortality for the past 250 cases has been 1 per cent. This, again, is close to the best in the world and it is also considerably less than when the surgery started. That confirms that, like any complex surgical procedure, there is a learning curve, and a single centre doing many surgeries is far superior to a number of centres doing a few. Melbourne, by comparison, has performed about 150 peritonectomies, Perth about 35 cases, and Queensland only about 12 peritonectomies a year, meaning that many of the referrals to St George Hospital are from Queensland.

For some years there has been a request for a nationally funded centre for peritonectomy. Clearly, the best solution is to centralise the expertise in this surgery. The Minister's letter in April 2013 indicated that there was not universal support among the medical profession for such a centre, due to concerns about safety and cost effectiveness. However, the most recent data available from St George and other centres worldwide shows that what was written in that letter, even though it was written as recently as April last year, is now just plain wrong. For appropriate patients, treated in specialised centres, peritonectomy is life saving.

The major driver for peritonectomy surgery is referral from clinicians such as oncologists, who are experts in the field. They know when patients are appropriately referred for peritonectomy. It is up to the New South Wales Government to ensure the people referred get the care that they deserve. I note that St George Hospital, even though it is funded for only 72 cases, is planning to do about 120 cases this year due to enhancements from the Government. The Government deserves acknowledgement for that. Despite that, the recommended time limits for peritonectomy are often exceeded. This is inequitable and distressing, and it adversely affects the lives of not only the patients but also their families.

Professor Morris recently submitted a renewed application for a nationally funded centre for peritonectomy. I strongly urge the New South Wales Ministry of Health to support that application. Australia needs a nationally funded centre to develop and maintain world-class expertise, to provide best patient outcomes for everyone based on need, and to ensure dedicated, sustainable and ongoing funding. A dedicated budget will mean that patients, including those from interstate, who need this complex treatment, can be assured that the necessary resources are available. We never want to have a repeat of what happened last year, when surgery on patients was abruptly cancelled due to local health area budgetary constraints, leaving seriously ill patients untreated. That does not need to be repeated. This is an issue on which politicians should work together to ensure that those who need the surgery get it.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.43 a.m.]: In New South Wales public patients can receive peritonectomy treatment at St George Hospital. Peritonectomy patients are clinically complex and require extensive use of intensive care units and inpatient beds. Peritonectomy is a procedure in which a review team identifies the priority of patients. These patients have an average length of stay in intensive

care units of seven days and an average length of stay in hospital of 28 days, and that restricts capacity. Frequently, patients do not have just one surgery; they might have surgery, then be sent to the intensive care unit, then have more surgery and return to the intensive care unit, and so on.

At St George Hospital peritonectomy surgery cases are undertaken subject to capacity, taking into account the urgency and needs of all other patients. In order to assist management of the waiting list for peritonectomy surgery, the Ministry of Health arranged to spot purchase additional surgical time from the St George Private Hospital. This created the capacity for a total of 14 additional peritonectomy cases to be undertaken at the St George public hospital during the 2013-14 financial year. As at 31 October last year there were 24 patients on the waiting list for peritonectomy surgery. As at 17 November this year, that waiting list had been reduced to 13—that is, by almost half.

St George Hospital is a level one trauma centre for the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District and has one of the busiest emergency departments in the State. It is renowned internationally for excellence in patient care, education, research and innovation. Work has now been completed on St George Hospital's new \$41 million emergency department. The new emergency department will be a significant boost for St George Hospital, which sees more than 62,900 patients and admits around 22,000 patients each year. The Government recognises that St George Hospital serves a fast-growing part of southern Sydney and the northern Illawarra, and this new emergency department will ensure quality front-line health care can be delivered for decades to come.

In October 2013 the Government allocated \$800,000 to St George Hospital to allow planning to commence for a major redevelopment. High-quality, well-informed planning will ensure that enhancements and upgrades to St George Hospital will meet the needs of the community for many years to come. In June this year the Government announced a further \$4 million to commence the St George Hospital redevelopment and \$2.24 million to commence the Sutherland Hospital redevelopment. The redevelopments of St George and Sutherland hospitals are anticipated to have a combined value of more than \$300 million. The redevelopments will be two of the largest infrastructure projects undertaken in southern Sydney in decades.

The next phase of the major redevelopment of St George Hospital will expand intensive care, high dependency and cardiac care services, creating new operating theatres and additional patient wards. The St George redevelopment includes the types of services that the local community needs and will ensure that St George Hospital will continue to be a centre of excellence and meet increasing demands, including the demand for peritonectomy.

Ms CHERIE BURTON (Kogarah) [10.46 a.m.]: My colleague the member for Macquarie Fields has well represented in his speech the views of the petitioners, and I thank him for his commitment and dedication to improving the health system. I also thank, and commend the commitment of, all those who signed the petition and those who collected their signatures. But today I ask why the Government cannot fund this type of surgery. Government members always blame Labor, saying Labor did not do this or did not do that. However, it is a matter of public record that Labor had successive record budgets, that Labor rebuilt or upgraded almost every major hospital in New South Wales, and that Labor had record spends in capital and recurrent funding every year. Those opposite have had almost four years on the Treasury bench. But what have we seen from them? We have seen budget cuts, with \$3 billion gouged out of the Health budget. Let us lift the veil and talk about why the funding of this surgery is such a struggle for this Government. Where has the \$3 billion gouged from the public health system gone? It has gone into a train line in the north-west. But that was not enough. Immediately after the member's mate Tony Abbott got into government—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will come to order.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: They do not like hearing the truth, so they try to shout us down.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I call the member for Baulkham Hills to order for the first time.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: They try to shout down democracy in this place. The member is trying to shout me down because he does not like the truth. That will be a problem for the member, because the next

election will decide whether there will be more health cuts or a Labor government that cares about the health system. Labor consistently, over 16 years, increased funding and built capital projects across New South Wales to provide a better health system. This cannot be denied; it is in NSW Health's own documents. But the \$3 billion gouged from the Health budget was not enough. What did Tony Abbott do when he was elected Prime Minister? He slashed another \$2 billion from his Health budget. That led to members on the government side of this Chamber feigning horror, saying, "How can you take \$2 billion out of our budget? How dare you! The system will collapse. We won't be able to operate."

What about the \$3 billion that was taken? What has the Government done with it? Will the Government go to the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] and stand up for New South Wales? Will it get that money back, or is it all just yapping and smoke machines before the next State election, then all will go quiet and Government members will accept the cuts and just cop it sweet? Is that what will happen? I have been in this place long enough to know that that is exactly what will happen. We need more funding for our hospitals and for peritoneal surgery.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I remind members that the Speaker determines who has the call.

Discussion concluded.

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [10.50 a.m.]: Madam Acting-Speaker—

Mr David Elliott: You are a protectionist now.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Baulkham Hills. Today I speak in discussion on a petition that represents the concerns of more than 12,000 people across the Hunter who took the time to sign a petition about local jobs and local manufacturing in particular. I acknowledge those who have travelled from the region who were active participants in acquiring and securing these signatures. I acknowledge also the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, which has run a campaign, "Make it here or jobs disappear". I do so because the task of any government, but particularly a State government, is to secure jobs, ensure that we continue to look after jobs and create job opportunities for people across the State and particularly in regions such as the Hunter, the Illawarra and central western New South Wales.

It is not the task of governments to send jobs overseas, despite what we have seen from members opposite for the past 3½ years. It seems that it is in the DNA of the Liberal-Nationals, whether at the State level or at the Federal level, to send jobs offshore, despite the consequences on regional economies and the impact on local jobs, denying young people in the regions an opportunity to acquire skills and continue to make a contribution to the region, the State and the nation. A classic example is what we have seen from the Government in its most recent iterations relating to rolling stock. Rolling stock for the Government's prized project, the North West Rail Link, is being built in Chennai, despite the fact that the Hunter has the capability and the capacity to build that rolling stock.

However, in the Government's bid to somehow make it look like it is delivering something wonderful, it has denied local manufacturers an opportunity to build the rolling stock for the North West Rail Link. If this Government's action continues local jobs will be sent offshore. What is happening with the submarine or frigate contracts at the Federal level? All those contracts have gone offshore despite the capacity in the Hunter and elsewhere to do that work. The Liberal-Nationals, whether it is federally or at a State level, refuse to protect local jobs. They refuse to ensure we have a manufacturing sector that is capable of building rolling stock and that continues to improve capacity in the regions to develop and build technologies and provide training opportunities for young people.

I refer in particular to the workforce at UGL and Downer EDI being left in limbo in the Hunter. Those employers have presented opportunities for so many people for so long, ensuring that workers can pay their mortgages and put food on the table, and that young people who are not attending university, or who have chosen not to do so, have an opportunity to gain an apprenticeship. But the policy of members opposite is

simply to take the cheapest option. Anyone who has worked in a trade, as I have—I am sure there are those who have had an opportunity to work in those areas—would know that the cheapest tool is always the most expensive one, something that was drummed into me early in my apprenticeship. Members opposite say that the Government is getting value for taxpayers' money by taking the cheapest option. However, they do not look at the wider consequences across the State and the regions when it comes to taking the cheapest option.

The Government has not considered the impact of job losses on families in the regions, when incomes disappear and workers and their families can no longer spend their wages for which they have worked hard in small businesses in the regions. There is a flow-on consequence. Job losses impact on businesses that are part of the supply chain, delivering other services and components to manufacturers. Job losses and the disappearance of incomes have an impact on those economies. Labor has another view: It gives priority to local manufacturers and provides a pricing preference in the regions to ensure that we build a manufacturing base, save jobs in the regions, and provide opportunities for young people to qualify for a trade, continue to work and provide in those regions.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [10.55 a.m.]: I pay my respects to all those petitioners who signed the petition that we are discussing in this Chamber. The best way for a State government to deliver jobs is to deliver quality front-line services. We are investing in public transport across the State, and since March 2011 we have delivered major transport infrastructure. Australian companies are among those that have won tenders for the North West Rail Link. Trains being delivered by Alstom are used in global cities such as Singapore, Milan, Hong Kong and Dubai. About a quarter of all rapid transit trains currently in operation around the world are made by Alstom. This Government will continue to put customers first.

As for the intercity fleet, I note that Australian-based companies are among those that have responded to the calls for expressions of interest to build and maintain our new fleet of 65 intercity trains—a \$2.8 billion project. This is another project creating jobs that Labor could never bring itself to do. The Liberal-Nationals are investing in the State's next generation train fleet for customers travelling longer distances from the South Coast, the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast and Newcastle. The new fleet will consist of 65 trains totalling 520 carriages, and will be configured specifically for intercity customers. There is now a strong cohort of local and international contenders keen to be involved in this project. We are also encouraging smaller local companies interested in being involved in the supply of carriages, maintenance of the fleet or fit-out and management of the maintenance facility. We want them to start talking to these major respondents to find out what opportunities there are to participate.

The next generation trains will come into service progressively, with the first trains delivered in 2019 and the rest of the fleet being delivered through 2024. The Government is about creating jobs and making New South Wales number one again. As I said at the outset, the best way for a State government to deliver jobs is to deliver quality front-line services. Labor consistently overpromised and underdelivered. We will not make the same mistake. We have provided an extra 10,500 weekly public services. We continue to invest a record \$60 billion in infrastructure. We have created thousands of jobs through the public transport sector. The North West Rail Link alone will deliver more than 900 jobs in the tunnelling phase. The South West Rail Link which is being delivered by this Government is one year ahead of schedule and \$300 million under budget.

Mr John Robertson: Check when the contract was signed.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: That is true, but you never could have built it.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! The member for Campbelltown will address his comments through the Chair.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: Members opposite have no credibility on this issue. The Leader of the Opposition had the hide to talk about DNA. Members opposite can look into the faces of the good people in the gallery and pretend that they support local jobs. However, which government awarded the largest multibillion project, a public-private partnership, to China? It was Labor. Who was the Minister for Transport? Stand up and identify yourself. Name yourself in front of the people in the gallery.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I call the member for Clarence to order for the first time.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: Nobody in this State is fooled by those opposite. Their entire 16 years was a disaster. Those opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, who was the former transport Minister, did not

deliver one Waratah train for customers—and that is only the start of it. Under Labor the North West Rail Link never got a start, the CBD metro never got a start and nor did the western express project or the intercity fleet replacement project. Those opposite delivered nothing for workers or for this State. This Government is delivering. The best way for the State Government to deliver jobs is to deliver the best front-line services, and that is what we will continue to do.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.00 a.m.]: I am disappointed that the member for Campbelltown did not even mention how this Government will create jobs in the Hunter to fix the jobs crisis in that region. This Government's inexplicable decision to build new rolling stock overseas when skills, know-how and manufacturing infrastructure exists already in the Hunter must be recognised for what it is: a slap in the face for Hunter residents and an utter refusal to support Australian and Hunter manufacturing. The Hunter has a jobs crisis and this Government's actions do nothing to alleviate that problem. In May this year the Australian Bureau of Statistics jobs figures showed that the unemployment rate for the Hunter was at 9.2 per cent, up from 5.8 per cent in May 2013. The figures show that this May 116,000 people were employed in the Hunter Valley, amounting to a loss of about 4,000 jobs.

Youth unemployment has skyrocketed to 13 per cent in the Hunter. Indeed, between February and July my office tracked the loss of more than 3,000 jobs in the Hunter. It seemed that a day did not go by without a headline proclaiming that more Hunter manufacturing jobs were being lost. How did the Government respond? It increased TAFE fees while cutting TAFE funding, sent contracts overseas and starved the Hunter manufacturing sector of much-needed work. This Government has no compassion and no care. This lack of support from the Baird Government is compounded by its Federal counterpart's refusal to allow Australian shipbuilding companies to bid for the tender to build two new Navy support ships. In contrast, Labor has announced plans to enact a tendering process that will support Australian workers and industry, particularly in economically depressed areas.

The Government's decision to outsource the construction of rolling stock makes even less sense when one considers that train builder Downer EDI shed almost 200 jobs in March. How many of those jobs in the Hunter could have been saved? How many families would still have a wage to support them if this Government had made the right choice? As I have said, it is utterly inexplicable and, to me, deeply troubling. So terrified is this Government of collectivism and unionised workers that it is willing to sell the Hunter region down the Hunter River. It is ideological, cynical and craven. In short, it is everything the people of the Hunter have come to expect from this Liberal Government. I call on the Government to commit to supporting the Hunter manufacturing industry and to build the trains here. Given all the Liberal Party has put the Hunter through in recent months, it is the least it can do.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.03 a.m.]: For the benefit of the people in the gallery, there must be a modicum of honesty and accuracy when discussing issues in this place. Unfortunately, I assure them that the Leader of the Opposition speaks with a forked tongue. This morning in this place he said, with all the hypocrisy and audacity he could muster, that we need to keep jobs in New South Wales. For the record, since March 2011 this Liberal-Nationals Government has created an additional 165,000 jobs across New South Wales—5,000 new nurses, new teachers and new police. We now have the lowest unemployment rate of anywhere in this country. That is a complete reversal of the situation we inherited only 3½ years ago when our predecessors under the stewardship of the Leader of the Opposition, who was very much part of the decision-making in the former Government's Cabinet, sent our economy to the dustbin—our economy was trashed.

We had the worst-performing economy in this country. Expenses growth was at 7 per cent and revenue was at only 5 per cent. But let me return to my initial comment. When I talk about the hypocrisy and audacity of the very limp and soft Leader of the Opposition, I need to take the people in the gallery no further than the contract awarded for the Waratah trains. Were those trains manufactured in New South Wales? No, they were not. Were they manufactured in Queensland? Were they manufactured in Western Australia? Were they manufactured anywhere in this country? As a matter of fact, they were manufactured in China. The Waratah contract was awarded to China to provide that rolling stock. The Leader of the Opposition speaks with forked tongue when he has the audacity and hypocrisy to tell the good people of New South Wales that he stands up for their jobs. He does not stand up for anything. He has no honesty, no credibility and no intention of creating jobs for the people. Why do I say that? History will show that we had the worst unemployment figures when he was part of the Labor Government.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [11.06 a.m.], by leave: The member for Hawkesbury is the only member who speaks with forked tongue. The Leader of the Opposition stands up for workers—the workers

of Newcastle and the Hunter. More than 6,000 workers in New South Wales have jobs in the rolling stock industry and its supply chain. Many of those workers live in the Hunter Valley and Newcastle. The rolling stock industry has strategic economic significance for both the Hunter and this State. Over the past 18 months, more than 750 workers employed with Hunter Valley rolling stock manufacturers, plus hundreds more in the supply chain, have lost their jobs. The New South Wales budget has committed more than \$6 billion for major transport infrastructure and more than \$2.8 billion has now been announced to build trains for the Hunter line, yet the Premier and the Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Hunter refuse to commit one cent of that money to New South Wales rail manufacturers.

In 2013 the O'Farrell-Baird Government introduced a new procurement policy that no longer includes a preference for locally made goods or services. Unlike the Local Jobs First procurement policy introduced by the Rees Government, the O'Farrell-Baird policy no longer has any preference for tenderers to provide apprenticeships and training, job creation or investment in regional areas or areas of high unemployment. Their Victorian colleagues under Premier Dr Denis Napthine in their plan "Our new Victorian Jobs in the 21st Century" have a local content target, and Victorian Labor also has a local content policy. We suggest that those opposite look to their Victorian colleagues to learn how to create local jobs for local people.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I call the member for Hawkesbury to order for the first time.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP: The North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link will have 25 to 30 new trains and the next generation intercity fleet will have \$2.8 billion for 65 new trains, yet no commitment is given to buying Australian steel or building any of those trains in New South Wales or even in Australia. BlueScope, United Group Rail and Downer EDI are world-class manufacturers, but they do not have enough work and all have commenced workforce redundancies. United Group Rail in Newcastle has 250 redundancies at Broadmeadow, and Downer EDI redundancies in Cardiff and Kooragang have resulted in around 500 job losses.

The flow-on effect is downstream job losses when facilities of this size downsize or close. For example, Varley Engineering in the Hunter, which supplies the major rolling stock sites, has also had redundancies. Building trains locally would not only create hundreds of jobs in the manufacturing sector but also support the businesses that supply the rail industry. Too many contracts have gone offshore, such as the train carriage contracts. Bus contracts have gone to Queensland, Navy contracts have gone to Korea and Spain, and now the submarine contracts have gone to Japan. I want to see more manufacturing contracts come to Newcastle.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I call the member for Campbelltown to order for the first time.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [11.09 a.m.], by leave: I contribute to this discussion brought on by the Leader of the Opposition about the tender to build rail rolling stock in New South Wales. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for doing so. I have listened to the debate in this Chamber and I do not care whether the Labor Government made a mistake in relation to the Waratah trains. I imagine that some members of the Labor Party believe there could have been better outcomes from that rollout. That does not excuse the current Government from exacerbating the situation and making an even greater mistake with regard to this expenditure.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I call the member for Campbelltown to order for the second time.

Mr GREG PIPER: I am keen to support local manufacturing, particularly Downer EDI, which is a major manufacturer in my electorate as is the United Group Limited, known as UGL. Former governments have delivered jobs and skills to the people of this State, but these decisions risk the future of manufacturing in New South Wales across the board, not just in my electorate. The Government would be wise to consider the broad benefits of awarding this lucrative contract to local suppliers instead of looking offshore to buy pre-manufactured rolling stock. We must do all we can to develop a skilled workforce so that in the future clients from other countries will look to New South Wales to buy our state-of-the-art products rather than us casting around to find opportunities offshore. It is a ridiculous situation.

The Build Them Here campaign has the backing of all the Hunter peak unions and business groups, such as the Newcastle Trades Hall Council and the Hunter Business Chamber. HunterNet and the Australian Industry Group have joined together to put aside traditional ideological differences to encourage the Government to pause in its rush to look overseas for a new and innovative ready-made product. I repeat my challenge to the Premier: Show the same support for Hunter manufacturing jobs as you have shown for those in Western Sydney.

The Premier, who is also the Minister for Western Sydney, announced earlier this year that the Government would require bidders for major infrastructure projects across the State to express how they would leave a lasting skills dividend for local communities. He also said that manufacturers working on government contracts would be required to hire local apprentices, which is a scheme that is likely to create 1,000 new apprenticeships. There is grand rhetoric and I welcome the precedent, but it needs to apply across the State. I urge the Premier to make rolling stock supply bids the subject of the same skills criteria assessment. If that were to happen the Government could not possibly send those jobs offshore.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.12 a.m.], by leave: On behalf of The Greens I support the rail rolling stock petition. It highlights in a clear, sensible and straightforward way the importance of maintaining a manufacturing skills base in this State. It also ensures that public money raised from the taxpayers of New South Wales is used to support the manufacturing industry in this State. I acknowledge all the members and delegates of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union [AMWU]. My father worked as a fitter and was a member of the AMWU for all his working life, so I have a soft spot for it. It is a credit to the union and to all those involved to have attained so many signatures on this petition.

Our manufacturing industry nationwide has been crippled by Federal Government policies, particularly under the Howard Government. We are now hearing about free trade agreements, which often means undermining the skills base of this country, exporting jobs and not supporting the growing and vibrant economy of this State. Whether it is ship building, rolling stock or componentry, this country needs a national plan. In fact, we need a State plan that prioritises apprenticeships with local training content and that focuses on regional areas. Balmain, Glebe, Leichhardt and Lilyfield were traditionally areas of manufacturing and production, but those industries have moved to the regions of New South Wales. It is important that manufacturing is supported in my electorate of Balmain and elsewhere.

The light rail extension traverses my area and we have called not only for the public transport system to remain in public hands but also for the rolling stock to be manufactured locally. We are disappointed that, although the original rolling stock was built in Dandenong, Victoria, the new stock tender has been allocated to Spain. That goes to the heart of this issue. Without supporting and maintaining our manufacturing base, we will lose the workers with the relevant skills and expertise. This State has world-class, skilled workers who can produce high-quality train rolling stock here.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: It is in the national interest that we maintain our manufacturing base. As a Greens representative, I believe it is important that investment in public transport and clean energy continue in this State. We have extremely competitive local workers who produce high-quality, world-class, safe products. It is critical that the Government invests in our manufacturing future and that it supports the workers at UGL and Downer EDI to ensure that this country does not become nothing more than a quarry of deskilled workers that sends its products overseas.

Discussion concluded.

FLYING FOX CONTROL

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [11.16 a.m.]: I thank the 10,000 or more petitioners who have signed the petition and all those people who collated petitions across the State. This issue does not affect just one area; it affects communities across New South Wales. My experience with flying fox infestations goes back to 1999 when I was President of the Maclean High School Parents and Citizens Association and the flying foxes were roosting in a rainforest immediately next to the school. The situation became absolutely intolerable. The students were bombarded with bat faeces, which was in plague proportions. The quality of life of the students and teachers was untenable and unbearable.

After a number of years of haranguing and canvassing the Government we were able to get a dispersal licence. However, the dispersal licence was so constrained that we were only able to move the bats from the school into the neighbourhood, and the problem has lain dormant and unresolved ever since. I instigated this petition after visiting Casino earlier this year where I saw some 40,000 to 50,000 bats roosting on the riverbank

in the middle of the town. They were causing a number of problems for the residents of Casino and affecting their quality of life. Bat faeces covered roofs and schools. The stench and the noise were unbearable. The health and safety of people in residential areas should be a priority.

I thank the Minister for announcing his new policy. It is a step forward. He has given responsibility to councils to manage and resolve the problem before it becomes too difficult. However, implementing the policy is another matter. On the weekend the member for Coffs Harbour and I visited a community in Glenreagh in the Clarence Valley. It has an infestation of flying foxes, which are roosting along the river and causing problems with water quality. People are drinking the water and it is an unhealthy situation. The bats are also noisy. They defecate on roofs, which creates a stench. People cannot live in a feedlot and nor can they live in a zoo. This is an urban area. The council and the people of Glenreagh need a practical and pragmatic solution to this problem.

Let us face it, this problem is one of past governments' making and in years gone by it took only a carton of shotgun shells to solve it. I am not suggesting that we should return to those days, but that was a cost-effective and simple solution and the mortality rate was not that significant—certainly not as significant as the 5,000 bats that died at Casino last weekend from heat exhaustion. Casino is not a suitable environment for bats. I have no doubt that had those bats been moved on there would have been a lower mortality rate. As I said earlier, we need to find a practical solution.

Current legislation is restricting some residents from protecting their families and their homes. The Government needs to make a financial contribution towards the cost of dispersing bats from those communities. It is important for a landowner to be able to protect his household and himself from the noise, stench and health risks posed by flying foxes. We must ensure that the policy announced by the Minister can be implemented practically and that the State Government provides some sort of financial restitution to councils if it becomes too difficult for them financially.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Noreen Hay): Order! I remind the member for Clarence that a landowner can be a male or a female.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [11.21 a.m.]: I support my good friend and colleague the member for Clarence regarding the infestation of flying foxes not only in his electorate but also along the east coast of New South Wales. It amazes me that the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne and in Sydney are able to shift flying foxes along, but that restrictions are placed on regional and rural communities where bats have devastated not only the vegetation but also the lives of residents. The huge colony of flying bats living in Mackays Road, Coffs Harbour, and at Narranga Public School left eventually but it created real health problems for the children at the school and, interestingly, respiratory problems suffered by people living in Gundagai Street, Coffs Harbour, diminished when the bats disappeared.

Professor Chris Tideman from the Australian National University said way back in 1999 or 2000 that flying fox communities and human habitation do not mix. Food crops such as peaches, blueberries, coffee, et cetera, are grown on the North Coast. Local bat colonies are no longer feeding and roosting in the bush; they are roosting in built-up areas that are closer to food supplies. In Queensland people and horses have died from the hendra virus, which is known to be carried by these animals. Flying foxes also carry lyssavirus—which is as close to rabies as one can get. In fact, anyone who is scratched by a flying fox is given a rabies vaccination.

People who visit Susan Island Nature Reserve at Grafton will see flying foxes in their millions leaving to feed—they blot out the sun. They are also at Kempsey, Bellingen, Urunga, Nambucca Heads and Port Macquarie yet we are told they are endangered. How can they be endangered if there are millions of them along the entire east coast of New South Wales? They are also found in Queensland and in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. If flying foxes were allowed to be shifted from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney they should be allowed to be shifted from communities such as Glenreagh.

Flying foxes are also having an economic impact. For example, people no longer go to the hotel at Glenreagh, which serves fantastic meals. I take this opportunity to compliment Warren Dean and his staff for the great service they gave us last weekend when we visited Glenreagh. Membership of the local equestrian club, which used to have lots of pony club activities, has dropped from 40 to 17. People no longer want to own horses. It costs \$150 to vaccinate horses against the hendra virus, and vaccinations must be administered twice a year. Flying foxes are also roosting in the camphor laurel trees around Nana Glen. People will no longer take their prized horses to the Nana Glen Equestrian Centre because they are afraid they will catch the hendra virus. Equestrian events contribute greatly to the North Coast economy. There is something wrong when councils spend millions of dollars on an equestrian set-up yet we cannot get rid of flying foxes.

A camphor laurel tree is a noxious weed. Flying foxes are roosting in them but the trees cannot be removed because they are within the riparian zone. The Government must adopt a policy that permits the removal of those noxious weeds. This will get rid of the bat colony because the animals will not have anywhere to roost. The streams can then be revegetated with native trees in which flying foxes will not roost, and the issue will be resolved not only for the local community but also for visitors. If we did not have food sources such as blueberries, raspberries, nectarines, peaches, coffee plantations, et cetera, the bats would return to forested areas to eat gum flowers, as they did in the past. It is high time that flying foxes and human communities were separated and that we acknowledge these animals are not endangered. There are millions of flying foxes. Why not conduct a census to find out how many flying foxes there are? This will ensure that people can live in safety and not fear for their health.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [11.26 p.m.]: I join my colleagues the member for Clarence and the member for Coffs Harbour in thanking the more than 10,000 people who have signed this important petition. This issue cuts across a number of communities throughout rural and regional New South Wales. I pay tribute, in particular, to those in the Inverell community who signed this petition in their droves—there were almost 3,000 signatures from Inverell alone. I have spoken previously in this House about the flying fox problems in the Inverell community. The flying fox population in Inverell was estimated to be almost 100,000. In December last year those flying foxes descended on the Inverell community, which has a population of 12,000. In May this year I launched this petition with the support of Mayor Paul Harman, Inverell Shire Council General Manager Paul Henry and Inverell Business Chamber President Anthony Michael.

I did so because of the ecological disaster being caused in the Inverell community by the roosting of these flying foxes. For example, at Blair Athol, a heritage-listed guesthouse, trees that had been growing for more than 150 years were stripped bare and left to die. Another colony roosted in the trees on the banks of the Macintyre River and more than a dozen trees were stripped bare. The excrement left behind was a health risk and it cost the council tens of thousands of dollars to clean up when the bats finally decided to remove themselves from that community. One lady on a rural property was scratched by a juvenile flying fox, which had very serious health implications. I gather from my conversations with that lady and her family that it was a very stressful time until they were given the all clear. During the circulation of this petition some have sought to categorise my colleagues and me as seeking carte blanche extermination of flying foxes throughout this State. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We simply want a better balance of rules and regulations in this State to prioritise people's health and welfare and community amenity because at present the interests of flying foxes tend to have primacy. I too acknowledge the work of the Hon. Rob Stokes, Minister for the Environment, and the changes he has announced. I will be watching very closely to make sure that we do not unfairly burden local councils and saddle them with financial costs that they simply cannot afford. We have made some progress in this area, which is very pleasing, but I will keep a watching brief over this area. Again I thank the Inverell community for being so supportive. By being pragmatic and sensible we have achieved something very important.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.29 a.m.]: I join my colleagues, notably from the North Coast and Northern Tablelands, to talk about the flying fox petition. I congratulate in particular the member for Clarence on bringing this petition to the House for discussion today. As the member for Coffs Harbour said, this does not affect just an isolated area. Residents up and down the east coast have concerns about flying foxes. In Port Macquarie flying foxes roost regularly in the Kooloonbung Creek Nature Reserve, which is in an urban area in close proximity to thousands of houses. There have been concerns raised with me about the smell, the noise and of course the potential health risks related to the flying fox colony. I have had many representations made to me in the past 12 months on this issue. I congratulate the people in Port Macquarie who distributed this petition. Some 1,000 signatures were collected from my local area.

I acknowledge that the council has a management plan for the Kooloonbung Creek Nature Reserve. There is a section in the plan that talks about flying foxes and some of the things that could be done to mitigate a number of the concerns raised by local residents. I think it needs to go much further than that, and clearly that is also what the residents in the Port Macquarie area think. It acknowledges that we could do some trimming of vegetation around the periphery of the reserve where the flying foxes roost. It also talks about the need for some information signage to advise people there is a flying fox colony in the area and the potential health risks that poses. However, this part of the Kooloonbung Creek Nature Reserve management plan has not been undertaken by council. I have had a number of discussions with council over the past few months and urged it to complete that as part of the steps outlined in its management plan for the flying fox population.

I take this opportunity to thank the Hon. Rob Stokes, Minister for the Environment. I know that he has listened very carefully to what both I and other members have raised with him regarding the concerns of local residents. I congratulate him on the strategy that he has put in place to alleviate some of the issues and some of the concerns raised about flying foxes. I certainly look forward to continuing to work closely with him. I note that all members on this side of the House, particularly those from the North Coast and the Northern Tablelands, are focused on supporting and assisting councils by removing some of the barriers that have prevented them from putting in place some mitigation processes for flying fox colonies.

Discussion concluded.

RETAIL TRADING LAWS

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.33 a.m.]: I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak in discussion on a petition from certain citizens requesting that the existing retail trading laws be retained in their entirety. I note that the petition gathered signatures from more than 11,000 retail, fast food and warehouse workers, along with community supporters, as part of the Take the Time campaign of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association NSW [SDA]. This petition was handed to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr John Robertson, on the steps of the New South Wales Parliament with one simple message: Members of this place support and protect the remaining 4½ days of public holidays when trading is restricted.

Thousands of New South Wales residents and workers have made their views quite clear by signing this petition—they want to preserve their ability to spend time with their family and friends on public holidays, and they deserve that right. There have been increasing demands on workers in the retail, fast food and warehousing industries, which are now operating seven days a week. This has resulted in workers spending significantly less time with members of their family, with their friends and with their community. Public holidays such as Christmas Day and Boxing Day, which are right around the corner, are treasured by all Australians, far and wide.

The removal of public holidays would undoubtedly place great social strain on workers, who would not be able to spend important time with their family and community on such significant public holidays—especially in light of the fact that only 4½ trade-free days remain in New South Wales. Members of this House should listen to the overwhelming call from this petition and protect our public holidays, such as Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday and the half day on Anzac Day. The benefits to the economy of any further retail trading deregulation are negligible at best and are not worth the social cost to our workers, to their families and to the wider community.

In fact, plenty of research clearly questions any argument that increased economic benefits will come from changing existing retail laws. This research includes the report from the McKell Institute entitled "Does Our Spending Increase? The relationship between trading restrictions and retail turnover." It clearly demonstrates that any economic benefits from deregulating those remaining trade-free days are negligible. There have been many other reports, including one from the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies entitled "The Potential Economic Impact of Liberalisation of Shop Trading Hours". More recently, Dr Gordon Menzies, Associate Professor in Economics at the University of Technology, Sydney, [UTS] made his submission to the Competition Policy Review, also known as the Harper review. All these reports state that any economic benefits would be negligible.

The Competition Policy Review is in progress. The closing date for submissions on the draft report was two days ago. The Competition Policy Review was announced by Tony Abbott and the Federal Minister for Small Business at the end of 2013. It is a review of competition policy in Australia, and one of the areas under review is retail markets. The public were invited to make submissions to that review. We await the final report. The New South Wales Opposition certainly hopes that the Baird Government supports workers in New South Wales and their overwhelming desire to retain these 4½ trade-free public holidays. Many of those in the retail sector and their families hold these public holidays dear.

I briefly remind the House that back in 2012 the New South Wales Government attempted to amend retail trading hours. Fortunately it withdrew its bill from this House after it became very clear that it would not receive the support of the Opposition or the crossbenchers in its attempt to change retail trading hours. It is very

important in the lead-up to the next election to remind this Government and the people of New South Wales that the Opposition supports workers in these industries, and supports their right to retain these trade-free public holidays. [*Time expired.*]

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [11.38 a.m.]: I speak in the discussion on the petition regarding the intended liberalisation of retail trading laws in New South Wales. The member for Blacktown and the member for Bankstown would both be aware that this is the second time that a petition on this topic has been discussed in this House. The Retail Trading Act 2008 restricts large shops, such as supermarkets, department stores, and hardware and electrical outlets from opening on 4½ days each year, unless they are exempt.

The restricted days are Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Anzac Day until 1.00 p.m., Christmas Day and Boxing Day. However, the trading hours of very small retail businesses are not restricted in any way and a number of different types of speciality shops such as restaurants, takeaways and newsagents are free to open provided they ensure that staff members freely elect to work on the day. Each of the restricted days is also a public holiday under the Public Holidays Act 2010. No other public holidays such as Australia Day or New Year's Day are restricted trading days. Opening any shop on those days is a matter for the shopkeeper. By imposing trading restrictions on one group of shops and not on others the Government could arguably be discriminating against a group of retailers. The National Competition Council found that this discrimination among retailers is anti-competitive and contrary to the public interest.

Restrictions imposed on general or large retailers can ultimately also harm small shops if they are located in shopping centres that remain closed because the major drawcard stores cannot open. The Government wants to modernise retail trading laws to provide more choice for retailers, employees and consumers. That determination remains. We want to allow shops to open at times convenient to consumers, protect the family life of shop assistants and, importantly, allow people who want to work to earn extra income. The New South Wales Government agrees that families should be able to enjoy public holidays together as often as possible or otherwise spend time together. In fact, in many jurisdictions public holidays provide an opportunity for families to shop together and for working parents to shop at leisure.

Would the petitioners also suggest that the Government shut down public transport on such days or close down media outlets or entertainment precincts? The Government is interested in reasonably protecting workers. It is also interested in reasonably protecting retailers and consumers. It is a question of striking the right balance. There is an important element of choice that should be protected for workers choosing to work. The Government is currently engaging with all interested groups to ensure that it strikes the right balance by permitting shops to open at times convenient to consumers while protecting the family life of shop workers and affording those who wish to work an opportunity to earn extra income. The Government thanks those who lodged the petition but respectfully maintains the position it has indicated previously.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [11.43 a.m.]: I strongly support the content of the petition relating to retail trading laws, the effort behind it and the goals it sets out to achieve. I commend the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association [SDA] for its work in keeping this issue in the public eye and at the forefront of the attention of Parliament. The speech of the member for Davidson shows that the union still has more work to do. It is clear that this issue is very much on the agenda.

For some time this issue has been at the front of the campaign of the SDA or, as we called it back in the old days when I first became a member in 1960s, the Shop Assistants Union. I became a member of the union in the 1960s along with all employees of Franklin's Food Stores. The company paid for the union dues, which came about as a result of negotiations between Johnno Johnson, who is known to everyone in this place, and Harold Cornock and Norman Tieck, who owned Franklin's Food Stores at the time. Johnno Johnson must surely have been the only person in the union movement who could have pulled off such a deal with a company so large.

Trading hours have changed a lot since the 1960s. They were generally 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on Monday to Friday and four hours on Saturday. No-one is suggesting we go back to that. Not only the retail sector and workers but also the consumers like the extended trading hours that are now available. The petition and the campaign by the SDA seek to protect the last 4½ restricted trading days under State legislation. That is not really a huge demand. In other words, all the things that the member for Davidson spoke about will apply for the other 360½ days of the year.

Generally speaking, retail workers are the lower paid in the community. They look forward to days such as Christmas Day and Boxing Day. I think Boxing Day is the best day of the year. There is no shopping

and it provides a time to recover from Christmas Day and the previous few weeks of shopping. Will we ask the young and older employees who work all the way up to Christmas to work on Christmas Day and Boxing Day as well? Clearly, if we take the message from the member for Davidson that certainly is the case. The comments by the member suggest—

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Choice.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The member for Davidson should realise that an employee of Bunnings, Woolworths, Coles or other big retailers is at a disadvantage when negotiating with management. Perhaps the choice is not as easy as he has claimed in the House today.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [11.46 a.m.]: I thank the people who signed the petition relating to retail trading hours and public holidays for bringing their views to the House. Everyone who signs petitions on the vast array of matters that come before the House is exercising an important democratic right. I thank them for participating in that way. It is important that members are alerted to the concerns of the community about all manner of things. I recognise that the people who signed the petition are concerned about family time and note the importance of spending time at home. It is an important principle, but it is equally important that people have the right to choose how they spend their time. I am not a shopaholic. In fact, I am not a particularly keen shopper at all.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: We can tell, Kevin.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: I am not sure if I should take that as a compliment. Some members of my family are much keener on shopping than I am. They want to be able to choose to go shopping at times when I would perhaps choose to do something else. The Government's approach and policy in most areas is about recognising the differences among people and the personal right to choose. We want to strike the right balance between competing values while recognising that there are arguments on both sides. The Government is not about taking a carte blanche approach. We are not going to abolish all public holidays and make people work all hours. As members will recall, in late 2011 the Government conducted a review into the shop trading provisions of the Retail Trading Act. We sought public comment and consultation to get the views of the community, which is the appropriate way to exercise our responsibilities on the matter.

I note that many employer groups including the Sydney Business Chamber and employers such as Coles and Woolworths said in their submissions that there is no shortage of staff willing to work on Boxing Day, for instance, and they support voluntary work arrangements for such a day. That is an interesting point to make. In fact, in its submission Kmart indicated that in its experience demand for work on those days exceeded supply in some cases. It is not as simple as saying that we should keep everything exactly as it is. In a democratic, pluralistic community we must respect differing views, monitor the situation and at times open up the matter for discussion. That does not preclude any outcome or indicate a preconceived notion. It is simply a sensible way to approach an issue such as this and ensure that community views are respected.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.49 a.m.], by leave: Earlier it was remiss of me to not thank many members and staff as well as delegates of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association [SDA], who are present in the gallery. I thank them for coming here to witness the discussion on the petition. I acknowledge the presence of Bernie Smith, who is the State secretary of the SDA, and congratulate him on all his efforts in coordinating the Take the Time campaign. The original campaign was launched by Gerard Dwyer, who is now the national secretary and a former State secretary, with the support of the entire executive, delegates and members of the SDA. I wish the SDA continued success with this campaign and remind the association that the New South Wales Opposition will continue to support the remaining 4½ trade-free public holidays that remain.

Discussion concluded.

NORTHCONNEX NORTHERN VENTILATION OUTLET

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai) [11.50 a.m.]: I am pleased to lead the discussion on this petition of 10,000 people organised by the Community Against Polluting Stacks [CAPS] group about the location of the northern ventilation outlet of the proposed NorthConnex road link between the M1 and the M2.

I am pleased in part because of my initiative following the 2011 election to allow such petitions to be discussed in this place. But for my decision, this discussion would not have occurred. This morning I gladly presented a petition from 10,000 people who are mostly from the Ku-ring-gai electorate and surrounding area, but I note for the record that the petitioners also are from areas as far away as Coogee and the southern suburbs. This is a petition requesting that the northern ventilation outlet be situated in a non-residential area and away from people's homes to minimise any health risks to nearby residents.

At the outset I again make the point—a point made to me repeatedly in meetings with CAPS, other groups and local residents—that my community strongly supports this link. As the roads Minister said, at a time when we face the challenges of a population increase of 1.5 million in Sydney and a doubling of the freight task over the next 20 years, serious decisions are required to be made. For too long within my electorate, residents, homes and suburbs adjacent to Pennant Hills Road and the Pacific Highway have been blighted by the volume and pollution of traffic, especially heavy vehicles. Removal of this surface traffic via the proposed NorthConnex tunnel would bring long sought after relief to those people and communities. In my early years in this place I was a strong advocate for what is now known as the M9—a genuine Sydney orbital, including a second crossing of the Hawkesbury River, to allow heavy vehicles plying interstate routes to and from the north of the State to completely bypass suburbs like Wahroonga, Normanhurst, Thornleigh and Pennant Hills. If such a link had been built two decades ago, the NorthConnex link probably would have been unnecessary.

But inaction by our predecessors has resulted in both links being needed in the short and medium terms. That past inaction also means that the construction impact of the proposed link is greater than it might have been. Let there be no doubt that this petition is not about stopping or scuttling the proposed NorthConnex link. It is not about burying heads in the sand and ignoring the existing impact, including health risks, posed by the current traffic arrangements at Sydney's northern road entry point. It is about trying to ensure that the link is built in a way that delivers the best possible outcomes for motorists and local residents alike. I was one of the members who made a submission as part of the environmental impact statement [EIS] process. It is this independent process that, as with other projects, will determine the future, shape and impact of the NorthConnex link. I have always understood community scepticism about how independent that process is. Regrettably, erosion of confidence in public administration is another legacy left to us by our predecessors.

But anyone who has followed the EIS process, and in particular the comments of HealthNSW and the Environment Protection Authority [EPA], should be assured of its rigour and independence. It is a process in which I have confidence and trust to make the right decisions about the project—right for residents, right for motorists and right for taxpayers. This rigour and independence means that the accuracy of data used to model the likely air-quality impact upon local health of the proposed northern ventilation outlet will be examined. It means that concerns about an apparent failure to take into account local topography and meteorological data will have to be addressed, and that claims about an underestimation of heavy vehicle emissions will be answered. The independent EIS process will also assess the issue at the heart of this petition—the location of the northern ventilation outlet, which is an issue raised by many residents in submissions on the EIS.

Residents are strongly concerned about the current location and its proximity to schools and homes. One alternative proposal that people have suggested is moving the outlet to the Hornsby industrial estate. I supported the proposal in my submission on the basis of the precedent established by the siting of Lane Cove tunnel's eastern outlet in the Artarmon industrial estate. I do so on the basis of no adverse impact being caused to other residents' health. But there is another issue raised in my EIS submission that is not reflected in this petition—the fitting of filters to the northern ventilation outlet. Trialling the retrofitting of a filter appears to have a negligible impact upon the air quality of the M5 tunnel. Indeed, the initiative of the Minister for Roads and Freight to penalise polluting heavy vehicles has had a far more favourable effect. However, it seems clear that every time a road tunnel is considered, this issue will emerge in local communities.

Despite the fact that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is investing record sums in public transport—including Australia's largest-ever public transport project, the North West Rail Link—road tunnels will be a feature of the repair of this city's transport systems following years of Labor neglect. Should it be economically feasible and affordable, a case can be made for the inclusion of a filter to determine the effectiveness of filters, once and for all. But I finish where I started: Everyone I speak to in our local area wants the M1/M2 tunnel solution to current traffic congestion and pollution problems to proceed. No-one is arguing in any way that suggestions to improve its operation and reduce any health risks to local residents should put the project's viability or financial viability at risk. I thank all those who took the time to make submissions on the EIS. I also thank those who signed this petition and those who organised it.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [11.55 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in discussion on this petition with 10,000 signatures. Like the former Premier, I can say that I and the Opposition support NorthConnex. I have been a member of this House for nine years and we are almost four years into the current term. It is in this term of government that petitions containing 10,000 signatures were introduced to the House. I can scarcely say of any of them that they have been frivolous or submitted to a local member for delivery to the Legislative Assembly in bad faith. More often than not residents have taken the time to organise a not insignificant number of signatures—and 10,000 is a significant number in terms of the work, effort and the concerns it represents.

Almost entirely those petitions have been underlined by certain factors. In other words, the residents who have signed the petitions and organised them feel they have been ignored. They are scared, angry and feel they have not been listened to; they feel they are being neglected. That certainly appears to be the case in relation to this petition. If that is not the case, the wording on the petition would not be so unequivocal. It is a "Petition of residents and workforce"—not only people who live there but also the people who work there—"of the suburb of Wahroonga and northern Sydney". The petition states:

Brings to the attention of the House the serious nature of the immediate and longer term adverse health impacts from the northern vehicular emission stack of the proposed NorthConnex tunnel, which will be placed in a residentially dense area in Wahroonga. The emissions will affect the health of 9,500 school children, elderly [people], residents and hospital patients who will be exposed to vehicular air pollution from the stack on a daily basis.

And then there is the clincher:

The undersigned petitioners therefore ask the Legislative Assembly to reconsider the current NorthConnex tunnel design proposal, and move the northern ventilation stack and portal into a non-residential area, thereby minimising health risks to the northern Sydney population.

The petitioners have asked for two things: to reconsider it and to move it; in other words, to listen and to act. That is what people ask for unequivocally when they submit petitions to this House. This Government has not been particularly good at listening and acting. If the Government was good on those aspects of proposed projects, we would not have an article of the type that surfaced on 13 October in the *Hills News* under the headline, "Baulkham Hills Liberal MP David Elliott drops support for unfiltered NorthConnex". The article states:

David Elliott, the Member for Baulkham Hills and Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, wrote to Mike Baird last week to say he had withdrawn his support for the motorway to be built without filtration systems in its emissions stacks ...

"I am withdrawing my support for an unfiltered stack", Mr Elliott said.

"There are too many people in West Pennant Hills, whose opinions I respect, to ignore the anxiety it has created."

Some might say that David Elliott was acting politically but the Australian Medical Association is not acting on that basis. The Asthma Foundation NSW is not acting politically when it says it is concerned about the health effects of the NorthConnex. The foundation is quoted, along with people like respected doctor and resident Ray Nassar, as saying:

With children especially there are concerns that exposure to the pollution will cause permanent and irreversible damage to growing lungs. Our concern is not only about actually causing asthma and bronchitis, but also lung development, and, down the track, cancer.

The pollution we will be showering people with is indisputably carcinogenic.

Dr Nassar said he was particularly concerned that the stack was only 23 metres tall at its highest point. By comparison, the Cross City Tunnel ventilation stack is 65 metres high. He said he was sending Government Ministers a petition signed by 250 doctors concerned about the pollution risks. These media reports go on and on. The National Health and Medical Research Council has also expressed concern, as have many members of the community who, I have to say, have been well organised by the Capps Group. There is plenty for the Government to listen to. It is not simply the case that it should fob all this off to Transurban and say, "They are designing it; it is not our concern." The environmental impact statement process must deal with this issue conclusively. It must do what the people in the public gallery today are asking for, which is not very much—just to listen and to act.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.00 p.m.]: Those were very interesting comments from a former roads Minister, talking about listening and acting. When he was roads

Minister he did nothing about ventilation in the M5 tunnel, which this Government is completely reconstructing. It gives me great pleasure to speak to this petition, not only as the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads but also as the member of an electorate adjoining the Hornsby area. There is no doubt that Pennant Hills Road is one of the most congested roads in Sydney; it has been consistently voted that way. Some 360 vehicle incidents occur each year on this stretch of road, almost one a day.

The NorthConnex project will take a significant number of vehicles, particularly trucks, off Pennant Hills Road, making it a much safer corridor. With the city's population set to grow by a further 1.5 million people, and with a projected doubling of our freight task within the next 20 years, projects like NorthConnex are vital to ensure we keep Sydney moving. We would not be building this project if it was not safe for the community; it is being built according to world's best practice. The New South Wales Government has established the Advisory Committee on Tunnel Air Quality, chaired by the New South Wales Chief Scientist, to review national and international practice and experience with motorway tunnels to safeguard the health and safety of the community and motorists.

For the first time for a project of its kind in New South Wales, we also carried out a comprehensive health assessment as part of the environmental impact statement. The NorthConnex tunnels will be wider, higher and flatter. They will be built with three lanes in each direction, with the highest tunnel in Sydney at 5.3 metres, instead of 4.6 metres in the M5 East. NorthConnex generally will be flat over the entire length, with existing gradients half those of the M5 East, at only 4 per cent. Emissions from trucks alone will be reduced by up to 80 per cent, compared to those now using Pennant Hills Road, due to continuous travel with no traffic lights, less travel time and flatter gradients.

The environmental impact statement shows there will be significant improvements on Pennant Hills Road, with up to 45 per cent better travel times. Modelling in the environmental impact statement shows—importantly—that motorists using NorthConnex would be five times less likely to be involved in an accident. I understand some misinformation has been circulated within small pockets of the community about NorthConnex. Again, this is not a process being run by Roads and Maritime Services or Transurban. The New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment imposes strict air quality criteria on tunnel design to ensure high-quality air in the tunnel and negligible impact on local and regional air quality.

The NorthConnex tunnel ventilation system will be designed and operated to meet stringent in-tunnel national and international air quality criteria and comply with the planning approval conditions of consent imposed by the Department of Planning and Environment. The ventilation system has been designed to meet projected traffic demands and operate efficiently in the event of a significant congestion incident. The ventilation outlets will be designed to ensure safety and a negligible impact on local and regional air quality for all surrounding residents. Efficient ventilation is achieved by locating the ventilation outlets for NorthConnex at or near exit portals. The key issue here is not where the outlet is but ensuring it is completely safe for the entire community and providing a high-quality motorway on behalf of commuters, freighters and those travelling between Sydney and the Central Coast.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.03 p.m.]: I thank the Community Against Polluting Stacks team for its hard work in raising serious concerns about this project and for gathering the 10,000 signatures needed to ensure that this matter is debated in Parliament. There are legitimate concerns about air quality, environment, traffic and a whole range of issues that need to be properly addressed for this project to proceed. But that is why we have an environmental impact statement—a process to look at the issues, to measure them against appropriate standards, and to provide solutions where appropriate.

I put on record my full support for the NorthConnex project. It has been talked about for decades. It is a problem for my community and for communities right across this State. It will be a game changer for communities if the NorthConnex is delivered. There are 80,000 car movements a day on Pennant Hills Road. This project, according to some estimates, will move up to 40,000 cars. There are 360 serious traffic incidents a year on Pennant Hills Road. The NorthConnex project is a solution to a problem that has plagued our communities for too long.

That said, there are serious issues that need to be addressed—serious issues that I have raised in my submission to the environmental impact statement process. The first is digital evaluation modelling. There are serious questions about its ability to accurately measure the particulate matter output from the tunnels. Serious concerns about this have not been addressed in the environmental impact statement process. It has not looked at the terrain and the meteorological data related to the location of the northern portal. I urge the environmental

impact statement process—noting that the Minister is in the Chamber at the moment—to take these concerns seriously, to go back to the drawing board and reassess the number, and to look at the modelling that has been done in order to quantify whether there will be an adverse impact on the community. If there is to be such an impact, we need to make appropriate adjustments to deal with that impact.

There are serious concerns about background air quality. The data used for the background air quality was taken from Lindfield and Prospect—two suburbs that are hardly analogous with the suburbs of Wahroonga, Hornsby and their surrounds. With the Minister in the Chamber, I urge the environmental impact statement process to consider using data from sites that are more analogous with those in the location of the northern portal. Another important matter is community involvement in monitoring. Monitoring stations are proposed to be established at James Park, Wahroonga. That is not close enough to where the impact will be at the northern portal. This needs to be addressed, and the community needs to have input into that process. The community has rightly highlighted serious concerns. Again I congratulate the work of Elizabeth Johnson and of Jonas Ball in particular for the scientific rigour that he has applied to the process. The environmental impact statement process needs to consider these matters and we need to come up with a solution and make a decision that is based on good science and medical advice.

Discussion concluded.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES FUNDING

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Regional Tourism) [12.07 p.m.]: I welcome this petition on New South Wales libraries, which shows the high regard that the people of New South Wales have for their public libraries. It is notable that 2014 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Library Act 1939. It is worth reflecting on the importance of the Act, which has been a great success in encouraging councils to open and operate free public libraries for their communities. In 1939, at the passing of the Act, only two free public libraries were operated by local councils in New South Wales—located at Broken Hill and the City of Sydney. The object of the Act was the "establishment, maintenance and management of libraries, library services and information services". It came at a critical time when access to books and newspapers was limited and levels of literacy were low.

Today, all New South Wales councils have adopted the Act, and public libraries are open to all New South Wales citizens. In my electorate there are two regional library services: the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Library and Monaro Regional Library. The Monaro Regional Library comprises the council areas of Cooma-Monaro, Snowy River and Bombala. Monaro runs one of the 21 New South Wales mobile library services, providing a custom-built truck that delivers collections and library services to remote towns and villages. Queanbeyan-Palerang operates branch libraries at Queanbeyan, Braidwood and Bungendore, all of which have received assistance from State grants over the past decade to improve buildings and collections. This year, State subsidies to these councils in support of libraries total more than \$280,000. Per capita figures range from \$2.76 for Queanbeyan to \$8.22 for the Bombala shire, showing the flexible range of needs-based payments that are provided under the current formula.

As has been noted in previous debates, this petition, which was instigated by the NSW Public Library Association, makes two demands: an increase in recurrent public library funding to councils; and the establishment of a Building Library Infrastructure Program. I am pleased to be a member of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government that has addressed both these issues. The first issue speaks to the operations of local councils across the State, which are losing more than \$1 million a day, and, of course, the situation is getting worse. In the next 20 years Sydney will grow by two million people and regional councils will face real financial challenges. We need smarter, modern local councils that can work with the State to deliver the housing, jobs and transport people need. My good friend the Minister for Local Government has worked hard to develop the \$1 billion Fit for the Future program for local councils across New South Wales.

The Government has committed a funding and support package that includes \$258 million to assist councils who decide to merge and make the changes needed to provide better services to our communities, a \$4 million innovation fund to assist small rural councils develop innovative ways of working, and access to experts to develop a plan and implement change. Fit for the Future will support local councils to become and remain sustainable; provide effective and efficient services, including libraries; and develop the scale and capacity to partner with the State to meet the future needs of their communities. The second request from the

NSW Public Library Association is the establishment of a Building Library Infrastructure Program. Again, I am proud to put on record that the \$27.5 million provided to councils this year is the highest-ever figure provided by a New South Wales Government in support of public libraries.

This includes the first year of the new Public Library Infrastructure Grants funding that will provide an additional \$15 million over four years to improve library buildings, public spaces and information technology [IT] infrastructure. I am advised that the State Library currently is reviewing applications for the first year of the program with very strong demand from councils. The Library Council of NSW will provide its recommendations for consideration to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for the Arts early in the New Year, with announcements expected in February. I thank the House for the opportunity to speak on this issue, and look forward to seeing the evolution of public libraries across the State as we change the landscape through local government and continue investment by State Government through our Public Library Infrastructure Grants Program.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.12 p.m.]: I thank the member for Monaro for tabling this petition for discussion. This is the fourth time that the public library funding petition has been tabled in this place and members have had an opportunity to contribute to the discussion. I was happy to table the first petition several months ago. Indeed, this fourth discussion is a timely reminder that in excess of 40,000 people have signed the petition. The petition has been running for a little over six months, so at the very least we can accept that at least 40,000 people have gone into any one of the 377 libraries across New South Wales in that period.

In my contribution to the first discussion I spoke about the wonder of books and about my experience in learning about Peter Pan, Atticus Finch or even *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Fortunately, during my childhood my mother took my brother and me to the library quite frequently. It always was a wonderful world with big, tall bookcases and shelves. My brother and I used to run amongst them and hide, much to the consternation of my mother. My brother and I would play tag and tips, and all we ever heard from mum was a plaintive request to be quiet.

My love of books continues today and I still spend a deal of time in my local library. I am fortunate to have four libraries in the Cessnock electorate across three different local government areas. I take my children to the local library and their love of books replicates mine—so many books, so many shelves and so many bookcases. However, libraries have changed. Now computers are used for a variety of tasks, such as making reservations for books, but people still sit at the front desk reading the daily newspapers and strangers still work together on jigsaw puzzles set out on the tables. The talking books attract me to the library and enable me to listen to stories during the hours I spend on the road—something to which I am sure my friend from Monaro will attest. Also, DVDs, videos and magazines are available in our public libraries, which continue to evolve and to change.

When the Library Act was introduced in 1939 funding was a 50/50 split between local councils and the State government. A pox on all Houses of Parliament and on political parties of all persuasions for allowing funding to disappear over a period of 75 years since the enactment of the Library Act. By the 1980s the State government funded only 23 per cent of public libraries and today funds only 7 per cent of the cost of providing its services. That works out to be about \$1.85 per person in New South Wales from the State government. That makes me think about the real numbers mentioned in this debate. That \$1.85 could be doubled to a total cost to the State of about \$10 million or \$12 million—that is all—especially considering we recently spent a couple of hundred million dollars redeveloping the Sydney Cricket Ground. It is a wonderful facility that people should visit to watch major sporting events, but, in reality, almost everyone in communities across this State at some stage visits a library but the same cannot be said for the Sydney Cricket Ground.

We are talking about spending potentially \$350 million on the ANZ Stadium—another sporting facility. I find our preoccupation with funding our sports and sporting facilities over institutions such as libraries a little strange and bizarre—and I say that with a background in physical education and a working history as a physical education teacher. I love sport and I love the opportunities sport brings to our communities, but I love libraries also and the opportunities they bring to our communities. When we talk about \$1.85 per capita funding across our State, the questions that must be asked are: Why is it limited to that amount? Is it enough?

As I said earlier, a pox on all those Houses of Parliament that have allowed library funding to shrink to such a small percentage of total costs. The four petitions that have been presented in this place from people across the State are a timely reminder to us all that, regardless of our political persuasion, we need to be serious about investing in our local libraries. Councillor Graham Smith from Cessnock City Council also sits on the

State Library executive and has been a driving force behind the petitions being tabled in Parliament and the work being done across the State. I thank Mr Smith for the thousands of hours he has committed to libraries across New South Wales.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [12.17 p.m.]: I speak in the discussion on the petition presented by the member for Monaro, John Barilaro. Public libraries are among the most heavily used community institutions in New South Wales. The latest figures published by the State Library of New South Wales indicate that 367 public libraries across New South Wales have maintained their impressive usage figures, with more than 35 million visits to library facilities in the 2012-13 financial year. One of the key reasons for this impressive growth is the diversity of services on offer and the flexibility that libraries show in meeting community need. The Albury Library Museum is perhaps the best example in New South Wales of a modern hybrid facility that combines library services and collections with a regional museum and cultural hub. Albury has brought a similar approach to its new Lavington Branch, which was partly funded by a New South Wales Government grant of \$200,000.

The Albury electorate includes also the local government areas of Greater Hume, Tumbarumba and Corowa. Public libraries have reinvented themselves in these areas too, notably with the opening of the new Henty Library earlier this month, which I attended, and the establishment of a new library at Howlong in 2013. Both these facilities received New South Wales Government grants to assist with building work: \$100,000 for Howlong and \$200,000 for the Henty Library refurbishment. This year subsidies paid in support of libraries across the Albury electorate total more than \$260,000, with per capita payments well above the base, ranging from \$2.66 per head for Albury to \$6.57 per head for Tumbarumba.

Previously announced investments by the State Government in the local library network have led to increased use of public libraries. Public access to the internet in local libraries has almost doubled in five years to more than five million hours used in 2012-13. The New South Wales Government's Revitalising Regional Libraries initiative, now in its fourth year, provided \$2 million to fast-track wi-fi hotspots in rural and regional public libraries. This impressive project has provided 114 country public libraries with wi-fi. So what is a public library today? Should it be just a place to borrow books, read newspapers, seek information, as it was when the Library Act came into force 75 years ago? What of the new services and facilities such as wi-fi and e-Resources, Baby Bounce, Tech Savvy Seniors and so on?

The public library continues to be the heart of the community as it has been since its inception. It is a place where people come together with a sense of community to create networks, learn skills, develop their careers, stimulate their children, educate their minds and replenish their souls. Libraries entice, delight and enrich communities. The New South Wales Government continues to focus on supporting the upgrade of library facilities and infrastructure. This year it has provided a record investment of \$27.5 million. Local councils will continue to have the responsibility of operating and managing local libraries. The petition is welcomed and reinforces the Government's understanding of the esteem that the people of New South Wales hold for their libraries.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [12.20 p.m.]: I support the petition requesting an increase in recurrent funding to councils for public libraries. As a councillor on Newcastle City Council, I can also speak for my colleague the member for Charlestown, who was Mayor of Lake Macquarie. We know that councils do not get enough money for libraries in this State. Figures from 1939 show that funding was split 50/50 between local councils and State government. Figures from the 1980s show it went down to 23 per cent and it now sits at a very low 7 per cent. Newcastle libraries are utilised by people from all socio-economic demographics, more particularly by the new refugees in the community who cannot access information technology at home. There is a need for investment in technology, which is expensive for councils, so the State Government must contribute. We have seen an enormous amount of cost shifting from both sides of government over the years. That must stop. Funding is needed for education and public libraries. I support the petition to increase recurrent public funding to councils for libraries.

Discussion concluded.

COAL DUST AND AIR QUALITY

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [12.22 p.m.]: I thank the people of the Hunter Valley for their engagement and initiative in trying to find

ways to improve local air quality. The Government, the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and the Parliament, through the current upper House inquiry into the Performance of the NSW Environment Protection Authority have been extensively involved in addressing the concerns of the people of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley in relation to coal trains and their impact on air quality. On Monday last week the upper House inquiry held hearings in Newcastle, at which representatives of the Hunter Community Environment Centre and other witnesses presented their views and responded to questions from committee members. The committee will present its findings in February and I am sure it will address this issue thoughtfully and thoroughly.

Coal from the Upper Hunter is transported to the Port of Newcastle by rail that passes through a number of urban areas. Members of the community are concerned about pollution from coal trains and have advocated for the covering of coal wagons. This Government has an extensive program in place to address coal dust as well as pollution created from the diesel fuel used by freight trains in the rail corridor. We will not take shortcuts that may prove to be costly and ineffective. We will continue to use a process of evidence-based gathering, analysis and option development, including cost-benefit analysis and consultation with all our stakeholders.

This Government continues to prioritise the improvement of air quality in the Hunter Valley. This is reflected in the funding allocated to air quality in general and the additional \$8 million in funding over four years for air quality projects, of which a significant proportion is going to Hunter Valley projects. A whole-of-government response to air quality issues in the Hunter Valley, particularly for reducing particle pollution from coalmining, is being driven by an Interagency Taskforce on Air Quality in the Hunter. At the same time, community input into air quality issues in the Hunter is expressed through the Newcastle Community Consultative Committee on the Environment, which brings together government, industry and the community. This committee provides a forum for local residents to identify important local environmental issues as well as helping the EPA and local industry to understand community concerns.

The Hunter Valley region is the most intensively monitored region in Australia with 14 air quality monitoring stations in the Upper Hunter and a further six in the Lower Hunter. It also has industry-required monitoring. This monitoring network is an important source of information on daily air quality for the community. Together with particle characterisation studies in the Upper Hunter and the Lower Hunter and the New South Wales air emissions inventory, the monitoring network is also an integral part of the Government's and the community's understanding of air quality in the Hunter Valley and its sources.

The Government is pursuing a number of further initiatives to deal with this issue. This includes an initiative targeting coalmine non-road diesel engine emissions from haulage trucks and heavy machinery, and the Dust Stop Pollution Reduction Program focuses on best practice for open-cut mines to reduce air emissions. Air quality in the Hunter Valley is an issue to which this Government is devoting a huge amount of expertise and resources. This Government will continue to work towards and to implement effective solutions to manage emissions from all trains and other types of diesel vehicles and equipment.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.26 p.m.]: It is a staple of fiction, set in the wretched coalmines of Charles Dickens' Britain, right alongside unwashed urchins and pit donkeys. The persistent, hacking cough of not tuberculosis, but what is now known as coal worker's pneumoconiosis [CWP], once commonly called the "black lung", which is caused by the inhalation of coal dust into the lungs. The lungs cannot cleanse themselves of this dust and the effects of this illness are similar to emphysema, which is the disease that killed my father. My grandfather was an asthmatic and I was an asthmatic as a child, so emphysema is a worry. In extreme cases CWP leads to necrosis of lung tissue. Six per cent of all occupational lung-related deaths in Australia are caused by CWP but recent industry measures have done much to address concerns about CWP. Though it takes years of daily exposure to develop CWP, coal dust is known to have deadly effects. Coal dust is a cause for health concerns. John Mackenzie from the Hunter Community Environment Centre said:

This is a serious public health issue. Uncovered coal trains expose the community to elevated levels of particle pollution and cause a range of cardiovascular and respiratory health problems.

Members should keep this in mind because more than 30,000 people live within 500 metres of the coal corridor between Rutherford and the Port of Newcastle and 25,000 children attend school within that space. Air quality matters. In the United States it is estimated that 50,000 deaths a year can be attributed to poor air quality. In light of that it should come as no surprise that in 2013 concerned Hunter residents monitored particle pollution from coal trains in the Hunter Valley. ABC's *Catalyst* program filmed the study with expert assistance to operate industry standard monitoring equipment. After analysing the data the study reached some rather troubling conclusions, which are published on the Hunter Community Environment Centre website. The report states:

A total of 73 coal trains were observed during the three days of monitoring. The corresponding pollution data was analysed to generate "signatures" which depict particle concentrations before and during the trains' pass by.

It further states:

While coal trains pass, particle pollution concentrations increase up to 13 times pre-coal train levels.

The 2013 Senate inquiry into the Health Impacts of Air Quality recommended that State governments instruct the coal industry to cover coal wagons and this petition echoes that call. The widespread support from the community is evidenced by the fact that enough people signed the petition to trigger today's debate and, in my view, I believe it is incumbent upon this Government to take steps to ensure that coal wagons are covered. Dr Andrew Jeremijenko, Occupational and Environmental Physician, Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, told the Senate inquiry:

Coal dust is obviously a risk; it has all the impurities that go along with it in the transport, as well. Coal may have arsenic, lead, heavy metals, [and] mercury. The science is clear that coaldust is a killer if you are exposed to it too much, so the simple thing is to remove that risk as much as possible."

The 2007 Australian of the Year, Dr Tim Flannery, was quoted in the *Newcastle Herald* as saying:

There are individuals and communities throughout the Hunter Valley who are suffering serious health impacts from the coal industry something as simple as covering coal wagons would be a great first step to protecting people.

A poll on the *Newcastle Herald* website indicates that more than three-quarters of respondents agreed that coal wagons should be covered. I am not launching a full-scale attack on the coal industry—I doubt that anybody in this Chamber is. Rather, I am calling upon the industry and the Government to take the necessary steps to protect the health of Hunter residents. Indeed, the coal industry has proven its willingness in the past to take steps to address industry-related health concerns. For example, in the CWP example I outlined the industry saw a health risk and made the effort to rectify it. I join the petitioners in calling on the Government to direct the coal industry to cover and wash all loaded and unloaded coal wagons. The Opposition is engaging in consultation with all relevant stakeholders to develop policy on this very important issue for the Hunter region and New South Wales.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.31 p.m.]: I make a short contribution to the discussion on this petition. The Government has been listening closely to community concerns about pollution from coal trains and how the community expects it to respond. I will inform the House about the actions the Government is taking to ensure that this issue is addressed proportionately, efficiently and effectively. Air quality in the Hunter Valley rail corridor can be impacted by coaldust, mainly larger particles, and by diesel fuel used by freight trains whether or not they are carrying coal. The pollution from the use of diesel fuel is known as PM2.5—namely, very fine particles that can be breathed deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream. Many constituents in my electorate are concerned about this because of the increasing number of coal trains that are now travelling along the Narrabri corridor, through the electorate of Tamworth, on to Gunnedah, Corindi and beyond.

The Environment Protection Authority [EPA] has prioritised PM2.5 because its health impacts can be considerably more serious than those of larger particles. When Professor Louise Ryan from the University of Technology undertook a re-analysis of the data from the monitoring of trains in the Newcastle area, she confirmed that there was no statistical difference between the level of particulate matter associated with loaded and unloaded coal trains and other freight trains. To address coaldust in the rail corridor, the EPA is examining operational practices along the coal chain from pit to port—loading, unloading and transporting—to identify opportunities to reduce air pollution. It has inspected coal train loading and unloading facilities in Queensland, including the use of veneering of the coal load and it is investigating the available options for rail system dust mitigation and their cost, including the washing of coal wagons. It is assessing rail system operator management practices and it has commissioned, in close cooperation with the community, the Lower Hunter Dust Deposition Study to provide additional information on the composition and sources of dust in the community.

To specifically address coaldust from mining, the EPA has reported that through the Dust Stop Pollution Reduction Program coalmines now meet an 80 per cent emissions control efficiency target for wheel-generated dust. It will stop or scale back operations in adverse weather conditions, it will be required to trial best-practice measures for overburden removal, and it is working to reduce wind erosion. Through the Dust Buster program, the EPA is undertaking a regular program of unannounced inspections of open-cut coalmine operations. It makes sense to take this time to investigate all possible sources. This Government is investing a lot into emissions from coal trains and other types of freight trains in order to find the most effective and efficient solution, or suite of solutions, available.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [12.34 p.m.]: In 2012 the *Newcastle Herald* began its Great Cover Up campaign in response to the scientific and anecdotal evidence about health issues and coaldust from coal wagons. The evidence showed that both laden and unladen coal wagons were distributing harmful emissions into the communities they passed—from the Upper Hunter to the Port of Newcastle. The tabling of this petition from coal-affected regions highlights that more than 10,300 people are concerned enough about or directly affected by these admissions that they want their plight considered in this House. A further 591 petitioners have contacted my electorate email to voice their concerns about the health implications for the thousands of residents along the rail corridor into the Port of Newcastle.

I worked in mine safety before coming to this place so I know how important the industry is to my community. I also know that the New South Wales mining industry has an admirable track record in responding to health and safety concerns. No miner wants the health of their community, or any other community, compromised. As an elected representative of communities such as Tighes Hill, Wickham, Islington, Carrington, Maryville, Mayfield and Stockton, which are affected by coaldust, it is my responsibility to bring this issue to the Government's attention. John McKenzie, spokesperson for the Hunter Community Environment Centre, said:

This Government has long had evidence that coal trains pollute our residential areas. With this petition, they now have a clear mandate to act.

Even if the Government is unable to approach this from a moral point of view, perhaps the pragmatic view of the long-term effects on our health system may sharpen its focus. Earlier this year the *Newcastle Herald* reported:

Several high profile public health studies have shown that particle pollution triggers increased incidence of respiratory and cardiovascular illness.

A 2013 Senate inquiry into health and air quality recommended that coal wagons be covered. Such a large group of people cannot be allowed to be subject to the health dangers of the particulate pollution that currently exists and which can so easily be mitigated by this relatively low-cost solution. Even the New South Wales Government best-practice guide recommended covering and washing coal wagons to limit pollution. It is incumbent on the Government to take the step of covering coal wagons, and the Opposition is consulting with all stakeholders to develop policy on this very important issue to the people of the Hunter and New South Wales.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [12.37 p.m.], by leave: I commence my contribution by acknowledging the *Newcastle Herald* Great Cover Up campaign, which has attracted the attention of many to this issue. In fact, the *Newcastle Herald* has a long history of campaigning for the community it serves, and the work of journalists such as Matthew Kelly and the *Newcastle Herald* editors should be recognised. I also thank the Hunter Community Environment Centre for its petition. The centre has voiced ongoing community concern about the hazard of coaldust to the communities that border the freight line in the Hunter, including the suburbs of Cardiff and Kotara south in my electorate.

I recently visited a couple who live in First Street, Cardiff south, about 800 metres from the rail line. They insisted that I see the levels of dust in their backyard before I left them. The gentleman wiped his hand over the outdoor furniture and then showed me his blackened palm. He told me he had cleaned the table only a few days earlier. That gentleman climbs onto his roof every couple of weeks to wash off the coaldust. He also collects roof water in barrels to water his garden and at the bottom of the barrels is black silt from coaldust—I have heard similar experiences repeated over and over again by residents along the freight line. This is also an issue of concern to parents. Some 60 schools, with approximately 23,000 Hunter schoolchildren—including my daughter—are situated less than 500 metres from the freight line. Indeed, there has been very real community concern about this issue for some time.

Both Government and industry have failed to respond adequately to this community concern. The local Hunter community must have faith that their health concerns are being treated seriously and that action will be taken. They certainly cannot rely on those opposite to protect their health. When a 2013 study found that coal train movements could increase dust levels by up to 13 times, this Government did nothing. Dust monitoring has been occurring along this freight line since 2011 but so far this Government is interested only in delaying action through more testing. I note the work of my colleague in the other place the Hon. Luke Foley, who has referred allegations of manipulated data from these studies to an upper House inquiry. We await those findings, which are due in February next year.

The Government should come clean on its plan to protect the health of people who live along the Hunter freight line affected by coaldust. The Hunter Valley has a long and proud association with coal, but no community can put the modest cost of action from industry above the health concerns of its families. My view is that we should be covering coal wagons to protect our residents—it is very much a Labor stance to protect people from the ill effects of industry. I am very pleased that the Labor Opposition is consulting with all stakeholders to develop policy on this very important issue for New South Wales and the Hunter.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.40 p.m.], by leave: I make a brief contribution to this discussion. It is interesting to note that we have also discussed today the stacks for the proposed road development in north-west Sydney and their pollution potential. The coaldust issue in the Hunter has been exacerbated over the past decade or two by the enormous growth in coal exports through the Port of Newcastle. Twenty years ago exports from the Port of Newcastle totalled around 30,000 to 40,000 tonnes per year. Exports are now at about 140,000 tonnes. So obviously coal movements on any given day have tripled, as has the amount of coal being carried by trains.

My views on this issue are very public. I am enormously concerned about the coaldust that falls from the bottom of coal trains. As they move along the tracks the wagons shake and the dust falls out the bottom. It is almost visible to the naked eye. A simple and relatively cheap solution might be to wash down the coal wagons by running them through some sort of wash or spray machine after they have been emptied at the port so that there is no residual coaldust on the return journey up the valley, where the wagons are loaded with more coal.

Studies have shown that the trains using those lines, whether coal trains or otherwise, are stirring up dust. The evidence suggests that the coaldust is embedded in the rail line. There is a challenge here for innovators—I have said this before publicly, and been mocked and ridiculed for it—to come up with some sort of train track vacuum cleaner to clean the tracks. That is where the coaldust sits—in the tracks. If a passenger train running along the tracks stirs up coaldust, if a wheat train running along the tracks stirs up coaldust and if an empty train running along the tracks also stirs up coaldust, then the evidence suggests that the coaldust is in the tracks. We probably need to do something about that. It is an area for innovators and inventors to focus on. Surely that is part of the solution going forward.

Coalmining is an incredibly important part of the culture, tradition and employment in the Hunter Valley. It is essential that we continue to produce coal. We need to be clear—and this was a bit confused in the contribution by the member for Tamworth—that there are two issues here and they need to be separated completely. The first is the coaldust along the coal train lines and the second is the general particulate dust that is created by the open-cut mines further up the valley. These are two completely separate issues. They are sometimes confused in the media but they need to be separated and kept separate because the solutions to those problems are completely separate.

Discussion concluded.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Bills

Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit, at the conclusion of community recognition statements, the member for Lake Macquarie to move a motion to discharge and withdraw the Newcastle Inner-City Rail Corridor Preservation Bill, and to speak to the motion for a period of up to 10 minutes.

CARAVAN REGISTRATION COSTS

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.45 p.m.]: I am proud today to represent the Tamworth and District Caravan and Leisure Club, led by Frank and Pam Wilson, and the 11,000 people who want to bring the attention of the House to the unfair difference in registration costs in New South Wales, including the motor vehicle tax on caravans, compared with our neighbouring States of Victoria and Queensland. Victorian citizens can register their caravans for 8 per cent of the cost for caravan owners in New South Wales. Queensland

citizens can register their caravans for 34 per cent of the cost of registering in New South Wales a caravan of the same weight. Therefore, the petitioners are asking the Legislative Assembly to reduce the cost of New South Wales registration and motor vehicle tax for caravans to bring it into line with that in neighbouring States.

These people have worked hard all their lives and are now enjoying their retirement. They would like to do so, but many are on a meagre budget and need their dollars to stretch further. We must do what we can to help them. I am pleased to respond to the petition regarding the differences in caravan registration costs between New South Wales and other States. This petition is timely because of the decisive steps the Government is taking to reduce caravan registration costs in this State. These are sensible organisations whose members are passionate about the great lifestyle that caravanning offers to tens of thousands of people. One of those organisations is the Tamworth and District Caravan and Leisure Club. There are differences in caravan registration and licence costs across jurisdictions. This is due largely to the different financial policies, funding arrangements, governance models, and legislative processes and make-ups that exist across all States and Territories.

Transport for NSW has already been tasked with providing the Minister for Roads and Freight with a range of policy options to improve the registration system for all light vehicles—including cars, motorcycles, caravans and light trailers. This review of vehicle registration policy involved extensive public consultation, including the release of a public discussion paper entitled "Vehicle Registration Initiatives" in June this year. It is interesting to note that a far-reaching and comprehensive review into the registration costs of light vehicles, including caravans, never occurred under Labor, which was in power for 16 years. It is yet another legacy that this Government inherited from Labor—just like the stamp duty for new and used truck trailers that we inherited. That was another Labor mess we successfully unravelled and solved.

The discussion paper considers the fairness of the current system of charges and acknowledges that caravans historically have paid similar rates to cars. These weight charges are currently calculated via stepped and irregular weight bands. So a car or caravan registration charge will depend, first, on how much it weighs and then on which weight band it falls into. The Government is considering changing the current weight bands to a precise cost-per-kilogram weight charge. This would ensure registration charges align exactly with the weight of the caravan. The Government considers that this would be an important improvement in the fairness of charges. A new charging proposal for caravans is a policy option coming out of this review, which would see registration charges reduced by between 5 per cent and 45 per cent compared with current private registration rates, depending on the weight of the caravan. For example, registration for an average-size caravan weighing around 1,600 kilograms would go from about \$390 annually to about \$225 annually—a 40 per cent reduction. The weight charge for a small camper-trailer would decrease by \$30 annually—a 28 per cent decrease.

At this stage, the new charging system is still a proposal. Public consultation on the proposal has now closed and all submissions are being considered carefully. The New South Wales Government has already undertaken work to improve registration costs for the caravanning community and is very serious about implementing a better and fairer registration system for all New South Wales motorists. The petition states that a caravan with a registration charge of \$738 in New South Wales could be registered in Victoria for \$49 and in Queensland for \$180. A New South Wales caravan with a \$700 weight tax charge is a very large, very heavy and rare caravan—less than 1 per cent of caravans are this heavy. The vast majority of caravans in New South Wales pay between one-third and two-thirds of this amount, with current charges typically ranging between about \$200 and \$400. Under New South Wales legislation, all vehicle weight tax revenue is directed to the roads program and is used to fund road safety initiatives, develop and maintain the road network, and improve traffic management.

In New South Wales every weight tax dollar goes directly towards improving roads, making them safer for the caravanning community and for everyone else who travels on our roads. Our jurisdictions have different laws and different funding policies. This petition is timely because the New South Wales Government review is already well advanced. The review considers the entire light vehicle registration system, which includes options to significantly reduce the cost of caravan registration in a way that is fair to all vehicle users and motorists. The Government will carefully consider all submissions in developing final policy options, including the views of the caravanning community. Again, I sincerely thank Frank and Pam Wilson and the members of the Tamworth and District Caravan and Leisure Club, and wish them continued safe journeys.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.50 p.m.]: It is disappointing that no Opposition members will speak on this petition that affects so many seniors across this great State. I am

Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads serving two great Ministers, the Hon. Duncan Gay and the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, and I come from a family that is heavily involved in the caravan industry. My brother-in-law operates ACR Caravan Repairs at Londonderry and my sister and brother-in-law have travelled the length and breadth of this great country in their caravan. Indeed, they spent so long away that I thought they were never going to come back. They were gone for two years. My mother-in-law and father-in-law have also travelled in their caravan. I understand the issues facing caravanners and the great opportunity that caravanning provides to seniors and others to travel affordably and explore all our great Australian tourism destinations.

I am pleased to respond to the petition relating to differences in caravan registration costs across Australia. The petition is well timed because of the review the New South Wales Government has undertaken to achieve some consistency in registration costs across the country. Some time ago on behalf of the Minister I had the privilege of announcing our proposal in line with the proposed amendments to registration costs to provide safer vehicles and vehicles that produce lower emissions. If I remember correctly, that is the first time registration costs have been reviewed since 1939. I will stand corrected but I think it has been that long. These reforms are overdue and it is about time the system was changed. A new charging proposal for caravans is a policy option out of the review that would reduce registration charges by between 5 per cent and 45 per cent compared with current private registration rates. At this stage the new charging system is still a proposal. Public consultation on the proposal has now closed and all submissions are being considered carefully.

The petition states that a New South Wales caravan with a registration charge of \$738 could be registered in Victoria for \$49, which is much cheaper, and in Queensland for \$180. A New South Wales caravan with a \$700 weight tax charge is a very large, heavy and rare caravan. Less than 1 per cent of caravans are that heavy. Under New South Wales legislation all vehicle weight tax revenue is directed to the roads program and used to fund road safety initiatives, develop and maintain the road network, and improve traffic management. In New South Wales, every weight tax dollar goes directly towards improving roads, making our roads safer for not only the caravanning community but everyone on our roads.

The review considers the entire light vehicle registration system, which includes options to significantly reduce the cost of caravan registration in a way that is fair to all vehicle users and motorists. It must be noted that a wideranging and comprehensive review into the costs of registration of light vehicles including caravans and other vehicles never occurred under the previous Labor Government. Labor members never undertook a review and, like I said, they have failed to turn up for this important debate.

The New South Wales Government will consider carefully all submissions, including the views of the caravanning community. I thank the Australian Caravan Club, the Caravan and Camping Industry Association of New South Wales and the NRMA for advocating on behalf of their many members. The efforts of those organisations to represent their members must be commended. Coming from a family that has embraced caravanning, I have been lobbied on the issue by many people from across the community. I spend an inordinate amount of time driving on New South Wales roads and I see the tsunami of people towing caravans. It is fabulous.

Mr Kevin Anderson: We love the grey nomads.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I am not going to discuss the age of caravanners; our roads are for use by everybody. However, seniors make up a large percentage of caravanners. It is great way to explore the country because some of our places of interest are unique. The ability to tow your home along, pull up wherever you want and stay as long as you like is an attractive option. On behalf of the community we are only too willing to review caravan registration costs and lower them to achieve some consistency with other States. It has been my great pleasure to speak on the petition.

Discussion concluded.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2014-15

Debate resumed from 6 November 2014.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [12.55 p.m.]: It is with delight that I speak in the take-note debate on the Budget Estimates and Related Papers for the financial year 2014-15 and talk about the Government's role

in rebuilding Gosford and New South Wales. This year's budget will make our community stronger. It will better enable us to provide local services, infrastructure and support that the people of Central Coast need. As a result of responsible policies the budget will be back in the black for 2015, which will ensure that there is more money for roads, rail, schools, hospitals and services in the years ahead. The Gosford community will benefit from a range of statewide initiatives. Our investments on the Central Coast include improving transport, investing in health, building our roads, expanding our police force, investing in education and supporting the vulnerable.

There has been record investment on the Central Coast in roads, health, education and services across the area. The Central Coast will share in a range of infrastructure initiatives and investments in front-line services to help the Government get on with the job of rebuilding New South Wales. Just under \$120 million has been allocated to Central Coast roads, with \$70 million to be spent on new capital works. Those projects are important for a range of reasons. The \$4.8 million upgrade to Frederick Street on the Central Coast Highway will ease a bottleneck that many people have long asked to be improved, which is caused by traffic moving through the beautiful electorate of Gosford and out to The Entrance or Terrigal on the coast.

The extensive redevelopment and upgrade of the Central Coast Highway at Brisbane Water Drive and Manns Road at West Gosford is another project that will improve traffic flows on the Central Coast. People spoke about upgrading that as a major project when I first entered local government in 1991. It has been on the books for that long. It was something that they were always "gonna" do but they could not get it done under the previous Government. Bandaids were implemented here and there, such as improvements to bits of the side of the road, but it never got the ultimate injection of funds it needed. In total, our project is worth \$170 million. The upgrade will make the intersection fit for the next century and is part of our substantial investment in road improvements on the Central Coast. Work has also been done on Woy Woy Road. There are only three ways into the peninsula for residents: along Brisbane Water Drive, through Empire Bay Drive over the Rip Bridge, or along Woy Woy Road. There is a railway crossing at the end of Woy Woy Road and it has come close to causing a number of fatalities.

Work had already commenced under previous Coalition budgets as part of the overall plan to deliver a pedestrian underpass. I look forward to early December, if not to the end of this month, when the pedestrian crossing will be opened. Gosford City Council has carriage of the project and is looking for assistance to effect improvements that are needed for the construction of a railway underpass. That is a major project and it has its own environmental issues. Ultimately it will remove the railway crossing at Rawson Road and will include an upgrade and improvements to Woy Woy Road. The road works will be extensive and I look forward to their completion.

Other road works that have been approved on the Central Coast include \$10 million that has been allocated to complete the construction of a new intersection on Sparks Road to support the Warnervale Town Centre, which is key to jobs and economic growth on the Central Coast, and \$10 million that has been allocated for continuation of construction of the upgrade of the intersection at Terrigal Drive and Charles Kay Drive. As I said in relation to the upgrade of the Frederick Street intersection, the pinch points in my electorate need to be upgraded and improved to facilitate the more efficient movement of traffic on the Central Coast and improve overall roads infrastructure.

Under the budget, \$5 million has been allocated to complete the planning and commencement of early works for the Pacific Highway and Wyong Road intersection at Tuggerah, and \$5 million has been allocated to complete planning and commence early works on Wyong Road at its intersection with Enterprise Drive. Funds also have been allocated to upgrade Wisemans Ferry Road in my electorate. For the information of members who have not travelled along Wisemans Ferry Road, I point out that it is eminently suitable for a weekend drive.

Mrs Roza Sage: It sure is. I have been along that road.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: It goes down to the beautiful Wisemans Ferry, and what a great spot that is for a weekend drive.

Mrs Roza Sage: It is great.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: Wisemans Ferry is a lovely spot and it has strong heritage significance for lovers of history. Unfortunately, for decades Wisemans Ferry Road had been neglected. I was very pleased in 2011 when a \$5 million commitment was made to commence improvement works in an effort to look after the

regional community on the mountain, which is integral to the success of agricultural production and to tourism. Wisemans Ferry Road is a renowned tourism route and it badly needed funding. To honour that \$5 million commitment, in this budget the last \$4.5 million allocation will be put towards the Wisemans Ferry upgrades. However, that will not be the last of improvements for that area. Additional funding will be required to make improvements, and I will work with the Minister to obtain further funding commitments towards effecting improvements to Wisemans Ferry Road.

I am excited about funding in the budget for health. Apart from an allocation of \$846,000 for the Central Coast Local Health District, which will provide six full-time equivalent positions for nurses, midwife educators, clinical nurses and midwife specialists, which is great, I am even more excited about \$2.7 million which has been allocated to begin construction of the Gosford Hospital redevelopment. Over four to five years, the plan is to allocate \$350 million for redevelopment of Gosford Hospital. The project has many priorities.

It has been years since the hospital received an injection of funds, apart from the hospital becoming the location of a cancer centre, with joint funding provided by the Federal Government and our Coalition State Government. The cancer clinic is of integral importance to my electorate. It was established to ensure that local residents would not have to travel to Newcastle or Sydney to receive treatment they very much need. The clinic is up and operational, but it represents the total extent of budget allocations for the provision of health facilities in my electorate. Since the early 1990s, Gosford Hospital has not received any major upgrades.

The announcement in the budget of an allocation of \$350 million for enhancements for Gosford Hospital will result in the construction of a new emergency department. Gosford Hospital's current emergency department ranks in the top 10 of the State for the number of patients treated, but it is under a lot of pressure. It is antiquated and outdated and badly needs to be a priority in the redevelopment project. Expansion of the intensive care unit and enhanced operating theatre capacity also will be part of the redevelopment of the hospital. Maternity facilities will be upgraded and provision made for significant additional inpatient beds for medical, acute and subacute services as part of the clinical and non-clinical support system.

Many years ago when the good Minister for Health was the Opposition spokesperson for Health, she would joke with me and constantly ask me, "What do we need at Gosford Hospital?" and I would reply, "More car parking." Along with all the other improvements needed for Gosford Hospital, much-needed car parking will be included in the redevelopment project. The budget also provides \$1.3 million for the establishment of a new satellite dialysis centre and a training unit at the Long Jetty Health Care Facility site. The new facility will have the capacity to accommodate 20 chairs, eight of which will be commissioned initially and further chairs commissioned in response to the expected increase in demand.

That is great news for Gosford Hospital and it comes on top of other announcements for improvements that have been made over the past four years. The previous Government removed rehabilitation services from Woy Woy, much to the public's dismay. Rehabilitation services were shifted out of Woy Woy, which is renowned for its aged population for whom rehabilitation services are paramount. As a result of a commitment made by the Coalition Government of New South Wales, the much-needed rehabilitation services were returned to Woy Woy—much to the delight of a community that knows it has a Government that is listening to them.

I turn now to discuss education. The budget commitments to education have been significant for my electorate of Gosford. Many times in this House I have mentioned the necessity for relocation of the Gosford primary school site that was agreed to by the previous Government. But the project became all too difficult and delays set in. However, the Coalition Government recognised the need to improve the growth of the city as well as the key waterfront area of Gosford, which is integral to ensuring the creation of employment opportunities and to stimulating the economy.

Against that background, this Government supported the previous decision to relocate Gosford primary school. I was very pleased to accompany Minister Stokes to the opening of the new Gosford Public School in Faunce Street. Funds have been allocated for demolition of the school at the old site. When I was at Gosford primary school, a bloke named John Anderson and I used to think about what we would like to do with our school. We got to knock down the old school, but we also got to build a new one. John Anderson currently is the principal of the new Gosford primary school, which replaces the old school. The project is worth a total of \$22 million and includes facilities for teaching staff, students and the community. The community is absolutely delighted with the new school.

This Government has increased funding for education. Just a little before the year 2000 when I was the mayor at Gosford City Council, Point Clare Public School came to my attention because the school had

15 demountable classrooms. The school is very popular; its enrolments have increased consistently over the years. Recently when I visited the school in the company of the good Minister for Education, I asked how long the demountable classrooms had been on the site. Staff who had been at the school for 20 years remembered the demountable classrooms were on site 20 years ago.

The school had been long neglected by the Labor Government, but the Coalition Government is very proud to allocate funding for the reconstruction, redevelopment and upgrade of Point Clare Public School, which will result in the demountable classrooms going. That could not happen under the previous Government, but it is happening under the Coalition Government. I am very proud of that. The school has been very much in need of improved facilities and deserves to be provided with facilities that young students need. Some of the other benefits from the budget include improved allocations for ageing and disability, such as \$800,000 that has been allocated for construction and upgrading at Booker Bay at Gosford, and \$800,000 that has been allocated for construction at Kincumber of aged and disability services and group homes. Half a million dollars has been allocated to Woy Woy for a new and relocated group home. Those facilities constitute benefits for our community on the Central Coast.

The budget includes funding allocations for minor but nonetheless very important projects, which include building works for improved disabled access and better amenity as well as security for those who visit our courts on the Central Coast. The project is worth almost half a million dollars. Other projects include young offenders and clean-up projects funded through the De-Tag graffiti prevention program at the Police and Community Youth Clubs at Umina and Bateau Bay. The budget also guarantees to deliver protection for the environment, which is so treasured by many people on the Central Coast. At least 12 projects worth \$320,000 will be funded under the Environmental Trust grants program.

The Office of Environment and Heritage will work with councils to deliver at least 40 projects worth \$4.1 million under the coastal, estuary and floodplain management programs. With more than \$1 million to be shared between the Hunter and Central Coast regions, this Government will double the amount of hazard reduction in the State's national parks as part of a four-year Enhanced Bushfire Management Program. These are great things for the Central Coast.

I spoke a little earlier about Wisemans Ferry Road, but \$160,000 has been allocated to fund conservation work along the World Heritage listed Old Great North Road, another outstanding project and another example of good use of the State's money to improve infrastructure on the Central Coast. I touch on another project that is very dear to my heart. It was good that this year it got an increase in funding. I acknowledge it did take a funding cut in the early days when we had to bring the budget back into line. I refer to the Community Building Partnership program. The return of that funding to its original level is great.

I take this opportunity to talk about Community Building Partnership funding for my area because it has been significant. The program has injected nearly \$1.5 million into my area alone, as well as other funding attracted to my electorate. Groups that it has been able to assist include NSW Maritime services, Rotary clubs and sporting groups including those involved in football, league, netball, lawn bowls and cricket. The Surf Life Saving Association also has been helped by the Community Building Partnership program, as have historical societies, Life Education, scouts, guides, youth groups, church groups, progress associations, community preschools and disability groups—working in conjunction with councils on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The Community Building Partnership program is one of the best programs I have seen in my time in local government and as a member of this place.

Mr Robert Furolo: A great Labor initiative.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: Yes, I acknowledge where the program started. Congratulations. You had to get one thing right. This is a great program, and one that I think every member of this House would at least want continued, if not expanded. It is important to have that grassroots connection with our communities. The Community Building Partnership program achieves that. This budget adds to the list of achievements of this Government on the Central Coast. I mentioned the essential \$350 million upgrade of Gosford Hospital. But very important is the rollout of the Opal card on Central Coast buses and trains. I think the Central Coast, at Gosford, Woy Woy, Tuggerah and Wyong, has four of the top 10 busiest train stations in New South Wales—that is, four of the top 10 busiest stations in the State are on the Central Coast. The rollout of the Opal card has been a benefit for our community.

There has been great investment in local roads, such as Manns Road and Brisbane Water Drive, upgrades of the Central Coast Highway from Wisemans Ferry, and work done on Woy Woy Road and Frederick

Street. Funding has supported our front-line services, with an additional 315 nurses for the Central Coast Hospital, and 61 new police officers allocated to the Brisbane Water and Tuggerah Lakes local area commands. Again, I commend those commands on the results mentioned in the latest figures of the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. These are outstanding local area commands, and they are to be congratulated. It was great to have the Minister for Police and Emergency Services visit just recently, meet the commanders and personally congratulate them on a job well done.

Other achievements have been the rezoning of the Gosford Public School site and the revitalisation of our central business district and waterfront precinct. Further achievements include the investment in Gosford Public School and in the work being done at Point Clare. More than \$1.5 million has been allocated there under the Community Building Partnership program. Also, there has been support for the interest rate subsidies for the \$28 million worth of projects through the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme conducted by Gosford City Council. These are all great initiatives of a Coalition Government. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I make special note of the Service NSW one-stop shop. Let me tell any member whose electorate does not yet have one of these centres that they are absolutely magnificent. The services now being provided in my community have to be seen to be believed. I make special note of the NorthConnex motorway, a key issue on the Central Coast. Even though it is located at the end of the F3, now the M1, it is key to my community. The 2014 budget has continued to deliver for the Central Coast by building on previous budgets. The achievements of this Coalition Government over the past 3½ years on the Central Coast have been very good.

I am delighted that this morning's *Daily Telegraph* and the *Central Coast Express Advocate* have come on board with our Forgotten Coast campaign. That adds impetus, drive and energy to what I have been trying to do within this Government. In the past, the news media gave too much air to those on the Central Coast who wanted to block progress. Notwithstanding the media's need to provide a balanced report, in the past the very vocal minority seemed to hold sway and the will of the majority was ignored by all. This has to stop. I am delighted with the positive and proactive approach now displayed by the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Central Coast Express Advocate*.

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

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

KYRA YEA, WINGHAM HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.15 p.m.]: I inform the House that Kyra Yea recently received the Wingham High School's School Community Service Award in recognition of her outstanding achievements at the school. She is a very personable and friendly person who genuinely cares for other students. Kyra has been a member of the Student Representative Council during her senior years. She hosted the school's Core Values Review Days for years 7 to 12 over a three-day period and was the organiser of the 2014 year 12 charity fundraising activities, the year 12 raffle, and school social events, as well as many other activities she organised throughout the year.

Kyra was proud to represent her school, make a speech and present a cheque to the Manning Base Hospital children's ward at the year 12 graduation. At school, Kyra exhibited a deep passion for modern history and loved reading, discussing, questioning and informing others about the issues studied in class. Kyra's teachers describe her as being an extremely well-organised and conscientious student who worked extremely hard to improve her skills and knowledge to achieve excellent results in all of her subjects.

TRIBUTE TO MR IAN HAMILTON AND MR LES HERBERT

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [1.16 p.m.]: I recognise two outstanding community citizens, Mr Ian Hamilton and Mr Les Herbert, who saved the life of local Keira resident Ken Joy. Mr Ian Hamilton is a life member of Thirroul Surf Life Saving Club; he has been a member of Thirroul Fire Brigade since 1975 and worked at West Cliff Colliery. Mr Les Herbert is a life member of Fairy Meadow Surf Club and a Wollongong City Council swimming pool supervisor.

In August 2014 Mr Ken Joy was celebrating his seventy-second birthday watching bowls at Nelson Bay Bowling Club when he suffered a serious heart attack. Mr Hamilton and Mr Herbert administered CPR and resuscitated Mr Joy. Mr Joy was later transported 60 kilometres to John Hunter Hospital and then to Newcastle Private Hospital where he underwent triple bypass surgery. Without the expertise and quick action of Mr Hamilton and Mr Herbert, Mr Joy would not have survived. This highlights the importance of learning CPR. I congratulate these two fine gentlemen.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.17 p.m.]: I congratulate Bambiniz Boutique on winning the Outstanding Children's Fashion Store award at the recent 2014 Sutherland Shire Business Awards. Bambiniz Boutique, which opened in December 2011, is a children's specialist store that stocks clothes, accessories and gifts. I congratulate Roberta Levy and her team at Progressive Heads, Caringbah, on winning the Outstanding Hairdresser award at the recent 2014 Sutherland Shire Small Business Awards. Roberta and her team have previous successes, including winning the Sutherland Shire Business Award in 1999 and being a finalist many times in the Sutherland Shire Business Awards over the years.

I congratulate B Smart Bova Living on winning the Outstanding Specialised Retail Business Award at the 2014 Sutherland Shire Business Awards. B Smart Bova Living has been providing mobility solutions to the Sutherland shire community for more than 10 years, helping the less mobile get around unimpeded in their daily lives. I congratulate Tanya and her team at Raw Sugar on winning the best cafe award at the 2014 Sutherland Shire Business Awards. Raw Sugar has been operating in Grays Point for the past three years. Tanya was born in southern Vietnam. Tanya and chef Binh have used their South Vietnamese heritage to create a Vietnamese-inspired weekend lunch menu.

SURFEST 2014

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) [1.18 p.m.]: I commend Surfest on celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. It is the region's premier annual international sporting event, presenting 12 events over 16 days of competition, with more than 700 competitors from 22 countries visiting the region. Surfest is presenting for the first time events in Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens and Newcastle council areas. Surfest will webcast the Burton Automotive Pro and Burton Automotive Women's Classic. It attracts an international audience. The Hunter Business Boardriders Pro Junior will again attract the best international junior surfers. I thank all of the 28 sponsors that support Surfest and make it the success that it is, especially the Burton family. This event is more than a great surf competition—it is a celebration of Newcastle and its people and their special relationship with the Australian beach culture.

PORT MACQUARIE MASTERS SWIM CLUB CHAMPIONS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.19 p.m.]: I congratulate three swimmers from the mid North Coast who recently competed in the Pan Pacs Masters Games held during the first week of November this year on the Gold Coast. The Pan Pacific Masters Games is a sporting event that invites a number of national and international contenders to compete. It is regarded as one of the renowned sporting festivals of the region. No qualification standards need to be met to enter the Pan Pacs; however, the event requires a minimum age for participation.

Wendy McMurtrie, 47, of Port Macquarie competed in eight events, putting in a wonderful performance to win bronze in the 100 metre butterfly. Kempsey resident Margaret Jopling, in her late seventies, competed in eight individual events winning two, coming second in one and third in all the others. Last but not least, 85-year-old Bill Patton swam in five events, winning two and coming second in the remaining three. His 100 metre backstroke win is of special mention as he finished nearly eight seconds clear of his nearest rival. Congratulations again to Wendy McMurtrie, Margaret Jopling and Bill Patton, each of whom is an inspiring member of the Port Macquarie Masters Swim Club.

CHESTER HILL BAPTIST CHURCH EIGHTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.20 p.m.]: I am delighted to inform the House that last Sunday the Chester Hill Baptist Church celebrated its eighty-fifth anniversary in front of a large enthusiastic

congregation. As a community, we are very blessed that for the last 85 years Chester Hill Baptist Church has united our community through prayer, faith and hope. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate Pastor Josh, Pastor Lou, Reverend Jonathan and the entire church congregation on their many achievements. I am confident that the church will continue to grow from strength to strength well into the future.

BAULKHAM HILLS CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.21 p.m.]: Each year I receive hundreds of entries into our Baulkham Hills Christmas card competition from children right across my electorate. The standard of effort and artwork is ever increasing, and it brings great joy to me to see so many children embracing and expressing the wonderment of the Christmas season. This year was no exception, with more than 400 entries again piling up in my office and proudly put on display. There could be only one winner, who was seven-year-old Siddharth Shasidharan of Matthew Pearce Public School.

Siddharth has won a \$100 Toys R Us voucher for his depiction of "A Soldier's Christmas", which will be placed on the front of my official parliamentary card. The card was a powerful depiction of the shadows of soldiers between two Christmas trees with the use of the poppy emblem as the ultimate sacrifice paid by so many. I add that one entry this year had the Red Baron shooting down Santa Claus, but it was disqualified for bad taste. All entries will be displayed in my office throughout December. I say again how proud and moved I am by the young people in my electorate embracing the Christmas spirit.

CALLAGHAN COLLEGE WALLSEND SOLAR CAR EVENT

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [1.22 p.m.]: Callaghan College Wallsend students deserve acknowledgement for recently participating in the University of New South Wales Solar Car Event. The students, with the support of their teachers, had built their cars over two days at school. With an impressive total of 21 cars entering the event, including five from Callaghan, one of Wallsend's cars was successful in finishing third in an event. Congratulations to Tara Campbell, Mahkaila Sanson and Linh Tran on their successful car and to all Callaghan College students who participated—a great effort.

ANTHONY KELLY, GUINNESS WORLD RECORD

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [1.22 p.m.]: I commend Armidale man Anthony Kelly, who last week broke the Guinness world record for the most speargun arrows caught underwater in one minute. Kelly broke the record on his first attempt catching eight; he caught another eight in his second attempt before finding his groove and catching 10 in his third and final attempt to smash the world record by three arrows. Mr Kelly completed this task in the pool at the University of New England sports centre.

Earlier in the week he organised another world record-breaking effort at Armidale High School with 250 students jumping up and down to AC/DC music in an attempt to set the world record for the most people head banging at once. The school tried to set another record earlier in the week for the most things thrown at once, but fell 19 short of the world record of 250, which was set last year. Well done to Anthony Kelly, a passionate and determined man. I am sure he will break many more records in the years ahead.

TYLER BOREHAM, BERT EVANS SCHOLARSHIP

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [1.23 p.m.]: I congratulate Tyler Boreham from my electorate on being awarded the Bert Evans Scholarship for his carpentry trade, valued at \$5,000 per year for three years. Bert Evans scholarships are available only to apprentices who work in a skill shortage category in New South Wales, are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander apprentice, or have a disability, or are female working in a non-traditional trade.

Tyler is in the second year of his carpentry apprenticeship and at just 16 years of age lives alone for the majority of time as he rents a house with a friend who works interstate. This is indeed notable for a young person, but especially so because Tyler has autism. He shops, cooks and cleans for himself, and has not missed a day of work in the 18 months he has been employed. Tyler is applying for an early driver licence because he has purchased a car to travel to work and to enable greater independence. His employer says that Tyler has more tools than most tradesmen, having used all of his Tools for Trade allowances and his savings to purchase tools. Congratulations, Tyler, you are an inspiration.

TRIBUTE TO LYNNE JACKSON**ROBERT AND ROMA URCH SIXTY-FIFTH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [1.24 p.m.]: Today I join pupils, parents and staff in saying farewell to the popular and well-respected Lynne Jackson, who is retiring this year. Lynne is a primary school teacher at St Finbar's, Sans Souci, who has dedicated 35 years of her life to educating children. Recently, she commented on how special it felt to meet the children of parents she has taught—her students span three generations. This devoted teacher still keeps in touch with her former students currently doing their Higher School Certificate [HSC] and gives them confidence. She will be greatly missed by her students and all who have had the pleasure to know her. I wish her all the best for a long and happy retirement.

I extend my warm congratulations to Mr Robert and Mrs Roma Urch, residents of Sans Souci, on the special occasion of their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. Robert and Roma celebrated this happy event on 22 October 2014. I wish them good health and every happiness for the future.

INDO-CHINESE ELDERLY HOSTEL

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.25 p.m.]: For 10 years now I have been a strong supporter of the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel in Bonnyrigg. This year the hostel celebrates 10 years of providing a home and care to older people in my community from South-East Asian and Chinese backgrounds. On 12 July I was pleased to represent the Leader of the Opposition at the opening of the major expansion to the hostel, which will allow it to meet the growing demand for aged care as our population ages. The hostel is now able to accommodate up to 88 high- and low-care residents. The expansion is the result of the hard work and efforts of many people, whether through donations carrying out administrative work, managing the project or organising fundraising events. I thank and congratulate the Indo-Chinese Elderly Hostel Board of Trustees on its leadership on this expansion, especially the chairman, Mr Henry Tang.

LIVERPOOL SERVICE NSW CENTRE

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [1.26 p.m.]: This morning I called in on our Service NSW centre in Orange Grove and met again with its manager, Arun Kumar, to congratulate him and his staff on seeing 9,000 people, up from the expected 5,000 to 6,000. The centre is undertaking a huge amount of work. I am happy to report that satisfaction ratings remain extraordinarily high, which is testament to how hard the staff work. The Liverpool Service NSW Centre is the busiest service centre in New South Wales, seeing more people than the Wynyard Service NSW centre. This weekend Arun is hosting an event to thank his staff. I hope to be able to attend because it will be a wonderful night and a way to say thank you to all the hardworking people at the centre.

TRIBUTE TO MAREE HITCHCOX

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [1.27 p.m.]: I congratulate Mrs Maree Hitchcox who is retiring as a teacher after 40 years with the Department of Education, 25 of which were at Tempe Public School. Mrs Hitchcox is highly regarded not only by the teachers, students and parents at Tempe Public School but also by the wider community thanks to her active involvement in the school. Mrs Hitchcox started as a librarian at Tempe Public School and then moved over to teaching. During that time she has been instrumental in many school programs and initiatives, including Indigenous reconciliation ceremonies. Mrs Hitchcox also was heavily involved in the school choir and plays clarinet in a band.

Mrs Hitchcox started a vegetable garden in the school and teaches the students about the vegetables that they grow together. Mrs Hitchcox then teaches the students how to cook. I am told that wonderful aromas are always wafting through the school from the cooking. The holistic educational experience Mrs Hitchcox provides her students makes her such a wonderful asset to the school. Mrs Hitchcox certainly will be missed at Tempe Public School, but I congratulate her on her service to the children of New South Wales, and after 40 years I wish her well for her future.

MADONNA DI LORETO FESTA

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.28 p.m.]: On Sunday 9 November, the twenty-second Annual Festa of the Madonna di Loreto was held at Fairfield Showground. The day started with a traditional mass followed by

a procession around the grounds and a spectacular fireworks finale. There were many activities throughout the day, including kids' shows, competitions and music from local artists. I congratulate the President of the Madonna di Loreto committee, Mr Tony Mittiga, and the organising committee on hosting another very successful festival.

PETS IN THE PARK

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [1.28 p.m.]: I was proud to join my husband, Victor, and Sydney city councillor Jenny Green to officially open the Love is the Colour Exhibition, which is a fundraising event for Pets in the Park, an inspiring charity that builds relationships with and improves the lives of homeless people and their companion animals. Pets in the Park provides practical advice, veterinary treatment, de-sexing, vaccinations, flea treatment, worming and microchipping, which can cost hundreds of dollars and be difficult to arrange for people living on the streets. I visited the organisation's monthly clinics in Darlinghurst with my dog, Max, and I have seen the care and compassionate work it does.

I have also witnessed the love and enrichment that pets give their owners who are homeless, and I commend this thoughtful and creative response. The photographs in the exhibition powerfully show the importance of these much-loved pets. The exhibition and associated calendar will raise money to continue the work of Pets of the Park. In particular I acknowledge the founders of Pets in the Park, Dr Mark Westman, Vicky Causley, Leah Skelsey and Linda Worland. I commend all involved.

KIAMA CRICKET CLUB: UNITED WE STAND

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [1.29 p.m.]: On Saturday 8 November Kiama Cricket Club conducted a special ceremony before its match against Lake Illawarra as part of an ongoing commitment to the United We Stand Spirit of Anzac initiative. The club honoured its three members who were killed in World War I. The club president, Nathan Barr, highlighted the cricket and wartime history of three members of Kiama Cricket Club who played between 1907 and 1913 and then enlisted to serve. Their cricket statistics were read, with a bell sounding between each. Then we had the ode followed by Warwick Sporne playing the Last Post, a minute's silence and the Rouse. It was a fitting ceremony and matched the occasion. I acknowledge the umpire, Lachlan Walker; bugler Warwick Sporne; rival captains Jaya Hartgerink, Kiama, and Brandon White, Lake Illawarra; and umpire John Oliver for their contributions. I thank my friend and Secretary of the Kiama Cavaliers Cricket Club, Brendon Barr, for his ongoing commitment and dedication.

MOUNT DRUITT SWIMMING POOL

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.30 p.m.]: I ask the Parliament to note that after a sustained campaign by the Mount Druitt community the Mount Druitt swimming pool will reopen on Saturday 29 November 2014. It is no coincidence that this event has followed shortly after the election of a new mayor of Blacktown, Councillor Stephen Bali. I congratulate the local community on fighting against the closure of the Mount Druitt pool. In particular I mention Ms Kerri Bradbury of the Save the Mount Druitt Pool Action Group, the Erskine Park High School parents and citizens, Anthony Portelli of the Rooty Hill RSL swimming club and many other community members. I also acknowledge Councillor Edmond Atalla for his fight within the council and the Labor team. The Mount Druitt community welcomes this decision. I call on the community to support this pool and keep it open forever.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution General Business Order of the Day (for Bills) No. 3 [Newcastle Inner-City Rail Corridor Preservation Bill 2014] proceeded with.

NEWCASTLE INNER-CITY RAIL CORRIDOR PRESERVATION BILL 2014

Discharge of Order of the Day and Withdrawal of Bill

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [1.32 p.m.]: I move:

That General Business Order of the Day (for Bills) No. 3 (Newcastle Inner-City Rail Corridor Preservation Bill 2014) be withdrawn.

I am disappointed that it has come to this. I believe that both sides of the Parliament should have supported this bill, but both, for different reasons, have made it clear that they will not support it. It was, in my view and in the

view of many others, a sensible bill. But if nothing else it has shone further light on the issue and perhaps shown the reluctance of either of the major parties to support even well-considered private members' bills in this House and that is a shame. I could have brought on the bill for debate, but with the outcome inevitable I am not inclined to give the parties a platform to roll out the same tired rhetoric.

This bill had clear support across the community, from the Hunter chapter of the Property Council on the right of the political spectrum to community-based organisations notionally on the opposite side of the ideological divide, such as Save our Rail and the Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement. It was also supported by two prominent Independent candidates in the recent Newcastle by-election, Karen Howard and Jacqueline Haines, columnists and many letter writers and online commentators who voiced their opinions through the local media. For example, in an article in the *Newcastle Herald* of 5 November Michelle Harris wrote this about the bill:

I'm yet to hear of a more sensible measure to placate legitimate concerns about the truncation of Newcastle's rail line that have emerged in the wake of the recent corruption inquiry into political donations—and to silence the conspiracy theorists who were there all along.

I know there are members on both sides of this House who believed it made good sense, because they have told me so. The positive response to this bill clearly demonstrates the community's desire to see the corridor retained as a public asset for the use and enjoyment of the people of our region. Whether it remains a public transport corridor or becomes a feature open-space precinct to complement the inner-city revitalisation, people do not want to see high-density development on that space. In negotiations on the bill, the Government indicated to me that development of the corridor is not its intention, but it stops short of committing its support to this legislation.

I fear that the dark hand of UrbanGrowth NSW is at work here. UrbanGrowth is an organisation of unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats that operates in the shadows but seems to have an inordinate amount of influence on government policy. UrbanGrowth is the former Landcom on steroids and deserves to be closely watched. On 6 November the *Newcastle Herald* reported that UrbanGrowth was urging the Government to permit development on at least part of the Newcastle rail corridor. UrbanGrowth is the lead agency on the Newcastle urban renewal projects, but also has a substantial stake as a two-thirds shareholder, with the GPT group as its partner, in the sensitive East End redevelopment site. This arrangement, whereby the overseer also has a substantial commercial interest in the project, is a blatant conflict of interest that has made the community wary and suspicious of the motives behind the renewal process.

Since the resignation from UrbanGrowth earlier this year of the Newcastle-based Development Director of the Newcastle revitalisation project, the decisions seem to have been made by faceless public servants based in Sydney. The community is rightly asking who these people are who are determining their city's future. Do they have an understanding of the history and sensitivities of this debate? Or do they just see the rail corridor as a block of prime land waiting for a For Sale sign to be stuck on it? Or is it an income stream to balance the books for what the Government is spending to renew Newcastle? This unease about the activities of UrbanGrowth and its commercial imperative is not confined to Newcastle either. As we saw in this morning's *Sydney Morning Herald* the people of Leichhardt are similarly dismayed by the organisation's apparent intention to plough ahead with a plan to put 16,000 new homes in the Bays Precinct, regardless of the outcome of community consultation.

I am disappointed that the Government has not seized the opportunity provided by this bill to articulate clearly its plans for the future of this land and reinstate some community confidence in the planning process. I acknowledge that the Premier has met with me on a number of occasions to discuss this bill. While he has indicated a willingness to provide more accountability in the planning process for this vital piece of land, there has not yet been a firm proposal on how the Government will do this, and I am not prepared to make any amendments that dilute the provisions of this bill and perhaps see my bill used to enable inappropriate development in the future. I am disappointed, too, and perplexed by Labor's position on this bill. Labor members refused to support it, even with only scant discussion of it, because of their policy of opposing truncation of the rail line. Yet this bill supports that position. It expressly allows for the continuation of public transport along that corridor, which is Labor's stated policy.

I pointed out that that is a fantasy and something akin to *Alice in Wonderland*. They are all at the Mad Hatter's tea party but most of us know that Alice woke up from that fantasy in the end. Unfortunately, the New South Wales parliamentary Labor Party has not yet woken up. The reality is that the Government has set a date for the termination of heavy rail services in the inner city and that deadline is just over five weeks away.

The clock is ticking. Hamilton station is already swarming with workers in high-visibility vests preparing the temporary terminus at Hamilton station. Labor members can deny all they want, but the truth is that this truncation—the Government would like this pointed out—process was begun by the former Government and the then Minister for the Hunter, Michael Costa and then reinvigorated by the then member for Newcastle, Jodi McKay. While I have a lot of regard for Jodi McKay, this is one area where I think she failed the local community. Labor had ample opportunity to address the decline of the Newcastle CBD on its terms. They were in government for 16 years but they failed to do so.

It is sad that Labor now has a plan that has been rightly shown to be a foolish plan by the Premier to bring back more level crossings to deal with the issue, to install six level crossings when we are trying to get rid of one major level crossing that is such a problem. How can installing more level crossings solve the problem? But the Government will throw in a convention centre and a pedestrian overbridge. The only thing we are missing are the steak knives, but I guess the electorate can look forward to them. I do not believe there is as much support for the truncation of the line and other aspects of the renewal process as the Government attests. I think the Newcastle community has been wearied and worn down by endless political posturing, debate and reports, and many people simply gave up in the end. They just wanted the matter settled one way or another. That is not the case with organisations such as Save our Rail. I pay respect to that organisation's consistency in this matter.

In my view this is bad planning. It is not the sort of planning I would have expected in contemporary times from a government that is relying on urban and transport planners—it just does not make sense. It is a huge waste of assets that come from the lease of the Newcastle Port that could be much better deployed into the region, and not just into the Newcastle central business district. This is bad planning and if the corridor is lost, it will be a theft of opportunity for future generations. In closing, I refer to what Michelle Harris said in her opinion piece in the *Newcastle Herald* on 5 November:

In practical terms, if the Government doesn't back this bill then it won't make it through the lower house.

That is the case and that is why I am discharging the bill today. I could not get the support of the Government or, bizarrely, the Opposition. I do know that I would have support from the crossbench and I appreciate the member for Sydney being in the Chamber. Michelle Harris continued:

If it [the Government] won't do so, then it needs to hurry up and explain what will happen to the corridor land, before it closes the heavy rail in less than two months and before we all start listening to the conspiracies.

I think Michelle Harris has really nailed the issue in her opinion piece attached to that article. I wish the Government could have seen its way clear to support this inherently sensible bill that is full of practical measures that coalesced the rhetoric from the Government, the Premier, the Minister for Planning, the Minister for Transport, the former member for Newcastle, Tim Owen, and other members over some time. It was not a controversial bill and it would have provided for many things that would have made a great city as the city continues to progress over the next 50 or 100 years. The ball is now in the Government's court and squarely in the Premier's court. I call on the Premier to ensure the best outcome for Newcastle.

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

Order of the day discharged.

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

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the Speaker's gallery five representatives from Landcare NSW, including Chairman Mr Rob Dulhunty, Mr Keith Hyde, Professor Ted Wolfe, Professor Allan Curtis and Mr David Walker, who are guests of the Minister for Primary Industries and member for Burrinjuck; Dr Dave Passi and the Indian Seniors Group from the Hornsby electorate, who are guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for Communities and member for Hornsby; Mr Adnan Salloum and Mrs Haifa Salloum from Victoria, Canada, who are guests of the member for East Hills; Ms Sandra Kerr, President of the Wyong Chamber of Commerce and Chair of Central Coast Tourism, who is a guest of the member for Gosford. I also welcome everybody I have not acknowledged.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**Ministerial Statement**

Mr TROY GRANT: I inform members of the House that I will answer questions today in the absence of the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and the Minister for Western Sydney. The Minister for Planning, and the Minister for Women will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, the Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

ELECTRICITY PRIVITISATION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Treasurer. I refer to the \$20 billion he was promising from privatisation of the electricity network. Will this entire amount be available in Restart NSW, or will there be further deductions to pay for transaction costs, stamp duty, superannuation liabilities and the repayment of debt?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Let us be clear, the Government has a real \$20 billion infrastructure plan for New South Wales. But I am quite intrigued by the member for Blacktown's obsession with the State Infrastructure Strategy and the way in which this Government will fund that \$20 billion plan. The bottom line is that those opposite do not understand how infrastructure funds work because when they were in office they had no infrastructure fund. If one looks at the litany of failures of those opposite in building necessary infrastructure across New South Wales when they were in office it is apparent that they did not know how to manage infrastructure. I have one observation to make about the member for Blacktown. If Bob Carr had privatised the State's electricity network in 1997 how much contribution would that transaction have made in growing this State over the past 20 years? At the same time those opposite, with their dirty union-based scare campaigns—

Ms Linda Burney: Dirty?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: They were dirty because those opposite were behaving like xenophobic baboons when they were attacking foreign investment interests in relation to these assets. The Government has taken—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has taken a point of order. The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: —a very clear direction.

Ms Linda Burney: Sit down you goose.

The SPEAKER: Order! The comment by the member for Canterbury was both unwarranted and unparliamentary. The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr John Robertson: My point of order relates to Standing Order No. 129, relevance. The question specifically asked if the entire amount was going to Restart NSW or was it going to be used to cover other things.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has answered the question. If the member had been listening he would have heard him.

Mr John Robertson: He has not answered the question.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The actions of the Leader of the Opposition show that he has not even bothered to read the Premier's press release when the announcement was made back in June. It was clearly spelt out that the Government would be undertaking a scoping study review of the State Infrastructure Strategy and we would be looking at how we would manage the proceeds through a fund to invest back into productive infrastructure across New South Wales. I do not understand what is complicated about this. The Government is taking the capital from one asset and investing it in more productive assets for the people of this State.

It is quite clear when Deloitte says that we are going to see some \$30 billion in additional economic activity in New South Wales as a result of this \$20 billion transaction. In particular our plan relates to \$6 billion for the regions and additional money for vital transport infrastructure to get this city moving. I do not know what those opposite have as strategies for decongesting Sydney but where is the infrastructure plan? The Parliamentary Budget Office is playing Angry Birds whilst waiting for the Opposition's policies. How are they going to fund them? What are they going to build? The Opposition has been opposed to every saving measure this Government has implemented since coming to office. Those opposite are going to continue on their merry way at the beck and call of the Electrical Trades Union [ETU] to fight this so that the unions continue to dominate the inefficient power businesses in this State. Where is the plan? What are those opposite going to build? Zero, nothing, nada.

Those opposite have no means by which to fund a plan. What I do know about the member for Blacktown is that he has been telling the media that he was going to abolish the Restart fund. Is he going to buy back the ports? Is he going to buy back the desalination plant? What is he going to do with the proceeds? Or is he going to shove the proceeds back into public sector wages and continue to blow expenses? Those are the questions. Where is the infrastructure plan and where are the means to fund it? Where are the costings of those opposite to go to the Parliamentary Budget Office? The bottom line is that the member for Blacktown is clueless. He is a baboon and an embarrassment to the Labor Party. What is he going to do?

DARLING HARBOUR AND BAYS PRECINCT REDEVELOPMENT

Mr GLENN BROOKES: I address my question to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government running the economy and transforming Darling Harbour and the Bays Precinct?

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the member for East Hills for his question. He, like all members on this side of the House, is committed to growing the New South Wales economy and delivering on his election promises. Like the member for East Hills, I am proud to be part of a government that is truly transforming New South Wales. One of the biggest transformations that has been undertaken—a wonderful legacy of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government in its infancy, with the support of the former Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, Mr George Souris—is the redevelopment of the western harbour super precinct around Darling Harbour.

From Central railway to Barangaroo, investment by the public and private sector of more than \$10 billion is underway. That precinct is emerging as the home of Sydney's growing financial and professional services, human services, tourism, entertainment and creative industries. The industries that will base themselves in this super precinct will ensure thousands of jobs. Indeed, this will be a key way in which the Government will drive economic growth in this State for decades to come.

The centrepiece of this transformation is the International Convention Centre, Sydney. It is a great legacy of the former Deputy Premier, the Hon. Andrew Stoner. I acknowledge his contribution to this wonderful project. This project is one we committed to in opposition to get the economy moving and we are delivering on our commitment. This \$1 billion project is the very first public-private partnership in New South Wales since 2008. It will generate \$5 billion in economic benefits for New South Wales over the next quarter of a century. The work is providing 3,700 jobs during the construction phase, with a further 4,000 jobs upon completion.

The great news is that we have already secured, thanks to the great work of the former Deputy Premier, 18 international events for the new facility. These are worth more than \$145 million to the New South Wales economy. This is an example of how this Government is committed to not only growing the economy but also delivering on our promises. This is a very clear example of how this Government is committed to doing what we promised the electorate we would do. Further along the western harbour we have the Bays Precinct, which stretches from the Anzac Bridge around the shoreline right around to Glebe Island. As the economy grows so does the footprint of Sydney's central business district. The Minister for Planning has announced the Bays Precinct Urban Renewal Program. This has enormous potential to transform some 5.5 kilometres of waterfront land. The Bays Precinct will deliver new housing, recreational, retail and tourism hubs.

I know the member for Balmain will be excited to hear that this project will support the wonderful inner west. We are sure that this project will change Sydney and New South Wales for the better. This really is Sydney's biggest urban overhaul since the Olympics in the year 2000. Today marks the start of a two-day summit that will begin to develop the vision for how we will arrive at and deliver on the Bays Precinct Urban Renewal Program. The summit will draw on the expertise of global, national and local urban renewal specialists to scope the early vision for the precinct. There are no preconceived outcomes here. The Government is going to do what it has done best over its term—it is going to consult, it is going to listen and it is going to be advised by the experts. They have been given a blank canvas on which to work.

Let me say that again—this Government is giving the experts a blank canvas, with the support of government, to shape the Bays Precinct into a world-class part of the harbour. We can contrast the efforts of this Government which I have outlined, and this project is synonymous with the way it has done things in government, with the actions of those opposite during their 16 years in government. First of all, and fundamentally, they failed to grow the economy to make these projects possible. They absolutely failed to support the events industry. They lost billions of dollars through their inaction and laziness.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr TROY GRANT: Labor failed to secure major sporting events. Business events were lost and cultural events went elsewhere in Australia. They are now on their way back. Victoria and Queensland were the greatest beneficiaries of the New South Wales Labor Government. From 1997 to 2007 Sydney dropped from number one, as we have heard the Premier articulate throughout the past week and over the past month, to number eight amongst the States of Australia. Those days are over. We are committed to continuing to transform New South Wales, and this project is key to that success.

ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. Last year the Mount Piper and Wallerawang power stations, owned by Delta West, were privatised for \$160 million. Why is it that not a single dollar of these proceeds has been put into Restart NSW, as is required under the generator transfer legislation?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. This is not supposed to be a general argument across the table. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I was just looking up my note in relation to the member for Maroubra and gentraders. It is here in my folder somewhere, and it is a cracker. The bottom line is that when you embark on a transaction it does take a period of time to actually transact—and then ultimately payments are made and they are put into the Restart NSW fund.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: This is again part of the problem. Those opposite never had an infrastructure fund.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I find it absolutely amazing that the member for Maroubra would be asking a question in relation to gentraders.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat and move away from the water jug.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Who remembers the dying days of the Keneally Government? The member for Lake Macquarie has his hand up.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am finding it difficult to hear the Treasurer. It will be hard to judge the point of order about to be taken by the member for Maroubra. The Treasurer will resume his seat. I found it very difficult to hear what the Treasurer said because of the level of interjections but I will listen to the point of order.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. I ask why the sale proceeds have not gone into Restart NSW. The transactions were completed in September 2013. It should not take 15 months for the funds to make their way into Restart NSW.

The SPEAKER: Order! I did hear the question. I knew the member was going to say that it was a very specific question. The Treasurer is remaining relevant to the question. The member for Maroubra should not argue his point.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: As I was saying, who will ever forget, in the dying days of the Keneally Government, the deceitful and corrupt acts of the former finance Minister in relation to the gentrader action? Who will ever forget his actions?

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: He appointed his Labor mates at midnight. It was signed off on by the Minister for finance at the time, the member for Maroubra. We saw the proroguing of Parliament, to engage in what was one of the most disgraceful acts in the dying days of that last incompetent, corrupt State government.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have already ruled that the Treasurer is remaining relevant to the question. The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My question was about why the funds have not got into the Restart NSW fund.

The SPEAKER: Order! I know what the question was about. The Opposition says this every day. I listened to the question. My ruling is that the Treasurer's answer remains relevant to the question.

Mr Michael Daley: The Treasurer was talking about me. I have nothing to do with those funds.

The SPEAKER: Order! Maybe the member for Maroubra is relevant to the question that was asked.

Mr Michael Daley: I cannot possibly be relevant to that transaction.

The SPEAKER: Order! Maybe the Treasurer is seeking to find out whether the member for Maroubra is relevant to the question.

Mr Michael Daley: The Treasurer is required to stay relevant to the question for the full five minutes of his answer under the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. The Treasurer is not required to do so under any standing order. The member for Maroubra has obviously not read the standing orders.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I was making the very clear point that when you embark on a transaction you have to go through a number of processes, and ultimately once a transaction is complete the funds find their way into Restart NSW.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I do not think the shadow Treasurer is in any position to be questioning this Government in relation to generators in this State. We had to clean up the mess that we inherited in relation to the generators in this State. We had to de-risk the budget. We had to clean up the mess that was left by those opposite. I can quote people like Tony Maher, a former Director of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU]. He said—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those opposite do not like hearing the truth.

Mr John Robertson: My point of order goes to Standing Order 129 on relevance. The question was very specific. Why is the money not there? When will it be there? It is 14 months later.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer is remaining relevant to the question according to the standing orders, which many people still have not read after four years.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I answered the question. I made it very clear that when you embark on a transaction you work through a bid phase, you work through a transaction phase and then ultimately you put the proceeds into the Restart NSW fund, which those opposite want to dissolve.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I quote Tony Maher from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU] on Michael Daley's gentrader deal:

It was always a dud deal. I think it's a disgrace, the Government stands condemned for basically pulling a roort.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the member's point of order? I have ruled five times that the Treasurer is being relevant.

Ms Sonia Hornery: My point of order is under Standing Order 75, which states that the use of names other than the member's title is disorderly. I ask you to bring the Treasurer to order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear any name calling because I was finding it difficult to hear the Treasurer.

Ms Sonia Hornery: It is hard to hear him.

The SPEAKER: Order! If members listened they would be able to hear the Treasurer, but they are interjecting and arguing

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Members opposite do not understand the concept of undertaking a transaction and putting the proceeds into an infrastructure fund. I reiterate the record of members opposite when they embarked on their Gentrader deal that ripped billions of dollars from the taxpayers of this State and was condemned by the CFMEU. Former finance Minister Michael Daley appointed Labor mates at midnight and left a dud deal for this Government to clean up. Opposition members are in no position to ask anything about generator transactions in this State because the record is clear that they are nothing but a bunch of crooks who only knew how to rip off the people of New South Wales.

BAYS PRECINCT URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAM

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning. What progress is being made to transform the urban wasteland of the Bays Precinct into an exciting new destination in Sydney?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Government is about delivering for the people of New South Wales and our global city of Sydney. That means we are getting creative about how we approach underutilised areas such as the 80-hectare Bays Precinct. Today marks the start of a two-day international summit that will begin to develop a vision for the Bays Precinct urban renewal to which we have invited some of the greatest minds in urban renewal and revitalisation. We need to learn from the most outstanding examples of what went right and wrong in the regeneration of other cities and locations around the world.

The global experts have been tasked with generating great ideas and propositions that will guide the revitalisation of the Bays Precinct over the next 30 years. They have been given a blank canvas on which to work. I say it is a blank canvas because the Government has made no decision about the final shape of the Bays Precinct or, for that matter, housing targets. Instead, the international experts, the local community, industry and Sydneysiders will be given an opportunity over the coming months to contribute to a world-class vision for that part of our harbour.

The Bays Precinct Urban Renewal Program has the potential to transform 2.6 kilometres of waterfront land into new housing, recreational, retail and tourism places in Sydney. It is a visionary urban renewal project that will change Sydney and New South Wales for the better. The precinct is just two kilometres from the

Sydney central business district and is currently, as the member suggested in his question, an urban wasteland. It is four times the size of Barangaroo and sits right next to the world's greatest and most spectacular harbour. It really is Sydney's biggest overhaul opportunity since the 2000 Olympics. Let us not forget that much of the precinct is derelict. It is off limits to the public and it has been for decades. We owe it to future generations to make sure we renew and revitalise the area for the years to come.

Through the international summit and the important input of Sydneysiders we can create a real masterpiece. There will be a mix of open spaces and public realm, and commercial, retail and residential areas to boost jobs and accommodate Sydney's expanding population. The foreshore will be progressively opened up to public access after being shut off for decades. Despite having so much potential, the area has been underutilised for far too long. Through the Bays Precinct Urban Renewal Program this Government will finally transform it into a world-class destination that will play a critical economic, cultural and social role in the future of the city, New South Wales and Australia. The revitalisation is a potential game changer for Sydney and the State. As I said, it is too early to say exactly what the transformation of the area will be but everyone would agree that the area has endless potential.

The White Bay power station, for example, is one of the city's most remarkable heritage buildings. There is no doubt that the station is in need of significant revitalisation and that it in turn will act as a catalyst for urban renewal. We will, of course, be speaking with the community about such an important project. A number of community groups have been involved in planning for the Bays Precinct for more than a decade. In fact, many of those community groups are participating in the summit right now. Let there be no mistake: As always this Government is about action and delivery. We will succeed in renewing the Bays Precinct where previous governments have failed. That is just one of the many steps we are taking to create jobs, drive growth and build a better future for the people of the State.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND OUT OF SCHOOL CARE RENTAL CHARGES

Mr RYAN PARK: My question is directed to the Treasurer. Given the Department of Education is increasing rent charged to non-profit after school care providers by up to \$12,900, will the Treasurer reverse the decision to increase rent for non-profit after school care services that will increase fees and drive service providers out of business?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira has asked a question. I assumed he would listen to the answer. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I always have to treat questions by the shadow Minister for Education with some degree of caution because quite often the premise of the question is wrong, as has been the case all day today. I would welcome the Labor Party continuing to pursue this matter based on the information before me, but that is really a matter for them. The licence fees paid by providers in government schools vary. When a school proposes to have a commercial service on-site the school and the department undertake a formal tender process to determine what the commercial service provider market is prepared to pay.

The SPEAKER: Order! Question time is not an opportunity for the member for Keira to argue or debate the matter.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: In the case of not-for-profit providers, on the other hand the department applies a standard formula to ensure that as a minimum it can recover the cost of providing the service at the school.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease arguing across the Chamber. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Let me repeat: In the case of not-for-profit providers, on the other hand, the department provides a standard formula to ensure that as a minimum it can recover the cost of providing the service at the school. Of course, fees will vary as a result of the number of children attending the service. This sounds like another scare campaign by members opposite.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Keira has further questions he can make an appointment with the Minister for Education.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is a scare campaign based on the voices in the head of the member for Keira. If he is going to ask silly questions he should make sure that the premise of the question is right in the first place.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is addressed to the Treasurer. How is the Government driving economic growth through housing?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: That is a sensible question from the member for Menai. We remember only too well that 3½ years ago this State was in the doldrums.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Look where 16 years of Labor got the State: 3½ years ago New South Wales was ranked eighth by the CommSec State of the States report.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown will resume her seat. Accessing the water jug at the centre table usually ends up in an argument across the table, which is probably the reason for doing it. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Opposition members do not care about the economy. I would check the quality of that water because I do not know what is in it. Some 3½ years ago under Labor the economy was in the doldrums. New South Wales was ranked eighth by the CommSec State of the States report. I took the opportunity to examine some quotes by one of the Opposition members, and guess who said this:

In terms of economic management, we left government with our reputation soundly intact and deservedly so.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Who said that?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It was the member for Maroubra. He went on to state:

Our public trading enterprises ... were efficient, world's best, delivering very good dividends for government with a unionised workforce.

The member for Maroubra fails to acknowledge the cost-of-living pressures faced by families off the back of Labor's 60 per cent price hike in the cost of electricity. Moreover, Labor's through-the-roof water charges left families in very dire circumstances. But what is particularly telling about the economic fortunes of this State relates to housing. In 2009 under Labor, there were 16,209 housing approvals. Currently the figure stands at 52,000 housing approvals over the past 12 months. Why is that the case? It is because this Government took tough decisions and implemented savings measures.

This Government reallocated resources across the State's economy to stimulate jobs, housing and public infrastructure investment. When Bob Carr declared the city to be full and put up the "Closed" sign, he also stopped investing in vital infrastructure across the State to facilitate housing development. This Government's investment in the economy has resulted in the creation of tens of thousands of construction jobs. Housing supply has provided opportunities in the north-west and south-west growth sectors, particularly, of Sydney.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The Opposition does not like to acknowledge that the current Government has ensured the State has improved from being the worst performing State under Labor to being ranked number one. The contrast between Labor and this Government is incredibly stark in areas of business and consumer confidence, retail trade, jobs growth and economic activity. Under Labor, New South Wales was ranked last compared to every other State. Now New South Wales has its mojo back. This Government has the budget under control, but what do we get from the Labor Opposition? The bottom line is that business and consumer confidence is at record levels, retail trade increased at the rate of 9.5 per cent in the past 12 months, the economy has grown by more than 3.5 per cent in the past 12 months, and New South Wales is now ranked number one, based on the eight economic indicators used by CommSec. Yet what do we hear from the Labor Opposition?

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: All we get from Opposition members is enormous negativity. One of the most telling stories of this Government relates to employment. The Government was committed to

generating 100,000 jobs when we were first elected. Since the 2011 State election, we have generated more than 130,000 jobs. Why is that the case? It is because this Government has stimulated employment through its Jobs Action Plan. This Government has provided the necessary payroll tax incentives that have supported businesses right across the State—businesses such as SuperCharge Batteries in Blacktown, which I visited recently. I am horrified at the prospect of the member for Maroubra tearing up the Jobs Action Plan.

Mr Clayton Barr: The Hunter is looking forward to it.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Try telling that to the 76,000 workers across the State, who now have a job as a direct consequence of the Jobs Action Plan. Labor is supposed to be the party of the worker, yet Labor will destroy one of the most successful programs that this Government has implemented through the Jobs Action Plan. The Leader of the Opposition should visit SuperCharge Batteries and have a discussion with business people in his own electorate. He might then learn that of the 23 employees associated with that business, five new employees were given the opportunity of a job through this Government's Jobs Action Plan. The State can continue to lead the nation's economic growth or that can be put at risk by the election of John Robertson and Labor in March 2015.

LOTTERY TICKET RETAILERS

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: My question is directed to the Treasurer.

Mr John Williams: Branch-stacker.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The member for Murray-Darling should find an electorate.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murray-Darling will cease interjecting.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I ask the Treasurer: Will he extend protections for lottery sales by newsagents and ensure that those small businesses are not driven out of business by giants like Coles and Woolworths?

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members may have an opinion, but they should not try to answer the question. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is somewhat ironic that the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Maroubra have organised the member for Bankstown to ask that question—a member who was not a member of Parliament when the lotteries sale went through.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will remain silent. I am unable to hear the Treasurer.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The member for Bankstown is not interested in the answer. She is straight onto the phone, having asked one of the most embarrassing questions in Parliament I have seen this year. The lotteries deal as it affects newsagents was signed up when Labor flogged NSW Lotteries to pay for recurrent expenditure across government.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I refer to a press release issued by the then Treasurer, Eric Roozendaal, in relation to the NSW Lotteries sale. He said that the proceeds of the sale of NSW Lotteries would go back into recurrent funding. I recall at that time that Labor was going to throw newsagents onto the scrapheap so the member for Upper Hunter led a campaign to put in place protections over a five-year period for the newsagents of the State.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question is pretty straightforward. It is simple, even for him. Will he extend the protections beyond the five years?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer's answer certainly is relevant to the question he was asked. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The Leader of the Opposition sat around the Labor Cabinet table and signed off on that deal. The Leader of the Opposition was not willing to give newsagents any protection at that time, but now he has the hide and hypocrisy—three months before a State election—to suddenly want to protect the interests of newsagents. If the member for Upper Hunter had not spearheaded a campaign to drive a five-year transition and protection program for newsagents, we would not have this situation because the newsagents would have been subject to Labor's rotten NSW Lotteries sale. Five years ago Labor took the proceeds of that sale and used them for recurrent expenditure. I note that the Minister for Small Business has started discussions in relation to—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance.

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

Mr Michael Daley: He has gone nowhere near the answer, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! I can only require that the Minister remain relevant, and he has been relevant.

Mr Michael Daley: The question was whether he would extend them.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer remains relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We are not going to put up with the hypocrisy of those opposite who did not put any protections in place when it came to State newsagents. Five years ago they had that opportunity, and they wanted to sell them out at that time. Because of the work of the Liberals and The Nationals, there was a five-year transition period protecting their interests.

Mr John Robertson: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the Leader of the Opposition take a point of order? If his intention is to interrupt the flow of the answer, the Leader of the Opposition is being disorderly.

Mr John Robertson: I would like to obtain an answer. My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129.

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

Mr John Robertson: The Treasurer has been talking but he has not answered whether he will extend the protections.

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

Mr John Robertson: The Treasurer is well away from giving anywhere near an answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Treasurer remains relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition used the word "protect", because I am sure it was not going through his thick head when he sat in Cabinet selling out the newsagents. The bottom line is that we are meeting with them, and we are happy to talk to them, because as of 31 March the protections that were delivered by the Liberals and The Nationals are due to expire. This will be a matter between Tatts and the newsagents. We are happy to sit and talk with the Newsagents Association about their concerns.

But we will not do what was done by that pack of hypocrites opposite, who sold out the newsagents five years ago; then, all of a sudden, three months before an election, they realised that they might need to change their minds. John Robertson had this opportunity when he was in Cabinet, and he failed badly. The bottom line is that John Robertson was an incompetent Minister, and he is an incompetent Leader of the Opposition. The only place in which the Leader of the Opposition belongs after March is in the seat next to the member for Wollongong.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled that a member who attempts to interrupt the flow of answers is disorderly. I have ruled several times on relevance.

Mr Michael Daley: With 20 seconds remaining, Government backbenchers want to know, because they are being lobbied, whether the Treasurer will extend the protections.

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

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health. How has the Government strengthened mental health care services in New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! I suggest members not interject during this answer, on this subject and in this place.

Mr JAI ROWELL: I thank the member for Clarence for his question, and I acknowledge his commitment to the provision of mental health services across rural and regional New South Wales. I am pleased to inform the House about a number of major achievements that this Government has made in strengthening mental health care across our State. Almost four years ago we were elected by the people of New South Wales to do a job. We were elected because this State needed a change in direction, including in the mental health space; and the Baird-Grant team has delivered just that. Last night marked an important milestone in improving the lives of those people across New South Wales living with a mental illness, with the passing of the Mental Health Amendment (Statutory Review Bill) 2014.

That bill is important because it will deliver greater involvement for individuals making decisions about care and treatment; enhance the rights for young people undergoing mental health treatment; allow more clinicians to make assessments; and increase access to mental health treatments, particularly those in country communities. The legislation also provides for increasing the use of audiovisual link technology and teleconferencing to facilitate assessments, thereby preventing unnecessary long-distance transport for people in rural and regional areas; and it will provide recognition of the need for primary care providers to receive information about the treatment provided to those for whom they care. As Minister, I have consistently voiced during this time that issues around mental health should be above party politics; and I take this opportunity to thank the member for Auburn for working with me in that approach.

This does not mean that we cannot recognise the significant contribution that the Government has made toward improving services over the past four years. Just last week the Premier, the Minister for Health and I were joined by the former Governor of New South Wales in opening the new \$67 million Professor Marie Bashir Centre at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. This centre offers a new model of care that will put Sydney and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital at the forefront in international best practice in mental health care. The new centre includes a six-bed short-stay unit for patients needing care for 24 to 48 hours; a gender-separated high dependency unit; an expanded eating disorder inpatient program of nine beds; and a seven-bed University of Sydney research unit that will translate research findings into everyday clinical practice. Those are just two examples of the fantastic work that this Government has done just in the past few weeks.

But we have been working for the entire term. This financial year we are investing a \$1.625 billion spend on mental health—a 32 per cent increase on the budget since Labor was last in office. Everyone on this side of the House appreciates this record spend in mental health; and we are committed to support those suffering a mental illness. There is a \$101 million increase in capital expenditure, furthering the significant capital works program we have undertaken since coming to office and delivering new or expanded services in places such as Wagga Wagga, St George, Liverpool, the Shoalhaven, Blacktown, Nepean, Orange, Goulburn, Hornsby and the Prince of Wales Hospital.

We have also delivered on our commitment to establish the NSW Mental Health Commission. I take this opportunity to thank the former Minister for Mental Health for his work in this area. We have established the 24-hour, seven-day-a-week NSW Mental Health Hotline. We have also provided \$3.4 million per year for

improved access to specialist child and adolescent mental health services, to assist the most vulnerable young people in our society. We have also allocated \$2 million each year that we have been in office to Lifeline for telephone and counselling services.

I know that many in this Chamber are ambassadors for Lifeline; I refer in particular to the members for Camden and Campbelltown, who are Macarthur Lifeline ambassadors with me. We have committed \$40.7 million for the Housing Accommodation Support initiative [HASI], including the Aboriginal HASI. It is great to hear that one of our recent HASI graduates has entered into employment, secured private tenancy and is in a stable relationship. We have also provided \$27 million for additional acute care mental health services; \$15.2 million over five years to deliver the State's first ever Eating Disorders Plan, and \$1.8 million in this year's budget to develop LikeMind pilot sites in the Nepean, Blue Mountains and Western Sydney.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr JAI ROWELL: The LikeMind sites will feature the co-location of mental, physical and other support service treatments under the one roof. In consultation with our colleagues in the NSW Police Force and the Ambulance Service of NSW, we are increasing the number of declared mental health facilities across the State, particularly in rural and regional areas where these facilities are so important because they are needed most. Over the next year alone there will be newly declared mental health facilities in Griffith, Corowa, Leeton, Narrandera, Young, Moree, Lithgow, Cooma, Moruya, Queanbeyan, Mudgee and Bathurst.

I know the member for Bathurst is excited about that. These are just some of the many examples of how the New South Wales Government has forged ahead with strengthening our State's mental healthcare system. We were elected to transform this State, and in just four years we have done that. We on this side of the House believe in service provision and outcomes for people in New South Wales suffering mental illness. That is what we have been doing for the past four years, and it is certainly what we will do for the next four years.

INNER-CITY SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Given the growing waiting lists and an increase in inner-city homelessness, will the Government commit to retaining inner-city social housing, including through working with community housing providers?

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: I thank the member for Sydney, who I know is a strong advocate for his local community not only for those in social housing but also for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The electorate of the member for Sydney is particularly challenged with the drift of homeless people into Sydney. We recognise that challenge in the electorate he serves. For too long those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have had to leave their communities and come to Sydney to get the support they wanted. They were forced to travel away from their families and friends.

We did not provide the services they needed where and when they needed them. That is why Going Home Staying Home is a good, new evidence-based approach to helping people who are homeless and those who are at risk of homelessness. We know that if we help people who are at risk of homelessness we can help them become more independent sooner. We are shifting the focus of our delivery of specialist homelessness services to early intervention, which is important because, as I said, we must provide those services when and where they are needed. It is important also because it helps us to attack that drift of people to the city, who otherwise—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

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

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was about the retention of social housing in the inner city.

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

Ms Linda Burney: The Minister is talking about another program.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister remains relevant. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The Minister remains relevant. The member will resume her seat. For the third time the member for Canterbury, resume your seat. The Minister remains relevant. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: We had 16 years of Labor neglect. These overdue, evidence-based reforms were necessary to give vulnerable people what they need, where they need it and with more resourcing to the areas that need it. I restored the funding package to the inner city. I recognise that we needed to give more time and support particularly to some constituents from all those electorates represented in this Chamber—those who come to the city in search of assistance when they are at their most vulnerable.

Ms Linda Burney: Are you going to talk about social housing?

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: Yes, I am going to talk about social housing. The New South Wales social housing system has to change. Labor bankrupted social housing for the New South Wales community. This side of the House inherited an unsustainable and unfair system. We have been working to rebuild that system. We have been working to clean up the mess. It was a mess. What did we inherit?

Government members: A mess.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: Growing waiting lists, a backlog of maintenance and too many people not getting the assistance they needed. As of yesterday we announced a discussion paper into social housing.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Oh great!

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: Opposition members should not laugh because they are devoid of ideas, policies and plans. That is a bit rough coming from the other side. Those opposite did not reform the system. They had 16 years. This discussion paper says that social housing in New South Wales should be fair to those who are on our waiting list and who, because of Labor's neglect, do not have housing or assistance. This system should be more sustainable. Most importantly, I make this point because it is something that Labor does not understand: This system needs to provide opportunities for those within social housing where it is appropriate for them to get training, education or a job. Social housing should not be a destination for everyone. We are going to work with our partners in the non-government sector. I thank the member for Sydney for his question. Whether one lives in Inverell or the City of Sydney, this Government, this side of the House, will help those vulnerable people. [*Time expired*].

ELECTRICITY AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State. How has the Government restored confidence in the State's gas and electricity sectors?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for Baulkham Hills for a good question and for his interest in this matter. The New South Wales Government is delivering on its commitment to reform the State's gas and electricity sectors. Over the past four years we have responsibly overhauled the State's electricity sector, ensuring lower prices for New South Wales households and businesses, and ending the legacy of Labor's double-digit price increases. Our successful program to divest the State-owned generation assets has delivered much-needed funds that are being reinvested in critical infrastructure. Our reform of the network distribution businesses, and the formation of Networks NSW, has curtailed the reckless spending instigated by Labor, resulting in network costs decreasing in 2014-2015 by an average 1.8 per cent. Compare and contrast that to the 60 per cent increases under the last three years of Labor, including 22.4 per cent in 2009-10 when John Robertson was energy Minister.

Our deregulation of retail electricity prices has delivered greater competition and a surge in customer switching and has seen a jump from 60 to 70 per cent in the number of households on competitive market contracts. Where John Robertson and Labor failed, this Government has proudly delivered. We now are delivering on a comprehensive gas plan to overhaul the New South Wales gas sector, and ensure safe and sustainable gas development in our State. For the first time New South Wales has a clear strategic plan to deliver a secure gas supply, promote jobs and economic growth, and ensure the protection of our vital land and water resources. The New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals have a clear and comprehensive plan lauded by industry, farmers and communities alike.

In contrast, Labor has a promise written on the back of a napkin to bury its head in the sand and hope that other States do the work for us. John Robertson has called for an end to the gas industry in New South Wales and for a national reservation policy so that other States can bail us out and charge their taxpayers for our bill. The member for Blacktown has not even promised to deliver anything; he simply has promised to raise this issue at a meeting—a big tick. The Leader of the Opposition is trying to turn New South Wales into a dark, desolate and desperate space with no future prospects, which is a reflection of New South Wales Labor.

Problem number one for the Opposition Leader is that the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] Energy Council unanimously opposes the idea of a gas reservation policy. The simple reason is that, unlike New South Wales, other States already have taken steps to develop their own natural gas resources. They are not facing the same problem as New South Wales, recovering from 16 years of failed government and embarrassing Labor mismanagement. Why should other States have to bail us out just because the Leader of the Opposition is more interested in populist politics than in responsible government? The simple answer, frankly, is that they will not. So John Robertson's and Labor's first big commitment is already dead in the water.

Rather than pander to The Greens, the Leader of the Opposition should be outlining a sensible plan to safely and sustainably develop New South Wales' natural gas resources. If we want a secure gas supply, we need to do our own heavy lifting and develop our own supplies in New South Wales, and not be at the mercy of other States. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has delivered a plan to do just that. Let us look at what was said about our plan. Fiona Simson, President of the NSW Farmers Association, welcomed the Government's consideration of farmers and their communities. Adam Kay, Chief Executive of Cotton Australia, said:

We applaud the NSW Government for its commitment to implement all of the Chief Scientist's recommendations.

This is a significant win for cotton growers and primary producers in this State.

Samantha Read, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Plastics and Chemicals Industries Association said:

We welcome the NSW Government's leadership on this issue. The Plan ... is the foundation of a structured and considered approach to increase supply, and to ensure that there is strategic and responsible management of the State's natural endowment.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Phil Barresi, chief executive officer of the Energy Users Association of Australia said:

With smart, considered policy responses from industry and government, such as the NSW Gas Plan, we can make the most of our enviable gas endowment, with a thriving manufacturing sector existing alongside a growing gas export industry. We applaud the NSW Government for the release of this plan.

The verdict is clear. We have delivered a detailed and considered policy which has shown Labor as being a policy-free zone. This Government is delivering on its plan to make New South Wales number one. Our plan is to enable people and businesses in this State to rise to the top. New South Wales Labor is still wearing the chains of its ugly past and it is determined to drag the State back into the gutter. As we know, people and businesses of New South Wales turned their backs on Labor. It gives me no pleasure to inform members of the House that they continue to turn their backs on Labor.

I feel sorry for the Leader of the Opposition. Last week he attempted to make a jobs and gas announcement about a Tomago Aluminium smelter, but he was turned away. The image is quite awful. The Leader of the Opposition has a plan to shut down the coal industry, which will gut 33,000 direct jobs and more than 120,000 indirect jobs in the region he was visiting. He was doing what he does best—driving electricity prices through the roof. Opposition members have their eyes open, their mouths move, but their brains have long departed. There are 500 heavy manufacturers, 33,000 businesses and 1.2 million households that can rely on this Government to provide them with a safe and sustainable gas supply.

Question time concluded at 3.22 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide for the following routine of business after the conclusion of the motion accorded priority:

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

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [3.23 p.m.]: I move:

That on Thursday 20 November 2014 standing and sessional orders be suspended to:

- (1) Provide for the following routine of business:
 - (a) at 10.00 a.m. Speaker takes the chair;
 - (b) private members' statements;
 - (c) at 12.30 p.m. community recognition statements;
 - (d) at 1.00 p.m. committee reports take-note debate;
 - (e) at 1.30 p.m. Speaker leaves the chair;
 - (f) at 2.15 p.m. Speaker resumes the chair;
 - (g) ministerial statements;
 - (h) giving of notices of motions (Government business, bills, business with precedence);
 - (i) question time;
 - (j) ministerial statements;
 - (k) papers;
 - (l) committees—tabling of reports and notification of inquiries;
 - (m) petitions;
 - (n) placing or disposal of business;
 - (o) consideration of a motion to be moved without notice "That the House take note of Christmas felicitations"; and
 - (p) the House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of Christmas felicitations.
- (2) Permit business to be interrupted at any time for the reporting and consideration of messages from the Legislative Council.
- (3) Provide for the following speaking time limits on the motion "That the House take note of Christmas felicitations":
 - (a) Premier—10 minutes;
 - (b) Deputy Premier—10 minutes;
 - (c) Leader of the Opposition—10 minutes;
 - (d) Leader of the House—10 minutes;
 - (e) Deputy Leader of the Opposition—10 minutes;
 - (f) Member for Maroubra—10 minutes;
 - (g) Government Whip—10 minutes;
 - (h) Opposition Whip—10 minutes; and
 - (i) Any other member—five minutes each.
- (4) Provide that from the commencement of Christmas felicitations until the rising of the House, no divisions be conducted or quorums be called.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.24 p.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting after (1) (a):

- "(b) Consideration of general business order of the day (for bills) No. 6 [Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2014] until concluded".

I am happy to negotiate with the Government a time limit of 30 minutes to enable the removal of this item from the Business Paper.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [3.25 p.m.]: It is Christmas and a time of goodwill, but no.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 24

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

Noes, 58

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

Pair

Mr Rees

Mr O'Farrell

Question resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

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

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report

Mr Jonathan O'Dea, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the 55th Parliament", dated November 2014.

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

PETITIONS

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

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Harris Street Walkway

Petition requesting the reinstatement of the Harris Street walkway connection to the central business district and the upgrade of lighting on Darling Harbour walkways, 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

Petition requesting additional parking facilities at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

Berry Ambulance Station

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

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**.

Same-sex Marriage

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

Public Housing Sale

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

Pet Shops

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

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

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

Container Deposit Levy

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

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

CBD and South East Light Rail Project

Petition requesting that the Randwick terminus of the CBD and South East Light Rail project be relocated from High Cross Park and calling for the protection of all trees in the park, received from **Mr Bruce Notley-Smith**.

Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital Parking Facilities

Petition requesting additional parking facilities at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Bronte RSL Site Redevelopment

Petition opposing any increases to the height and floor space ratio limits for the Bronte RSL site redevelopment, received from **Mr Bruce Notley-Smith**.

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

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

The Clerk announced that the following Minister had lodged a response to a petition signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson—Pittwater Commercial Fishing—lodged 16 October 2014 (Mr Rob Stokes)

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**State Economy**

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.35 p.m.]: I am delighted to give reasons as to why my last priority motion in the Fifty-fifth Parliament should be accorded priority. However, before so doing I wish to advise the House of a potential threat facing New South Wales. I am not referring to terrorism, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria [ISIS] or the Ebola virus; I am referring to something that has the potential of having a more far-reaching effect on the people of New South Wales. Unfortunately, in just over 130 days from today, John Robertson could become the Premier of New South Wales. Should the people of New South Wales be alert? No. Should they be alarmed? No. The people of New South Wales should be terrified.

John Robertson has a plan that will turn this State around and make New South Wales, the leading State in our nation, number eight again. John Robertson is determined to make New South Wales number eight again. We know he can do it because he did it before—and now he wants to do it again. He wants to slash thousands of public transport services every week. He wants to ensure that waiting lists in emergency departments are double what they are now. He wants to lower literacy and numeracy standards in our schools. He wants to do all that because that is exactly what he delivered when he was a Minister in the former Labor Government. Compare that with the hard, firm policies of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition that have made New South Wales number one again. This Government has strengthened the economy; it has injected a rocket full of viagra up the backside of the New South Wales economy, but John Robertson has shown us soft, limp policies—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: The language used by the member for Hawkesbury is completely inappropriate in the Parliament of New South Wales.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I uphold the point of order. I invite the member for Hawkesbury to withdraw his comment about viagra.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I am happy to withdraw that comment. The Leader of the Opposition does not like hard, firm policies; he is the political equivalent of a cold spoon, with his soft, limp policies that will make New South Wales number eight again.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Members will resume their seats. If members continue arguing across the table they will be removed from the Chamber. I direct the member for Macquarie Fields to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of the speech by the member for Keira seeking priority for his motion.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Macquarie Fields left the Chamber at 3.39 p.m.]

Out of Hours School Care

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [3.38 p.m.]: That was an extraordinary contribution from the member for Hawkesbury. This is the time in the parliamentary program when Government members are meant to state why their motion should be accorded priority and to speak on behalf of the people of New South Wales. What we had instead was a disgrace. We want to talk about something that affects constituents in every electorate—that is, the way the Government has cut out-of-school-hours care to the bone. Men and women in communities across New South Wales will be forced to pay huge fees. Small local operators who have been offering after-school care for decades have been forced to close their facilities. That is because the Government wants to increase fees by up to \$12,900 per year.

I cannot think of anything more deserving of priority than this issue. Mums and dads from every community want this important issue to be raised in this, the oldest Parliament in Australia. This is a real issue; this is an important issue. I have been flooded with calls and correspondence from parents across New South Wales. They wonder how the Government has allowed this to happen. How did the Government allow the Department of Education and Communities Asset Management Unit to send letters in March this year confirming that councils and other providers will be required to pay annual licence fees commencing this year and ranging from \$4,000 to \$12,900?

If any members opposite gave a damn about their communities, if they gave a damn about women participating in the workforce and if they gave a damn about quality and accessible after-school care—which their local communities rely on—then they would not be supporting the ridiculous motion to be accorded priority proposed by the member for Hawkesbury. Instead they would support the motion proposed by the Opposition—a motion that talks about a real issue, a motion that raises real concerns and a motion that brings to the oldest Parliament in Australia a contemporary problem. This problem is confronting every one of our communities. And yet those opposite will support the motion proposed by the member for Hawkesbury. It is drivel. Those opposite should hang their heads in shame.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 41

Mr Anderson	Mr Elliott	Mr Piccoli
Mr Aplin	Mr Flowers	Mr Rohan
Mr Ayres	Ms Gibbons	Mr Rowell
Mr Bassett	Ms Goward	Mrs Sage
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Mr Brookes	Mr Holstein	Mrs Skinner
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Issa	Mr Smith
Mr Conolly	Mr Kean	Mr Speakman
Mr Constance	Dr Lee	Ms Upton
Mr Coure	Mr Maguire	Mr Ward
Mrs Davies	Mr Marshall	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Notley-Smith	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Doyle	Mr O'Dea	Mr Patterson
Mr Edwards	Ms Parker	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 23

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

Pairs

Mr Baird
Mr O'Farrell

Mr Collier
Mr Rees

Question resolved in the affirmative.

STATE ECONOMY**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.50 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Commends the Government for making New South Wales number one again.
- (2) Notes that after 16 years in government and four years in opposition the current Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition still have no plan for New South Wales.
- (3) Supports the leadership of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, and their clear \$20 billion infrastructure plan to rebuild New South Wales.

Before I delve into the complexities of the motion accorded priority by members, I point out that the shadow Minister for Education stated for the record during his contribution to the priority debate that he had received thousands of letters from parents relating to after-hours school care. First of all, to clarify the record, I have never received—

Ms Tania Mihailuk: Point of order: The member for Hawkesbury should be speaking directly to his motion accorded priority. I ask you to draw him back to the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Hawkesbury will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I would have thought the shadow spokesperson for Fair Trading would want to discuss issues relating to children and the community. I make this point: The shadow Minister for Education said that he had received thousands of letters from parents about after-school care. I am speaking about reforming New South Wales.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: Point of order: Mr Acting-Speaker, I understood that you upheld my point of order.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I upheld the point of order. The member for Hawkesbury will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: As I said, I am speaking about this Government's reforms on behalf of the people of New South Wales, which include important reforms to education. They include reforms on behalf of our children to increase numeracy and literacy standards, and reforms to our educational facilities. I say to the shadow Minister for Education that if he has those letters he should table them in Parliament.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: Point of order: The member for Hawkesbury is flouting your ruling. I remind him that his motion states, in part, that the House supports the leadership of Premier Baird and Deputy Premier Grant, and their clear \$20 billion infrastructure plan to rebuild New South Wales.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I am listening carefully to the member for Hawkesbury. I have asked him twice to return to the leave of the motion. I believe he is coming back to it.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I have come back to the leave of the motion each time. That is a vexatious point of order because improving educational facilities is part of our \$20 billion plan. I state once again that, in undertaking responsible reform and taking a responsible approach to rebuilding this State and making it number one, the Government has made reforms to a variety of areas, including infrastructure improvements across the State. When we inherited the Treasury bench in 2011 New South Wales was the worst-performing State in

Australia. That was thanks in part to the Leader of the Opposition because he was a Minister in the former Government that left us with State debt of \$30 billion. We have turned that around and now have only \$8 billion in debt.

We have leased and recycled assets and poured that money into critical infrastructure such as our schools. If complaints are being made about after-school care, the Opposition should table them. If the Leader of the Opposition has any faith in the shadow Minister for Education he will table those thousands of letters in the Parliament today and the Government we will take them on board. We have not received one letter on the issue. We have made this State number one. It is the best-performing State in Australia. We have a very clear plan to lease the poles and wires next year if we receive a mandate from the community. Once we lease those poles and wires we will inject a further \$20 billion into the New South Wales economy. I say again that if the Leader of the Opposition displays again the limp, soft policies that he displayed in government then he will be the political equivalent of a cold spoon.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.55 p.m.]: We would have been more than delighted to debate the motion that the member for Keira sought to be accorded priority and which Government members rejected. I would have thought the member for Hawkesbury might want to debate his motion that, from memory, discussed the \$20 billion pipedream that the Government is offering the people of New South Wales by selling Transgrid, Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy.

Mr Ray Williams: Leasing.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The member for Hawkesbury says the Government is leasing them. I am happy to discuss that further.

Mr Ray Williams: Point of order: It is relevance under Standing Order 73. I need to correct the record because we have never intended to sell the poles and wires; it is a long-term lease.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I draw the attention of the member for Bankstown to the member's point.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: It is 49 per cent leasing of our energy providers in New South Wales. As a result of the Government protecting Essential Energy in country and rural New South Wales, 100 per cent of Transgrid, Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy will have to be leased permanently to reach the 49 per cent the Government requires to get some way towards its desired \$20 billion. We know that the money will not eventuate. Government members claim that they will use the money for a rapid transit system, a second harbour crossing and something that will supposedly end up in Bankstown. I think everybody in the House knows that is a pipedream.

The Government will deprive New South Wales of \$1.7 billion worth of dividends that would have funded front-line services in our health sector and education system. The plan will deprive the people of New South Wales of front-line and direct services. New South Wales Labor has a plan. It is a plan to reinstate the money that the Government will take away from the education system. We will ensure that TAFE is a viable option in the future for people of all ages to obtain better skills and further their careers. We have a direct plan to freeze the fee increases that the Government has supported for the past three years. We support apprenticeships; the Government does not.

Mr Matt Kean: You support your union mates. The only one you don't support is the member for Auburn.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The member for Hornsby knows that all his Government is offering is a 100 per cent permanent lease of Transgrid, Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy. The New South Wales Government should be honest with the New South Wales public about what its plans really are.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: The member for Bankstown has said that Essential Energy is part of the long-term lease. It is not.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: What a correction! Fine, I will correct it.

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

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: It is Endeavour Energy and Ausgrid. I can keep repeating that, but it will be a 100 per cent sale of those energy providers and not Essential Energy.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: It is not a "sale". It is a long-term lease.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order. However, I remind the member for Bankstown that although parliamentary privilege applies when she is making statements in the House, the statements should be made accurately.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: Everything that the Opposition is saying about what is happening in electricity is accurate. This Government is trying to hoodwink the public of New South Wales about precisely what will occur next year in March. Let us be very clear: That will be the start of many sales of public infrastructure. We have already seen what is happening with the Northern Beaches Hospital. How many other hospitals will be privatised? Mike Baird made it very clear two days after he became Premier that he had a vision for privatising parts of our health sector. There is no doubt about that. He certainly has not denied that on the record. [*Time expired.*]

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [4.00 p.m.]: I support the motion accorded priority moved by my good mate the member for Hawkesbury. The member for Hawkesbury is my good friend. I will examine how regional New South Wales has contributed to making New South Wales number one again. In 2001 the Coalition came up with the slogan "Make New South Wales number one again", which could be regarded as being just like any other campaign slogan. But in our case, this Government set out to achieve its campaign motto of 2011 to "Make New South Wales number one again", and has actually achieved that. Let me examine how regional New South Wales has contributed to that by significant investment in infrastructure, which is something the former Labor Government did not do.

In the regions of New South Wales we see significant infrastructure investment in Health. I know that the city of Dubbo waited for a new hospital for a very long time. My good friend the member for Gosford will confirm that his electorate will have a hospital worth \$350 million. In Tamworth alone, there has been \$210 million of redevelopment of the Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government as well as \$42 million for a Tamworth Regional Cancer Care Centre, \$11.2 million for a Werris Creek Multipurpose Service [MPS], \$19.7 million for the Manilla MPS and upgrades at the Gunnedah District Hospital. Projects relating to roads and transport infrastructure right across New South Wales include upgrading the Pacific Highway and roads in the Tamworth electorate that were run down, had potholes and were dangerous, such as Manilla Road, the Oxley Highway and the New England Highway. They are being upgraded. The upgrade of Manilla Road is worth \$8.5 million.

A new rail overpass worth \$23 million will be constructed over the Oxley Highway and Dampier Street. The regions also have been investing in water infrastructure, with \$50 million being spent on augmentation of Chaffey Dam, with the compliments of the Federal, State and local governments—three tiers of government working together. In Education, \$6.5 million will be spent on the G. S. Kidd Memorial School in Gunnedah and \$2.6 million will be spent on capital works, upgrades and maintenance in schools across the Tamworth electorate. This Government will continue to live within its means while investing in the key drivers of the economy to deliver the services that people of this State have a right to expect. We live in exciting times. The heart of regional New South Wales is beating a little faster than previously just because this Government is getting the job done and making New South Wales number one again.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [4.03 p.m.]: I have been looking forward to the opportunity to speak about the \$20 billion number for quite some time because I have lots and lots of questions to ask about it. I have put a number of questions on the *Questions and Answers* paper, I have put questions directly to the Treasurer, questions have been asked of the Treasurer in this House and the media has put questions to the Treasurer, yet there is still a complete absence of response. I can refer to a briefing note by one of The Nationals as well, but let us be clear about this: supposedly 49 per cent of the asset will be sold.

Mr Ray Williams: Leased.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Leased. I will refer to media reports throughout my speech that always refer to the transaction as a sale of poles and wires. Supposedly 49 per cent of the poles and wires will be sold. The reality is that to achieve that, the Government has to sell in excess of 49 per cent for the other network providers. What is not being spoken about, and what The Nationals members should hang their heads in shame

about, is that the Essential Energy body that will be protected and kept aside from this is supported through the profitability of some of the other networks. Once 100 per cent of the other networks is sold, the Government no longer will have that revenue stream to support Essential Energy. The cost of power for all the customers on the Essential Energy network must increase by the very nature of the networking because there will be no more financial support and co-funding.

As we have seen with a number of government entities over the past couple of decades, it is nigh-on impossible to hold onto and preserve a portion of a monopoly asset. The Government may start and go through a gateway with the anticipation or suggestion—or maybe the fabrication—that it will hold on to a part while selling off another part, but the reality is that time passes and, ultimately, it all will be sold. In the light of that, let me examine what will be missing from future budgets. As a result of the poles and wires transaction, we know that the State will be somewhere in the vicinity of \$2 billion to \$3 billion per annum worse off. That \$2 billion to \$3 billion per annum over 100 years, if it is a 100-year lease, equates to at least, on today's rates, \$200 billion to \$300 billion.

Mr Kevin Anderson: You live in the country. Protect your country jobs. Protect your country jobs. Protect your country jobs. You live in the country. Protect your country jobs.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Just shut your mouth, mate. The member for Tamworth has had his chance to make his contribution, now zip it up. If we add the increase to \$200 billion or \$300 billion, more than a trillion dollars is missing from future revenue for this State, yet we are being told that there is \$20 billion. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.06 p.m.], in reply: It always gives me great pleasure to participate in debates on motions that have been accorded priority, especially when we can compare and contrast a good and responsible Government that has a proven track record over four years of restoring an economy that was a basket case when we inherited it with a Government that left us with an economy that, according to every key performance indicator, was the worst-performing of every State in this country. Over the past four years this Government has made New South Wales the best-performing State in the country. New South Wales has the lowest rate of unemployment at 5.7 per cent and economic growth is humming along. Moreover, only this week this State has been seen and supported by the G20 leaders as establishing a global infrastructure hub centred on Sydney. Why would we not implement an infrastructure hub in Sydney? As our Premier quite rightly said, when we look around the city skyline—indeed, when we look right across the State—we see a construction zone, which is what this State needed to be.

While we inherited a budget in severe deficit four years ago with \$30 billion in debt from the former Labor Government, this Government making very decisive and tough decisions has completely turned the economy around to the point at which we have a budget in surplus by more than \$1 billion. This State also has a construction program for critical infrastructure that will be worth \$61.5 billion. This Government had to pick up the pieces of a \$30 billion backlog in infrastructure that we inherited from our predecessors in government. We listen to the soft, weak and limp policies espoused by the Leader of the Opposition, who is picking up exactly where he left off when he was a Minister in the former Labor Government, and recall that he did not support any of the Coalition's funding mechanisms, and he did not support construction of the North West Rail Link. If John Robertson becomes Premier, we can forget the North West Rail Link and three tunnelling machines because that will be all over and done with.

Most importantly, we come to raw economics. The Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition did not support the lease of the ports. They did not support the lease of Port Botany, the lease of the Port Kembla port or the lease of the Port of Newcastle. There are new members in this House on the Opposition side who know full well that the front page of the *Newcastle Herald* stated "It's our time". That was because hundreds of millions of dollars will be injected into that city alone. While we have this plan and have restored the economy of New South Wales, we will lease 49 per cent of the poles and wires if we are given a mandate by the people of New South Wales; and if we are given that mandate we will inject a further \$20 billion into critical infrastructure across New South Wales. The extension of the rapid rail line will go directly to the electorate of the member for Bankstown. If the member does not want that advanced public transport system, she should step up and say that to her community. We will continue to make this State number one.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 48

Mr Anderson	Ms Gibbons	Mr Rowell
Mr Aplin	Ms Goward	Mrs Sage
Mr Ayres	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bassett	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baumann	Mr Holstein	Mr Smith
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Issa	Mr Souris
Mr Bromhead	Mr Kean	Mr Speakman
Mr Brookes	Dr Lee	Mr Stokes
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Maguire	Ms Upton
Mr Conolly	Mr Marshall	Mr Ward
Mr Coure	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr R. C. Williams
Mrs Davies	Mr O'Dea	Mrs Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	
Mr Edwards	Ms Parker	
Mr Elliott	Mr Piccoli	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Evans	Mr Provest	Mr Patterson
Mr Flowers	Mr Rohan	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 22

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

Pairs

Mr Constance	Mr Collier
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Rees

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**Financial Year 2014-15**

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [4.19 p.m.]: I resume my contribution to the budget take-note debate. I shall touch on some of our many and varied achievements that have been good for the Central Coast. They include the \$350 million commitment to upgrade Gosford Hospital; \$10 million for the brand new Central Coast Regional Cancer Centre; reopening the rehabilitation services for Woy Woy residents and the new subacute care facility; rolling out the Opal card for buses and trains on the Central Coast; maintaining upgrades to our rail infrastructure; delivering additional transport services; investing in local roads; upgrading the Central Coast highway intersection at Brisbane Water Drive and Manns Road, West Gosford; continuing construction works on Wisemans Ferry Road to replace the railway on the Woy Woy Road level crossing; upgrading the intersection of the Central Coast Highway at Frederick Street, East Gosford; continuing support of front-line services with an additional 315 nurses for our Central Coast hospitals; and allocating 61 new police officers to Brisbane Water and Tuggerah Lakes local area command.

Further achievements include providing an additional 128 teachers in the region; rezoning the former Gosford Public School; revitalising our central business district and waterfront precinct; investing in the new

\$21 million Gosford Public School; announcing major upgrades to Point Clare Public School and major maintenance upgrades to Brisbane Water Secondary College at Umina and Woy Woy campuses; providing \$1.5 million in grants to more than 60 projects, benefitting many local organisations from police and community youth clubs to Meals on Wheels, Life Education Surf Life Saving clubs and community aged care; funding towards the upgrade of Woy Woy oval; and supporting interest rate subsidies valued at \$28 million worth of projects for Gosford City Council, including road renewal and sewerage works improvements.

Customer service has been made easier with a new digital transaction service, a single 24/7 phone number and the new Service NSW one-stop shop in Gosford. Construction of the NorthConnex motorway M1 link at Wahroonga and M2 at West Pennant Hills is expected to commence in early 2015. Many things have been achieved in the 3½ years of the Coalition Government. I support the *Central Coast Express Advocate* and *Daily Telegraph* campaign because I am pleased about what we have achieved in 3½ years. Am I satisfied? Any politician who says that they are satisfied with what they have should not be in this place. I need more for my community and I will continue to fight for those things.

I believe the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Central Coast Express Advocate* campaigns will add impetus, drive and energy to what I have been pushing for from this Government. In the past the media has given too much air time to those on the Central Coast who wanted to block progress. Notwithstanding the need for balanced reporting, the very vocal minority view seemed to hold sway and the will of the majority was ignored by all. I shall reflect on a few things over my 20-odd years of civic life, previously as mayor and in working with other Government members to achieve things on the coast.

From the past decades of neglect we have achieved some things, but they were hard to come by. If not for Jim Lloyd, the then Federal member for Robertson in the Howard Government, we would not have received the \$80 million for the water pipeline and would have ended up with a desalination plant. How did that work for Sydney? We saved ourselves from that angst. Jim Lloyd also fought hard for the Gosford Stadium. He was the only Government member who backed us for the Peninsula Leisure Centre when minority groups bagged it. The council fought hard when I was mayor to get the Caroline Bay arts centre.

The planned sinking of the *Adelaide* off the coast for an artificial reef was delayed by minority groups, who said it was going to be a disaster. I now ask those who protested whether they would object to any of those items that now are assets to our community. However, we have a long way to go. I am delighted that the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Central Coast Express Advocate* have displayed this positive and proactive approach. I welcome John Singleton and his passionate drive and commitment to improve the Central Coast. His high profile can be of tremendous help. This Coalition Government has done more for the coast in 3½ years than anything that has been done in the previous three decades, but there is still a long way to go. I know the Coalition Government is committed to achieving results.

Rome was not built in a day and fixing decades of neglect was never going to be easy. But the strong economic performance of the Government makes it easier to deliver after all the hard work of the past 3½ years. I want many things for the Central Coast—not dissimilar to those for which the media campaign asks—such as the hospital, which we already are addressing; a dedicated university; government departments relocated to the coast to ensure that the coast receives its fair share of infrastructure allocations; a performing arts centre; improved and increased rail services; and sections of the M1 and the Central Coast upgrade of the Kariong interchange widened. I agree with all of those projects, but we will have to fight for them. We have to work to get these things. I am absolutely committed to continuing to fight and deliver for the beautiful coast. In speaking with the Premier and various Ministers about the Central Coast, I know they too are committed to correcting the neglect of the previous three decades. I look forward to hearing from them in the coming weeks and months leading up to March 2015.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.26 p.m.]: It did not take very long to determine that this budget is a definitive loss for the residents of Fairfield. The Baird Government has failed to allocate any money for new infrastructure or projects to be completed within the Fairfield electorate. The budget spans far and wide in Western Sydney, but Fairfield has been forgotten yet again. Although that is no surprise to me given this Government's track record, I must admit that I was mildly optimistic at the very least that Fairfield would not be forgotten for another consecutive year. We have seen the New South Wales Coalition Government slash funding for major services across the board. My local residents are hurting and suffering from the monstrous cuts to TAFE, Health and Education. Unfortunately, Fairfield electorate residents are worse off as a result of budgets this Government delivers.

The blatant cuts to our most vital services are cold and callous, and leave those already doing it tough without any recourse to get back on top and in control. Looking over the 2014-15 budget for the Fairfield electorate, one will be hard pressed to find anything for which to commend the Government. All of the committed funding would fit on a single page; even then, it is primarily minor maintenance and ongoing operational funding. The only real funding win Fairfield received in the 2014-15 budget was from the relocation of the Fairfield fire station from the Fairfield central business district to a site in Yennora within the Holroyd local government area. However, this decision was undertaken without any community or stakeholder consultation and has raised community fears that safety may be compromised as a result of the fire station being located further from the Fairfield central business district.

This Government's trend of not investing within our local area is nothing new for Fairfield residents. We are accustomed to the stale taste this Government leaves in our mouths after it decided to dictate what it feels is best for Fairfield. It should be noted that the funding for the relocation of the Fairfield fire station was a commitment included in the 2011-14 budgets and really should not be the highlight of the 2014-15 budget. Much needs to be done in Fairfield, yet this Government just will not recognise that we need a little bit of tender loving care. Failing to provide for much-needed infrastructure and services in our local area, while neglecting the residents of Fairfield, is not what I call a fair and balanced budget for my constituency.

One key problem that must be addressed is the state of our main roads and the traffic issues that arise as a result. We do not need to go far in Fairfield before we experience congestion on the roads, or I should say we cannot go far in Fairfield before we experience such congestion. The residents of Fairfield would welcome a decision from the Government to invest more money into our main roads to help free up the congestion and bottlenecks that occurs throughout the area, but yet again we have seen no money for any major projects that would help to alleviate the congestion that Fairfield motorists experience on a daily basis. The Government's agenda is simply to provide for minor maintenance works and to continue along its merry way, which does nothing to relieve the daily stresses for people in the western suburbs who sit in traffic for up to 30 minutes, only to travel a few kilometres. This level of congestion and continuous bottlenecks is expected around the Sydney central business district but it is simply unacceptable in our suburbs.

Government members have attempted over the years to connect to the people in the west. Sadly, it is impossible for them to do so because they do not understand the area and they do not understand the people so they cannot begin to fathom or understand our needs. Token gestures here and there do not make up for the years of neglect by this Government. The funding that Fairfield has received in this year's budget is, once again, just a token gesture; it has no substance. I have asked the Minister for Transport to install lifts at a number of train stations that have no mobility access for disabled and mobility impaired residents. The Government has since advised that mobility access options would be considered for Carramar, Yennora, Chester Hill and Villawood train stations under a \$770 million Transport Access Program for "infrastructure where it is needed most".

It is somewhat strange that there are ramps at the platforms for wheelchair-bound commuters to get on and off trains, yet the only way to get out of the station is via the stairs. It would appear that the Government does not believe that the residents in Carramar, Yennora, Chester Hill or Villawood are in need of mobility access at their local stations because no funding has been provided in this year's budget. A number of disabled residents in the area rely solely on public transport to carry out their day-to-day business. The unfortunate lack of mobility access at the aforementioned stations imposes significant financial burdens on many of my constituents who are already struggling. However, according to this Government they are not in urgent need of assistance and they can only wait. It is a rough budget.

Students in Fairfield are also among those hit hardest by this year's budget. Course fees have soared and some courses are simply unavailable. In addition, they have to travel for longer to reach their campuses that offer their preferred course. Thanks to the Federal budget, those who choose to attend university will have what can only be likened to a mortgage for many years to come. Education will become a luxury for students whose families cannot afford it and there are no options available. The Government's fierce cuts to TAFE have felt like a smack in the face for many Fairfield residents who have relied on TAFE services to gain the skills necessary to get into the workforce or to enhance their careers through further qualifications. Sometimes TAFE is the only option for skilled migrants to have their qualifications and skillsets recognised formally in Australia.

Fairfield has a large migrant community and to ensure that new migrants are able to continue participating in their chosen profession it is vital for them to have the means to undertake the training that is required to update their skillsets. I fail to see where the Government has made any provisions in this budget to

enhance the availability of education through any new programs or measures. I have yet to see or hear anything from the Minister for Education about making TAFE more affordable and readily available for students who are struggling in the Fairfield local government area and my electorate of Fairfield.

In an area such as Fairfield, which is the most culturally diverse electorate in the State, we have a large number of migrant families who are giving their best to integrate and to become involved in their local community. This is why the Government must provide additional funding to community language schools across New South Wales. Education needs to be on the forefront of our agenda, and we need to ensure that every man, woman and child in New South Wales has the opportunity to access affordable education. This will ensure that our local residents are highly trained and have the skills and knowledge that is necessary to embark on any business endeavour they choose.

There has been a lot of concern in my local community regarding the need for improved funding for our local community language schools. An increase in funding would be of great benefit for our diverse multicultural communities, not just in Fairfield but also across the State to ensure that they have the resources available to cater for the large number of students who choose to participate. Community language schools in New South Wales have more than 56 different languages available and offer students the ability to learn in a new language. These schools play an invaluable role throughout our communities and should be given all the support we can muster. Lo and behold, little has been done to cater for the needs of our local community language schools, nor have their concerns been met with viable funding solutions to ensure that their growing needs are met.

Delving further into the budget we find there is funding for the inception of ambulance hubs throughout Western Sydney. Ambulance hubs are a welcome addition. However, given that the Government is \$500 million short in funding for our local hospitals, there are still areas of concern if they are to continue functioning at optimum efficiency. My local residents in Fairfield have been sold short. They have been told, "You are getting a shiny new ambulance hub. However, we have changed New South Wales hospitals in the process but I am sure you will be fine. Do not worry."

We should not have to choose between having a first-class ambulance response unit and having a first-class local hospital. Hardworking staff at Fairfield hospital do an absolutely remarkable job and always go above and beyond to ensure that their patients are receiving the best quality care they can provide, given the limited funding. Imagine how much better their services would be if they were given the funding they require, rather than bleeding them dry. It boils down to the old saying that we get what we pay for. The staff at Fairfield hospital can only give as much support and care as they are capable of giving. Unfortunately, their resources are limited as the Government does not believe they require more funding to enhance the quality of care and treatment available to the residents of the Fairfield local government area.

Trolley block is a key issue that has yet to be rectified in our local hospitals. It occurs when there is a lack of available beds and/or doctors to see a patient who has been transported to hospital by ambulance. The result is that the ambulance officer and the patient who is on the ambulance trolley are required to wait in the hallway for as long as it takes for the patient to receive medical attention. This issue must be resolved. It can only happen by providing local hospitals with the funding they require to employ more staff and to acquire enough beds for the number of patients who are admitted. We need to ensure that all patients who are admitted to hospital are not stranded in the hallway for hours. This will ensure that our ambulance officers can get back on the road and respond to emergency situations as they arise.

In its 2014-15 budget and Rebuilding NSW document, dated 17 June 2014, the Government touted its investment in our hospital system and said, "Morale in our health system is higher than ever before." The Government believes this because "staff are seeing cranes in the air at their hospitals". The Minister may need to take another look at that because to date no-one has seen any of those mystical cranes that are boosting morale in Fairfield, or even any cranes on the Fairfield skyline. It is tragic that the health Minister has been so blind and heartless to the needs of my community. She has left the residents of Fairfield alone to fend for themselves. However, when the dust settles it is black and white—namely, Fairfield has received little or no support from this New South Wales Coalition Government. The needs of those in my electorate have been overlooked and their concerns have been disregarded. This Government placed an emphasis on the works being completed in north and north-western Sydney, with very little substance given to areas such as my electorate. Consequently, Western Sydney has received measly token gestures; we are the runners-up in the 2014-15 Coalition budget.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [4.41 p.m.]: I am delighted to share with the House the good news in the 2014 budget for the constituents in my electorate. I can confidently say that I have delivered all the

commitments I made to the people in the Blue Mountains in the lead-up to the last election. I have also been able to lobby for many other projects that have benefitted my community. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government has invested in the much-needed infrastructure and services for which my community has been crying out. High on that agenda was the completion of the widening of the Great Western Highway through the Blue Mountains, improved rail transport and more investment in our local hospitals.

The Blue Mountains electorate consists of 1,418 square kilometres. It consists mostly of national parks and its major road and rail corridors roughly bisect the electorate from east to west. I note that the Minister for the Environment, who is responsible for those national parks, is in the Chamber. The Great Western Highway and the Blue Mountains train line are the major transport routes in my electorate, closely followed by the Bells Line of Road along the north-western border. Hawkesbury Road, which runs from Springwood through Winmalee and Hawkesbury Heights to the Hawkesbury area, is the only other State road. This very busy road was in a poor state of repair. More than \$2 million has now been spent upgrading that road from White Cross Road, Winmalee, to the Hawkesbury bends.

Good transport routes and services are essential to the residents of my electorate. Since coming to office one of my greatest achievements has been the Government's commitment to fund and fast track the completion of the Great Western Highway upgrade. This major road to the Central West has been under construction for at least four decades. The Labor Government promised to complete it for the Olympic Games—but it did not state which Olympics. It was then supposed to be completed in 2010 but, as with most of Labor's promises, we were offered a blank page; it did not happen. Since being elected in March 2011 the Liberal-Nationals Coalition has spent a record \$569 million on this upgrade. I have had the pleasure of opening four sections of the highway upgrade, including sections commenced by the Labor Government, and although I commend it for that it is a pity that for 16 years construction was not completed as promised.

In this year's budget \$113 million in funding has been allocated to continue upgrading the Great Western Highway, including Federal funding of \$40 million. It is important to note that the two sections at Bullaburra were fully funded by the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. I am happy to report that the two-kilometre section at Bullaburra west has been completed at a cost of \$85 million and the road is now open. As I have said, I have presided over the completion of four sections of the Great Western Highway at Lawson, Wentworth Falls, Hazelbrook to Woodford and now Bullaburra west, or Bodington Hill as it is known locally. The more complex Bullaburra east section with a pedestrian bridge over the highway, which I successfully had restored to the plans, will be completed in late 2015. Each time I drive along that road I look at those improvements. The pedestrian bridge is due to be completed in about a month's time. We will all be waiting with bated breath as its span is joined together.

In this year's budget \$75 million in funding has been allocated for the upgrade from Lawson to 400 metres west of Genevieve Road, Bullaburra. These sections have been left until last because of their enormous engineering requirements. For example, at Bullaburra west a major slicing of Bodington Hill was required, a major gully was filled in and a wildlife corridor was left underneath for the spotted quoll—I am told that a spotted quoll has already been observed running close to the highway. The Hazelbrook to Woodford section was notable for the collapse of the Reed group, which had been contracted to build the road, as well as the controversial red pedestrian bridge over the highway to Hazelbrook station under the old Roads and Traffic Authority. What a debacle. People still comment on that pedestrian bridge which, according to the plans I saw, was not supposed to have been built.

In my time as the member for Blue Mountains I have taken part in roundtable meetings with community organisations, including the Hazelbrook Association and Woodford Association, Roads and Maritime Services, project contractors, Blue Mountains City Council staff and councillors. These were good forums at which to air grievances in order to negotiate good outcomes for all involved. In particular I pay tribute to the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, for his responsiveness in listening to the community's viewpoint. I am proud to have been a part of that process in advocating for the Blue Mountains communities. The landscaping work at Memory and Memorial parks is also nearly complete—a wonderful example of what the local community has achieved.

I again pay tribute to the local community which has been determined but reasonable with changes resulting in a much better outcome than was originally envisaged. To say otherwise, as some Labor personalities have tried to infer, is a complete fabrication. The completion of the Great Western Highway has been a sore point and the butt of many jokes among Blue Mountains residents. This road is vital to the connectivity of communities. It is also vital to the tourism industry, which is our largest industry and largest contributor to our economy. Continual road works have been a dampener on tourist visitations for many years.

I hope once this road upgrade is completed we will have a tourist bonanza in the Blue Mountains. People have often commented to me that the state of the highway is a factor as to whether or not they visit the area. The sections that have recently been finished have made a big difference, and I have received many praiseworthy comments. We greatly anticipate the completion of the whole project. This feedback has come from both the local community and the people in Sydney. Thanks to this Liberal-Nationals Government the completion of the upgrade is now a reality, which is a far cry from the 16 laborious years of glacially slow outcomes under the Labor Government.

Another major road partly located in my electorate is the Bells Line of Road near Bell, Mount Wilson and Mount Tomah. The stretch of road near the entrance to Mount Wilson Road is a notorious area for accidents, especially in wet conditions. The Mount Wilson NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] brigade is the local first-responder, and I have been told that it is frequently called out to motor vehicle accidents in this area. More than \$20 million has been allocated for improvements to the Bells Line of Road. This represents \$16 million to continue the Bells Line of Road Corridor Improvement Program, stage one, including additional overtaking lanes. Construction of these additional overtaking lanes has already started, and I believe that one has already been completed. It will also include safety works and road realignments and \$5.4 million to improve surface quality on a six-kilometre section of the Bells Line of Road near the Mount Wilson Road intersection. As I have said, this section of road is notorious for accidents, especially in the wet. The residents of "the mounts" are very much looking forward to the completion of these works to improve the safety of the road.

As I have mentioned previously, Hawkesbury Road is an important arterial road in my electorate. This was the area where the terrible fires of October 2013 occurred. The section from the traffic lights at the Winmalee shops to below the Hawkesbury lookout is very much in need of repair. It is therefore pleasing to see the allocation of \$2.2 million to improve surface quality on Hawkesbury Road from Winmalee to below the Hawkesbury lookout. This work is near completion and residents will soon be able to enjoy driving on another good piece of road.

The recent announcement of significant blackspot funding for the Springwood turn-off by the Federal member for Macquarie, Louise Markus, was also well received. This turn-off from the Great Western Highway into Springwood is certainly a dangerous area, with cars often backed up into the flow of traffic on the highway while waiting to turn. The Roads and Maritime Services plan is to lengthen the turning lane to accommodate overflow traffic in the afternoon peak time when the intersection is at its busiest. Additionally, a "no right hand turn onto the Great Western Highway" is currently being trialled. There have been many accidents and a fatality at this spot when cars have attempted to make the right-hand turn. I will always advocate safety over convenience when it comes to road safety. This is a particularly difficult stretch of road in which to get over into the right-hand turning lane.

Equally as important as the road is the passenger train service on the Blue Mountains line. The Blue Mountains has a large commuter population, especially in the lower Blue Mountains. It is estimated that half the workers who leave the Blue Mountains travel by train each day. So the announcement of the new intercity train fleet was greeted with enthusiasm by Blue Mountains commuters. Some \$5 million has been set aside for the delivery of the \$2.8 billion next generation intercity trains to operate on the Blue Mountains line and other lines. The Blue Mountains line is unique in that the newer regular train carriages cannot proceed past Springwood station as the station platforms are too wide. Blue Mountains commuters have had to travel on the old V-sets, some of which are 40 years old and are showing their age.

The refresh and minor reconfiguration of the old carriages has been commented on in a positive light. People love the refurbishments that have been done to tide us over until we get the new carriages. New refurbished seating, vandal-proof toilets, new carpeting and fresh paint have improved commuter comfort on the long trips from the Blue Mountains. I encouraged local commuters to suggest what they would like to see in the new carriages and was overwhelmed by the response. All these responses have been handed to the Minister for Transport for consideration in the internal configuration of the carriages.

Some of the suggestions, apart from having comfortable seating, were that the carriages have more luggage space, space for bicycles and free wi-fi. With so many tourists travelling by train to the Blue Mountains, the lack of luggage space is a complaint I often hear. Tourists often take up all the available seats with their luggage. A lot of seats are taken up because there is nowhere else for them to put their luggage. We also have many weekend cyclists who use the train to travel to locations from which they ride back. So bicycle racks also regularly rate a mention. In particular, the Woodford to Glenbrook track is very popular with cyclists. Often

they will drive to Glenbrook, leave their cars there and then cycle to Woodford. Often they will travel back to Glenbrook by train. The next generation trains will come into service progressively, with the first trains delivered by 2019 and the rest of the fleet being delivered through to 2024.

As part of the Government's Transport Access Program, Wentworth Falls station will receive an easy-access upgrade with lifts on both sides of the station, forecourts, improved lighting and closed-circuit television [CCTV], something the residents of Wentworth Falls have been advocating for many years. These requests fell on deaf ears until the last State election, when the Labor Party decided it would make it one of its election promises. It is a shame that it ignored the issue for all those years and hopped onto the populist bandwagon during the election campaign. It continues to do this by trying similar vote-buying exercises even now. I am so pleased to have worked with the community, in particular, the Wentworth Falls community action group, to make this upgrade a reality. The group worked hard collecting signatures from Wentworth Falls residents. I was happy to be able to present this petition to the Minister, along with members of the committee.

I have often spoken in Parliament about the need for easy access to Wentworth Falls station, which is one of our bigger commuter stations. Wentworth Falls has one of the highest proportions, if not the highest proportion, of elderly residents in the Blue Mountains. Wentworth Falls is at the snowline so in winter the steps are very slippery and many falls down these steps have been documented. I am talking about not just people who are less able; I am also talking about able-bodied people. As with the majority of the Blue Mountains stations, it is exposed with no shelter over the walkways or steps. There are also many tourist visits with people on day trips taking the many accessible walks through the national park. They often arrive at Wentworth Falls station. The Wentworth Falls station easy-access upgrade is now a reality, with planning well underway.

A very important budget item is the increase in funding to improve NSW Rural Fire Service bushfire preparation and response capabilities, with \$31.8 million over four years to be spent across the whole of New South Wales. I was pleased to be able to announce recently that there was funding for the building of a new fire shed at Shipley. Unfortunately, the previous allocated money has been swallowed up with council development application fees and other administrative fees. We are also getting fire trucks for Shipley and Mount Victoria, and vehicles for local group captains. These are also covered by this funding package. Many other initiatives have been funded in the Blue Mountains, and I will mention only a few of them. We received \$1.3 million for Great Community Transport. This is a wonderful service, headed in the Blue Mountains by Helen Walker. This service provides transport for older and disabled people to get to medical appointments and various other places at a very low cost. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Recently in the Blue Mountains we have seen the rollout of the Opal card on the Blue Mountains Bus Company and the Blue Mountains Line. Recently we saw the rollout of the seniors gold Opal card. There has been a favourable response. Whenever I go to train stations to greet the commuters of the Blue Mountains I receive a positive response. I know from speaking to stationmasters that they have also received a positive response to the rollout of the Opal card. Some \$65,000 has been allocated to the Blue Mountains City Council for a new community recycling centre at the Katoomba Waste Management Facility for the safe disposal of problem household waste. This is part of the Waste Less, Recycle More Initiative. I was pleased that the Minister for the Environment, Rob Stokes, visited the area and spoke about the wonderful work of the Katoomba Waste Management Facility.

As members know, in 2013 an enormous bushfire affected the Blue Mountains and the lower mountains, in particular. It caused the loss of 2,011 homes and damaged many others. Fortunately, no lives were lost. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services established the bushfire recovery flexible grant program as part of the recovery process. In addition, \$11.4 million of State and Federal money was made available for a package to make safe and clean up blocks to ensure that full insurance payouts could be put towards future rebuilding costs. Further, \$1.8 billion of State and Federal money has been provided for a bushfire recovery package to continue to fund long-term recovery. That funding is expected to continue for at least 18 months.

Funding has been provided for community and economic recovery, including grants for community groups and small businesses. A tourism campaign to promote the region was very successful, and beyondblue was engaged to provide specialist psychological services. The first round of grants has been received and the second round recipients will be announced shortly. We have implemented very good projects to increase the resilience of the community and businesses. Other initiatives include more than \$120,000 for local neighbourhood centres to operate the No Interest Loans Scheme, which supports families and residents who may otherwise be excluded from access to financial services and offers an alternative to high-cost credit products such as those offered by the payday lenders that we have heard a lot about in the news. The program has been going for quite some time in the Blue Mountains and it has been very well received.

Some \$50,000 was allocated from the Regional Visitor Economy Fund to upgrade the World Heritage Exhibition Centre at Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens and attract tourism. Since the Coalition came to office entry fees for Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens have been rescinded, which has resulted in a great increase in visits to the park. Anyone who has not been to Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens should go. It has spectacular views and beautiful cool climate gardens. It is one of my favourite places in the Blue Mountains. I have been able to deliver an upgrade to Springwood fire station to make it a 24-hour fire and rescue facility. Previously, we had only one such station in Katoomba. After putting \$1.5 billion towards the refurbishment of the Springwood station it can now look after the entire lower mountains area. Previously, appliances had to come from Regentville in Penrith. I am happy to have secured that upgraded station for the Blue Mountains.

Mr Geoff Provest: Hear, hear! Good local member.

Mrs ROZA SAGE: Thank you. We have also implemented good initiatives in health. My electorate has two smaller regional hospitals: Springwood Hospital and Katoomba Hospital, which is also known as Blue Mountains Hospital and is one of the few Anzac memorial hospitals to have been built. Under the previous Labor regime services were pulled away and centralised at Westmead. Since we have been in charge of local health areas we have returned services to Katoomba, especially the maternity services that were forever being closed—the community was up in arms about that. The debacle is now resolved and the hospital is improving.

Recently Minister for Health Jillian Skinner visited my electorate to announce a \$1.08 million expansion of surgery services. It will include a second operating theatre and the recruitment of three new surgeons, bringing the total number of surgeons to 11. There will also be two new outpatient clinics treating specific types of hernias and gallstones, and a general surgical registrar will be recruited who will operate from Monday to Friday from January. The extra theatre space and expanded surgery workforce will also help reduce waiting lists for some common procedures. I add that for the very first time interns have been allocated to Katoomba Hospital. The people of the Blue Mountains are really enjoying the extra services provided and the additional staff at Katoomba Hospital.

I conclude my contribution by discussing one of my favourite projects that we have recently been able to fund. It was again wonderful for the Minister for the Environment to visit the area to announce \$1.2 million in funding for restoration work on the Three Sisters walking track. I began to lobby for that upgrade two years ago when I found out from the National Parks and Wildlife Service that it was desperately required. It was not hard to see why. The Three Sisters walking track was constructed in the 1930s and not much has changed since then. Echo Point receives about two million visitors per year and the state of the track was appalling. It was cracked and a litigation nightmare waiting to happen. People could have easily fallen from the track.

The Three Sisters is an iconic tourism destination. It was a disgrace that international tourists enjoying what might have been their only Australian bushwalk had to use such a dilapidated track. I am pleased the Government announced the funding, and the work has already been started. When the Minister kindly visited we met with National Parks and Wildlife Service and council staff who had input in the project and together we inspected the first area to be completed. It was timely because the international parks congress was being held at the time and delegates were able to visit the Blue Mountains to savour that part of the area.

As well as improving the track by providing disability access, our great Aboriginal heritage will be displayed in various interpretive areas. The Three Sisters is an important place for many Aboriginal people. The land formation is an Aboriginal significant place, where members of many different nations came together. The Blue Mountains is home to the Darug and Gundungurra people. The Wiradjuri people from over the mountains and other peoples also travelled there to congregate. All in all, the Government is doing a great job in the Blue Mountains. It has funded many other projects—

Mr Rob Stokes: Tell us about them.

Mrs ROZA SAGE: There are so many that I will have to sit down and tally them. There are far too many to list in this short space of time. In conclusion, I am extremely committed to continuing the good work that the New South Wales Government has started. It is my commitment to the people of the Blue Mountains to always advocate on their behalf and continue the good work of this Government.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.09 p.m.]: The New South Wales Liberal Government and Mike Baird's team have been delivering for New South Wales, but particularly in my electorate of Baulkham Hills. The budget achieves a surplus and fulfils our infrastructure commitments. It is ironic

that in 1985 Bob Carr and the Labor Party under the Carr plan promised rail to The Hills. It never happened. In 1998, Bob Carr promised rail to The Hills again and said it would be completed by 2011. It never happened. In 2005, Bob Carr and Labor delayed rail to The Hills until 2017. In February 2008, Morris Iemma and Labor cancelled rail to The Hills. In March 2008, Morris Iemma and Labor promised rail to The Hills, which would be completed by 2017. In October 2008, Nathan Rees and Labor shelved rail to The Hills. In October 2010, Kristina Kenneally and Labor promised rail to The Hills, with construction to start in 2017 and completion by 2024.

It is no surprise that the people of Baulkham Hills are sick and tired of Labor. It is no surprise that they know what the rest of New South Wales knows: We cannot trust Labor promises in relation to infrastructure. By not delivering, Labor was unable to secure the long-term future for New South Wales and was unable to plan development effectively. Councillor Mark Taylor and other Hills shire councillors are relieved that construction has started on the North West Rail Link and that this Government and this budget are delivering on the North West Rail Link. Liberal councillors and local members of Parliament know that it is wrong to play politics with infrastructure because it stops councils and communities planning effectively for the future. The budget includes \$863 million to begin construction of the \$8.3 billion North West Rail Link. We made a promise and we are keeping to it. The Liberal Government is fulfilling its promises. "Elizabeth" the boring machine—and, no, I am not referring to the Leader of the Opposition, and member for Blacktown—

Mr Geoff Provest: Or Walt?

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: And I am not referring to Walt Secord. The boring machine "Elizabeth" is working. The machine has come from France via China and it is digging in the ground as I speak. "Elizabeth" has begun work on the stations, as we saw from a newspaper front page this morning. With the excavation of Cherrybrook and Castle Hill stations having commenced, the switch yard construction has also commenced. The people of Baulkham Hills can see that this is happening and that promises made to the north-west are being fulfilled. We are getting on with the job. The provision of an additional \$7 million in funding has been earmarked. The project will require extending the North West Rail Link to the second harbour crossing, which I know is a priority for the Minister and the Premier.

The Treasurer has announced a plan to deliver funds for the Sydney Rapid Transport line as well. He will use the funds from the long-term lease of the State's poles and wires to build a second harbour rail crossing also. This is exactly the type of infrastructure project and investment that The Hills has been crying out for. It took Mike Baird and his team to deliver on those projects. One of my political heroes, Margaret Thatcher, allegedly said that a man who, beyond the age of 26, finds himself on a bus can count himself as a failure. Unlike the late Dame Margaret Thatcher, I am a big fan of the buses. My wife, my children and I use buses. That is why I am delighted to announce that the 2014 budget expanded bus services to The Hills. The M60 travels from Parramatta to Hornsby; the T65 travels from Rouse Hill to Parramatta via the T-way; the 602X travels from Rouse Hill to North Sydney; the 607X travels from Rouse Hill to the Sydney central business district [CBD]; the 612X travels from Kellyville to Milsons Point; the 615X travels from Kellyville to the Sydney CBD; and the 601 travels from Rouse Hill to Parramatta via Kellyville.

New bus route 706 will be introduced to provide public transport from Parramatta to Blacktown via Winston Hills and Kings Langley. Our Liberal candidate for Seven Hills, Councillor Mark Taylor, and I have long recognised the need to increase public transport services to the community. We look forward to using this new service. The introduction of the Opal card has enabled the Government to provide cheaper fares each week compared with the former TravelTen tickets. The budget includes \$157 million to continue the rollout of the Opal card. When the Baird Liberal Government completes the North West Rail link, it too will be Opal ready. We will be able to go anywhere with the Opal card. Labor promised an electronic ticketing system by the time Sydney hosted the 2000 Olympics. We were still waiting for it when Labor was booted out of office.

The budget also sets aside \$400 million for stage one of the Parramatta light rail. In the next few months we will be investigating routes, particularly those linking Parramatta to Castle Hill. I am keenly following the development of light rail in Western Sydney. It is not only in the area of transport infrastructure that this budget is delivering. The budget is providing \$5 million to begin the redevelopment of the Westmead Hospital, which I know the Liberal candidate for Seven Hills, Mark Taylor, is very excited about. He has hosted a visit by the Minister for Health to discuss the project with the community. The upgrade of the hospital will cost \$1 billion upon completion and will be the largest hospital redevelopment in the State. We also look forward to 12 new state-of-the-art operating theatres, extra inpatient beds, additional car parking and a new emergency department. Mark Taylor is delivering for the people of Seven Hills even before his election. The redevelopment comes after completing a \$5 million upgrade of existing services.

This budget is also providing \$81 million to continue the redevelopment of the Blacktown Mount Druiitt Hospital. The Liberal Government is again investing in the west and north-west Sydney after years of Labor neglect. Our police and other emergency services have also won with this budget. I know that Superintendent Rob Critchlow of the Castle Hill Local Area Command does an amazing job in the area. His effective policing requires boots on the ground, which is why this budget includes \$153 million in recurrent funding over four years to employ additional police officers so that we can increase the strength of our force. The budget provides \$4 million to begin the rollout of body-worn video cameras for the police force. The cameras will make it easier to confirm that the police have used appropriate force and to establish the facts when evidence is presented. I have spoken to community leaders, such as the Liberal candidate for Seven Hills, Mark Taylor, who has told me that the cameras will make it easier to convict criminals who assault police officers, and will make it easier for the police to get on with the job.

As the Parliamentary Secretary for the Centenary of Anzac, I am very pleased that the New South Wales Government is investing in the Anzac War Memorial in Hyde Park and completing the vision of Bruce Dellit by adding a water cascade on the southern side of the memorial. If Labor had its way, we could not be delivering on such a strong budget. John Robertson, the Leader of the Opposition, has opposed every savings measure this Government has introduced. The Liberal Government knows how to produce cost-of-living savings. I congratulate the Premier and the Minister for Resources and Energy, Anthony Roberts, on delivering a 1.5 per cent reduction in electricity prices, which came in on 1 July 2014. Labor opposed those measures and will have to confront that reality at the election.

The days of Labor neglect are over. This budget is delivering on commitments. This budget is from a Government that is rebuilding New South Wales. It is a budget of a Government that believes in action. It is the opposite of a Labor budget: It is fiscally responsible and it delivers on infrastructure. This Government is fulfilling its promise to the people of The Hills to make New South Wales number one again.

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

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORTHERN BEACHES PALLIATIVE AND SUPPORTIVE CARE SERVICE

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [5.21 p.m.]: Pittwater is blessed to have a diversity of community groups and associations, but very few can claim to have as compassionate, caring and inspirational members as those involved with the Friends of Northern Beaches Palliative Care. This group is an integral driving force behind Northern Beaches Palliative and Supportive Care Service, which this year celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary. In October 1989 highly respected and renowned local general practitioner Dr John Doran brought palliative care services to the northern beaches and the picturesque surrounds of Mona Vale Hospital. This concept—to provide specialist physical and emotional care to those with life-limiting illnesses—at the time was in its infancy. But with a talented and dedicated team, Dr Doran began a movement that today supports countless local families during the most difficult of circumstances.

Unfortunately, it has not been a straightforward journey. As with many projects and initiatives, funding, infrastructure needs and red tape have proven to be challenging. This included a somewhat comical decade-long battle with the little-known New South Wales Commissioner of Dormant Funds to recoup hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations raised by our community. However, the issues have been progressively worked through and overcome, culminating towards the end of last year with the opening of a refurbished and expanded palliative care unit on the eastern side of Mona Vale Hospital's grounds. It was my privilege to refer to this project in the House shortly after my election in 2007. At that time it seemed as though it was an impossible dream but, following the change of government in 2011, the vision became a reality. Although the project was many years in the making, this modern, purpose-designed facility is one of the best available examples of a true community-based project and a genuinely beneficial partnership between the community and the New South Wales Government.

Whilst the services and facilities have changed and improved over time, one of the most important constants has been the outstanding support provided by our local palliative care volunteers who serve our community in the most compassionate and altruistic ways possible. We all know that volunteers make communities. We also know that without them many of the services and opportunities we often take for granted simply would not be possible. This is particularly the case with the Friends of Northern Beaches Palliative Care, who combine essential fundraising activities with bereavement support, respite assistance and personal companionship. There is nothing more important a local volunteer can provide, nor is there anyone more vulnerable or in greater need of support.

Saying thank you to everyone who has contributed towards such an important service over 25 years is an almost impossible task. However, one very special volunteer, who has contributed since the beginning, is Jo-Ann Steeves. Jo-Ann epitomises the ideals of volunteerism and continues to serve our community with absolute enthusiasm and passion. In the same breath, I also pay tribute to the late Cora Adcock. Among her many community achievements and contributions, Cora began spearheading our community's fundraising efforts for the unit's recent expansion some 20 years ago. It is certainly fitting that this very special facility is named in her honour. I also specifically acknowledge the long-term contribution of palliative care specialists Dr Peter Moore and Dr Jerry Lake, and more recently Dr Anthoulla Mohamudally. They are widely considered to be the angels of the northern beaches. I acknowledge also the indomitable and passionate Gail Carew, who I am convinced never sleeps and is always willing to put up her hand to offer support and assistance wherever possible.

Importantly, once again in this House I would like to acknowledge one of the mothers of Mona Vale Hospital, Eileen Gordon, who has spent decades of blood, sweat and tears working to see improvements in patient care and services, and who continues to display outstanding leadership on behalf of our community. Also deserving of great recognition is everyone involved with Hope Healthcare and HammondCare over many years, including Stewart James, Dr Stephen Judd, Mark Newton, Fran Hennes and Geraldine Dixon, along with Mona Vale Hospital's General Manager Frank Bazik, Director of Nursing and Midwifery Jacqui Edgley and our local health district chief executive, Associate Professor Vicki Taylor. All have provided outstanding assistance in many different ways. I also commend the team at Pittwater Council, particularly Mayor Jacqueline Townsend, Emeritus Mayor Harvey Rose, Councillor Kay Miller, Community Manager Lindsay Godfrey and everyone involved in the flotilla of community groups that have provided support to the Friends of Northern Beaches Palliative Care over so many years.

Among many others, this has included the Mona Vale Hospital Auxiliary, Pittwater Business Limited, the Zonta Club of the Northern Beaches and the Pittwater, Terrey Hills, Narrabeen Lakes, Frenchs Forest, Dee Why-Warringah and Manly Rotary clubs. Without the support of these groups, and their generous members, the palliative care services provided at Mona Vale Hospital simply would not be possible. Looking to the future, the Friends of Northern Beaches Palliative Care have set their focus on the introduction of a specialist inpatient palliative care unit at Mona Vale Hospital. I certainly agree with the group, and its many supporters, that the need is growing and there simply is no better hospital location anywhere in Sydney for a service of this nature than Mona Vale Hospital. On behalf of the Pittwater community, I offer my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the Friends of Northern Beaches Palliative Care, and the Northern Beaches Palliative and Supportive Care Service, over the past 25 years. I cannot commend enough the care and service that is provided, nor the staff and volunteers' compassionate efforts.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.26 p.m.]: I commend the member for Pittwater for his ongoing support of Friends of Northern Beaches Palliative Care. People in need of palliative care services are going through a difficult time, and the carers and volunteers deal with serious issues. Great services are offered by palliative care, particularly the volunteers. Mona Vale Hospital and the people of Pittwater are blessed to have such a dedicated local member to advocate for them continually. He shows a great deal of care and understanding during difficult times. As the member said, Pittwater is a far better place and Mona Vale Hospital is far better for the dedication shown by the Friends of Northern Beaches Palliative Care.

FAIRFIELD ELECTORATE TRAIN TIMETABLE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.27 p.m.]: Almost a year ago today I stood in this Chamber and related the concerns of my constituency regarding the impact that the new rail network timetable would have on my electorate. I highlighted the initial impact of the new timetable implementations and the concerns from residents in my local area. In the past year constituents of the Fairfield electorate have voiced their concerns

over and over again regarding timetable changes to the rail network that services our area. Unfortunately, those concerns have been met with a stubborn response from the Government, which has put up a wall and disregarded any concerns that were brought to its attention.

When the Minister for Transport was asked about service cuts in the area and the enormous inconvenience caused to residents in my constituency, the Minister ignored the concerns raised and instead launched into a tirade about the new services on offer and how this would make things better. But I have some news for the Minister: What you believe looks good on paper does not always work out as a viable solution for commuters in the Fairfield electorate. One example is the residents who live in Chester Hill and need to commute to Homebush on a daily basis. Before this fancy new timetable came into effect, my residents had the opportunity to catch a direct train to Homebush, which took approximately 20 minutes.

Upon implementation of the Minister's "new and improved" timetable, with enhanced services to cater to the needs of commuters across the rail network, residents in Chester Hill travelling to Homebush are now required to use four train services, resulting in a commute that takes just under an hour. That is correct: four trains! One, hop on the train at Chester Hill; two, change trains at Birrong; three, change again at Lidcombe; and four, change once more at Strathfield and then we are finally on our merry way to Homebush. I fail to see how this new timetable enhances services and caters to the needs of my residents in Chester Hill. The Minister is busy touting how wonderful the new timetable is and yet she has utilised very few resources to ensure vital train services were not cut or made overly complex for commuters in the Fairfield electorate.

Recently, we have seen information pertaining to the complaints made by commuters on the New South Wales rail network since the timetable changes have come into effect. Oh my, the information is truly astonishing. A plethora of complaints—which are labelled as "valued feedback"—are supposed to be able to provide invaluable information to allow for changes as necessary, while ensuring the network is meeting the needs of the residents. These complaints have blown out to astronomical proportions and have obviously been ignored. What will the Minister do in light of the record-breaking level of complaints? I imagine she will boast about the range of new services on offer and how the timetable is making things better for the rail network across the State. According to the Auditor-General's report, between 2013 and 2014 the number of timetable complaints to Sydney Trains increased by 949 per cent—that is right, 949 per cent. I am not misrepresenting information here; these figures are correct.

We have also seen an increase in complaints in other areas. Ticketing complaints have increased by 51 per cent; information complaints have increased by 38 per cent; service complaints are higher by 24 per cent; and security complaints have increased by a staggering 26 per cent. It is no wonder commuters are infuriated. Services have been cut and then replaced with substandard provision, which leaves many commuters feeling unsafe and uncomfortable and stranded at stations from time to time. As a result a plethora of commuters feel completely dissatisfied. This is all a consequence of the Government's shoddy management of our rail network, and action needs to be taken. The Government has neglected the residents of the Fairfield electorate for far too long.

The Government and the transport Minister need to begin listening to the concerns of the residents and commuters in the Fairfield electorate. They are unhappy with the abhorrent services being delivered in our area and they are tired of being ignored by the Baird-Grant Government. The Government and the Minister created this problem but pretend nothing is wrong, and the residents of Fairfield are now suffering as a result. Minister, it is time to stand up, own your mistakes and fix this timetable dilemma. The Government needs to begin delivering services that meet the needs of everyone, not just pockets of commuters here and there. The people of New South Wales, and particularly those in the Fairfield electorate, deserve better.

ARMIDALE AND DISTRICT WOMEN'S CENTRE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [5.32 p.m.]: The Armidale and District Women's Centre was formed by a group of passionate, insightful women in 1986 to provide a much-needed safe and supportive environment for all women in the Armidale community. It is fair to say that at present they are very concerned about the future of their service. In fact, unless additional funding is found very shortly, the centre is scheduled to close in the middle of next month. The Armidale and District Women's Centre has been an Armidale institution for nearly 30 years. But the centre faces a difficult time, given that as a result of recent reforms to the homeless sector it will no longer receive the \$50,000 in annual government funding that it received previously.

The centre was established in late 1986 with a grant from the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program [SAAP] through the Department of Community Services. It was first situated upstairs in Faulkner House, Armidale, and now is located at 3/87 Beardy Street. The women's centre provides information, support, referral and advocacy services for women, children and young people in Armidale and surrounding districts. The centre operates an information and referral service covering the many needs of women in the local community. The centre works closely with other community organisations, ensuring that all referrals are the most appropriate for the client at the time.

The Armidale and District Women's Centre incorporates three main services: the centre itself, the Domestic Violence Proactive Support Service [DVPASS], and the Safer Options for Armidale [SOFA] initiative. Both DVPASS and SOFA government-funded programs will continue under the reforms. However, these complementary services will be moved to another organisation prior to the women's centre potentially closing its doors in the middle of next month. Those funded services will continue, but will not be provided by the women's centre. Many women at the centre access the free counselling service provided by qualified volunteer counsellors, of which there are many, and volunteer psychologists.

Additionally, the centre runs regular and one-off groups that inform and support women. The centre also provides housing and accommodation assistance; help in accessing emergency relief with food and finances; and the opportunity to use technology, including computers, printers and phones, which are provided free of charge. The women's centre operates frugally with minimum funding but much community support and assistance by volunteers. The centre sees about 50 clients a week and, as I said, is supported by a wonderful team of volunteers. Women's issues vary from help with accommodation to assistance with family break-ups, violence, social isolation, disadvantage and unemployment.

The centre provides support to women with toddlers and to teenagers, and assists the many University of New England students who are away from home with no support networks. The centre provides assistance to those needing a space for a cup of tea and a chat as well as being a referral service. The centre has been an essential service for many years in our local community. It has provided a number of services and courses from reducing energy costs to self-esteem courses, breaking free, healthy relationships, grandparents as carers, parenting and nurturing through nature, art therapy, laughter, yoga, a cultural cafe, conversational English for women from overseas and a plethora of other services over many years. Certainly, the centre is greatly appreciated by the community.

Over the past 18 months the management committee has been working with various funding bodies in an attempt to secure ongoing funding. I have met with the organisation's management and its committee a number of times. I commend Robin Passmore and her team, as well as the management committee, for the constructive and sensible way those discussions have been conducted. It is very much appreciated. A number of meetings have been held with FACS at a regional level looking at options of being auspiced by the Tamworth women's refuge. Sadly, to date we have not been able to reach a solution, but I will keep working on their behalf for as long as I can to try to find a solution to ensure that we can keep the doors of the women's centre open. I pay tribute to the centre for providing a unique and important service for the community. I will continue to support it, and hopefully we will find a solution.

RENEW NEWCASTLE

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [5.37 p.m.]: Newcastle has led the renewal of its central business district [CBD]. For those who do not know, before the GPT Group bought a large amount of real estate in the heart of Newcastle to create its new residential and retail development, the CBD had many vacant shops. The question was what to do with those vacant shopfronts. Renew Newcastle was established to help solve the problem of Newcastle's empty CBD and to find short- and medium-term uses for vacant or disused buildings, or those awaiting redevelopment. Renew Newcastle aims to find artists, cultural projects and community groups to use and maintain the buildings until they become commercially viable or are redeveloped. Renew Newcastle is not set up to manage long-term uses, own properties or permanently develop sites; instead, it is to generate activity in the buildings until future long-term activity takes over.

While the long-term prospects for the redevelopment of Newcastle's CBD are good, in the meantime many sites remain boarded up, falling apart, vandalised or decaying because they have no short-term use and no-one is taking responsibility for them. Renew Newcastle cleans up these buildings to get the city active and again in use. Marcus Westbury is a writer, broadcaster, festival director and media maker. He was born in Newcastle and has long been obsessed with the problem of Newcastle's decaying and vacant buildings. He initiated Renew

Newcastle joined by Marni Jackson, who was the general manager from 2008 to 2014. The current general manager is Christopher Saunders. Renew has led Newcastle's ailing city centre out of the doldrums, but is now under threat of running out of money and folding. The project has run on an annual budget of about \$200,000, funded mostly by the State Government over the past three years, but will run out early next year.

Since its inception, Renew Newcastle has undertaken 169 projects and filled 70 vacant premises. It has steered a drop in city vacancy rates of up to 80 per cent, reduced vandalism, activated tired and worn-out corners of the city, increased tourism and created jobs. Every dollar invested in the program is returned eleven-fold in economic activity. Many businesses launched under the project now occupy full commercial leases in the city. Two businesses actually purchased buildings and now each employ nine people. The project has been adopted by other major cities facing the same issues as Newcastle. Among them are Melbourne and Adelaide, and Christchurch in New Zealand, which is still trying to recover from its devastating earthquakes.

In the past, the program has had good support from the council and the State Government, but the absence of State members of Parliament following the recent Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] hearings has made it hard to pursue a renewal of the project's three-year funding model. Hunter Development Corporation has moved to save Renew Newcastle from financial oblivion by pledging \$30,000 a year, but this is not enough. The scheme needs about \$200,000 a year to operate, and that funding has run out. Trades and Investment has provided \$50,000 per year from its Enterprising Regions Program, but without indication of ongoing funding. Arts NSW provided annual funding of \$50,000 per year until the end of 2012. The withdrawal of that funding provoked a media outcry, and the Minister reinstated it for 2013 only.

In 2013 the Premier provided \$50,000 through the Premier's Rural and Regional Grants Fund for 2014. The combination of those funds amounts to about \$150,000 per year for the past three years. At this stage only \$30,000 from the Hunter Development Corporation is confirmed for next year. UrbanGrowth has suggested that it may be able to fund core costs in 2015, but nothing has been confirmed. In the absence of a local member for Newcastle, conversations were had with Scot MacDonald, MLC. He was impressed with Renew Newcastle and made reference in Parliament to its value. He also briefed the Premier's Chief of Staff about finding ongoing government funding. I have approached the Premier's Chief of Staff to continue discussions and I hope for a positive outcome.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.42 p.m.]: I thank the member for Newcastle for updating the House on Renew Newcastle. I am delighted that the State Government's investment is delivering results and I congratulate everyone involved. This is just another example of the Liberal-Nationals Government supporting the Hunter and Newcastle region because for many years, as the member identified correctly, the former administration neglected Newcastle. I am glad this money will make such a difference to the community and is producing results.

THE GREAT DRIPPING WALL

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.43 p.m.]: I address members of the House on an issue that is very dear to the hearts of people in my electorate and indeed is of great national and international significance. I speak of The Drip. It is a beautiful natural landmark that is a 35-minute drive from Gulgong and Mudgee. The Drip, or the Great Dripping Wall, is formed of natural sandstone, which towers over the northern bank of the Goulburn River. Water runs down from surrounding hillsides and seeps through the high rock gorges, filters through the sandstone rock and drips into pools of water in the river below. It is one of the most famous unique natural water features in New South Wales and Australia, and is renowned all over the world.

On 30 November 2010 The Drip was sold to Moolarben Coal. The deal was overseen by the Hon. Tony Kelly, who was the relevant Minister at the time. Unfortunately, this was four months before the 2011 State election and the people of Mudgee and the surrounding districts knew absolutely nothing about it. We still ask questions about how the beautiful natural landmark could have been signed over in the dying days of the former Labor Government. Since that time, the New South Wales Government has attempted to reach an agreement with Moolarben Coal to have The Drip handed back. Those discussions have been progressing with the help of environment Minister Rob Stokes. In the interests of the people of the district and indeed in the national interest, those discussions must be brought to a close to finalise the matter. This issue is not going away. If it remains unresolved, the community and I will be unhappy.

This is not about being anti-mining or pro-mining. Most people in our area support mining because of its economic benefits. But Moolarben Coal, which is mining in the area, has to accept that there is a huge

amount of community interest in The Drip and that the public want their famous landmark protected. I invited the environment Minister Rob Stokes to visit The Drip. He is the first Minister of this Government to have done so, and I thank him for that. He was mightily impressed with what he saw. We were standing under the dripping rock when I lost my footing. As I stood in the car park wiping away the blood from my shattered elbow, he simply waved as he left the car park. I commend the Minister for his caring attitude.

On a more serious note, discussions between the Minister and Moolarben Coal are ongoing. They must be progressed to meet the concerns of the community. The Drip should be declared a national park. Let us stop beating around the bush and finalise the matter. Until this issue is resolved, there will be a high degree of community angst and anger. If some concessions have to be made to the community for the mining operations to continue, so be it; that is the price that must be paid for mining. We are not against mining. Most members of the community support it, but this matter must be finalised.

Bev Smiles has been a local community activist for some time and she is leading the charge on The Drip. Recently she presented me with a book entitled "Save The Drip: Echoing the Sentiments of our Local Community". It features art work from The Drip as well as messages and thoughts from community members about how significant The Drip is to them. When the Minister and I were at The Drip, we saw the wall where Brett Whitely painted his mural, which still exists, although it has dimmed with the passing of time. I will pass the book on to the Premier. I thank Ms Smiles for her work and the community for their support for The Drip. The matter must be sorted; The Drip must be saved.

BULAHDELAH DISTRICT SOLDIERS MEMORIAL GATES 1914-1918

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.48 p.m.]: On Saturday 15 November I attended the dedication ceremony of the Bulahdelah District Soldiers Memorial Gates 1914-1918, which was a spectacular day. The dedication ceremony was in recognition of the service and sacrifice of the men and women from the Bulahdelah district as a tribute to the Anzac Centenary. The original Soldiers Memorial Gates were dedicated on 15 February 1941. With the passage of time the gates had fallen into disrepair. When it became necessary to widen the entrance the gates were removed and were left lying at the back of the showgrounds. The hardworking committee of the Bulahdelah Show Society and the Bulahdelah RSL sub-Branch decided to restore the gates.

A couple of years ago I had the pleasure of viewing their plans and obtained a Community Building Partnership grant to assist with building new gates for the Bulahdelah Showground entrance. The Master of Ceremonies on the day was John Smith. Stephen Rae, whom I had the pleasure of working with in the Police Force, is now the Prosecutor at the Drug Court at Toronto. He is also a lay Minister and he led the community in prayer. His wife, Meredith, sang the national anthem. Warwick Murray, a renowned bugler from the Manning Valley, played the bugle. Art Brown gave special thanks to the Government for the Community Building Partnership grant. He said:

Being a numbers man I have witnessed an enormous amount of money that has been invested by government in the Bulahdelah area in recent years—I am sure to the envy of other big towns in other electorates.

A number of people in the community assisted in completing the work. The brickwork was done by Rod King; the cement rendering was done by John Bartyn; and the iron work—of the highest skill—was done by David Fenning, who is the father of Ryan Fenning, the renowned rugby player for the Forster Tuncurry Dolphins. The timber strainers were obtained by Harold Matherson from the local eucalypt forest; the rails and the curing of the wood was done by Dorneys Mill; the hole boring was done by Wally Towers, with the support of Ron Klaxton and Kerrie Simmons from Great Lakes Council. Special thanks went to Andrew Moncrieff, a master shipwright, who took on the responsibility of project managing the onsite activities. He prepared and constructed the wooden fence and then capped it off with copper skulls, which is a great tribute to the timber heritage of the Bulahdelah District.

Special thanks was given to Harvey Reynolds, a wing-commander and flight contingent from the RAAF Base at Williamtown; Bradley Barry, a local boy; Tony Hinton, a famous rugby league player on the mid North Coast; officers from the New South Wales Mounted Police Unit; and Rodney O'Regan from the Great Lakes-Manning Valley Light Horse Troop. Troopers came from as far as Grafton, Murrurundi and Sydney. Rodney O'Regan was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia earlier this year. He is a former police officer and an ex-Vietnam veteran. Special thanks were also given to members of the volunteer services, including the fire services and RSL members, the Bulahdelah school representatives and Bulahdelah Scouts.

Gary Gooch, President of the Show Society, and his wife, Kerry, were present, as were Jack and Thora Ireland. I attended their seventieth wedding anniversary a short time ago and Thora was celebrating her ninetieth birthday. Jack, who has also received the Medal of the Order of Australia, is a returned serviceman from the Second World War. Also in attendance were Bob Baldwin, the Federal member for Paterson; Lance Gainey, President of the Lower North Coast District RSL; Eric and Sue Saville, President of the Bulahdelah RSL sub-Branch; David and Wendy Williams from the Agricultural Societies Council of New South Wales; and Rodney and Voula O'Regan from the Great Lakes-Manning Valley Light Horse Troop. It was also a delight to have Gwen Smith there. In 1943 she had her photograph taken in front of those gates. I had the pleasure of cutting the ribbon on the new gates with her on this occasion. I congratulate the committee. It was a great day for all concerned.

GOSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [5.53 p.m.]: I have spoken in this House several times about the decision to relocate Gosford Public School. Tonight I will talk a little about the history of the school. The first Gosford Public School was established in 1865. The old "school on the hill", as it is known locally, is now a heritage-listed building. In 1954 the Gosford Public School moved to its current location and in the revitalisation of the Gosford waterfront that school is now being demolished. Last September, as part of that initiative, we announced, in conjunction with the school, the taking of 1,000 bricks from the school constructed in 1994 to be sold as a fundraiser for the 150th anniversary of Gosford Public School. Principal John Anderson has done a lot of work on this with me and with the Central Coast Regional Development Corporation.

Interestingly, following that announcement in September, my office received a letter from Mrs Janice Saunders nee Gallagher from Dalyellup in Western Australia. Mrs Saunders said that she had been notified about what was happening and wanted to explain her family's connection to the Gosford Public School. Jan's mother was Jessie Gallagher, the daughter of Clara and George Margin—the Margins Cordial factory is famous in Gosford, and members of the great Margin family still reside in the city of Gosford. Jessie Gallagher and her five siblings spent their early school years at the Gosford "school on the hill"—the one built in 1865. In 1924 Jesse and another girl were the first pupils to obtain their leaving certificates at the school. After graduating from the Sydney Teachers' College, Jesse taught at Armidale Demonstration School, and Lisarow and Tinga primary schools. She resigned in 1932 when she married Lloyd Gallagher. Jan said it was legislated that if a female teacher married she had to resign. I have not heard of that, but I will follow it up.

Jesse was re-employed from 1943 to 1948 at Gosford's "school on the hill" because of the shortage of teachers during World War II. Her father, Lloyd Gallagher, ultimately became the headmaster of Gosford Primary School from January 1954 until his retirement in February 1971. Lloyd was born in the Glen Innes district. He undertook his teaching training at Armidale before enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force [AIF] during World War II. He was head teacher at Conifer, Winton, Bowling Alley Point and Pilliga. On his discharge from the Army in 1945, he was appointed acting headmaster at Gosford Public School while Mr George Walpole was on long service leave. The Walpole name is also well known in the Gosford community.

Positions as head of Glebe, Central, Normanhurst and Ettalong schools followed before his final appointment to Gosford Public School as headmaster in January 1954. In March 1954 classes moved into the new buildings in Mann Street—namely, the buildings demolished over the past month because of the construction of the new school. The 1,000 bricks have been taken from that school. Jan was born in 1937 in Gosford and has two brothers, John and Robert. She attended Gosford Public School and Gosford High School before becoming a teacher. She married Alan Sanders in 1959 and they had four sons—Guy, Dean, Scott and Evan—who also attended Gosford Public School.

It was lovely to receive this letter all the way from Western Australia from someone who has such fond memories of Gosford Public School. Indeed, countless generations of her family have either been students or taught at the school. Jan is looking forward to obtaining one or two of the bricks in memory of not only her mother but also her father, her grandmother and all the members of her family who had a long association with the school. The initiative of celebrating these bricks as a fundraiser for the 150th anniversary of Gosford Public School will be well noted by the Saunders family.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.58 p.m.]: I thank the member for Gosford for bringing to the attention of the House the sesquicentenary of Gosford Public School. I congratulate the member on the initiative to inform people about this wonderful achievement as well as this fundraising project. I wish Gosford Public School well.

MEMBER FOR LONDONDERRY PUBLIC SERVICE AND PARLIAMENTARY CAREER

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [5.59 p.m.]: As we face the end of another year I will leave my colleagues with some subject matter to ponder during the Christmas break. First, I will remind the House of my service to the people of New South Wales, my dedication to the people of the electorate of Londonderry and the western and north-western Sydney community, and my commitment to justice, transparency and honesty. Government documents, Hawkesbury City Council records, newspaper articles, and correspondence show that my main focus during my public service work has been on delivering quality services and infrastructure. Even while working in private enterprise I campaigned for the community. That is who I am. That is what I like to do; it has been my purpose in life.

I have devoted countless hours to lobbying politicians, talking with journalists and putting my neck on the line because it was the only way to make Child Flight happen, the medical helicopter service for children which I co-founded in 1989. This service took intensive care transport for critically ill babies and children in New South Wales to being a world leader and providing equity of medical care to communities across Sydney as well as regional and country New South Wales. I also knew that the \$500 million plus Windsor Road and flood evacuation route project was not going to drive itself "all the way to Windsor". As mayor of the Hawkesbury I was known for being progressive and for getting things done—I never shied away from that reputation then and I do not do so now.

I was not the only one who had the guts to take a semi-rural community on the fringe of Sydney into the twenty-first century and to ensure that its residents received the services, facilities and infrastructure they deserved. I was but one of many councillors on Hawkesbury City Council between 2004 and 2012 who shared a vision. But none of the progressive decisions made by Hawkesbury council during that time could have been made without the cohesive support of my fellow Liberal and supportive independent councillors, led by my deputy mayor at the time, Kevin Conolly, who is now my parliamentary colleague. The member for Riverstone moved many of the motions in the council chamber during that time as deputy mayor. I take this opportunity to thank Kevin publicly for his support as my deputy mayor at Hawkesbury City Council. We could not have achieved half as much as we did if we had not been so united.

I am proud that many other projects I campaigned for as mayor are now being delivered by this Coalition Government—the North West Rail Link, cross-regional transport, the Richmond Road upgrade, intersection upgrades between Richmond and North Richmond, and the air-conditioned and brand-new Waratah trains now plying the Richmond line, which was unheard of during Labor's time in power. As mayor of Hawkesbury I had a track record of ensuring that decisions were based on policy documents and staff recommendations. I did not base decisions on personality or whim nor on who I socialised with, as some Hawkesbury councillors have done for years. Members will understand my dismay and bewilderment that the Independent Commission Against Corruption was not presented with this evidence when I was wrongly accused recently of wrongdoing. I have not been given a right of reply to information presented, which I vehemently refute.

Two decisions from my time as Hawkesbury mayor are in question. The first involved a development application for a nursing home, which complied with the former Labor Government State Environmental Planning Policy (Seniors Living) [SEPP], and had sign-off from all relevant State Government departments. It was recommended for approval by Hawkesbury council's professional planning staff. Five of the 10 councillors present voted contrary to the staff recommendation, and five voted to support the staff recommendation. I used my casting vote to break the deadlock. As was my usual and provable voting pattern, I supported the staff recommendation.

The second decision involved another planning matter. The Labor Government had set housing targets for all councils through the metropolitan strategy. Hawkesbury was given a target of 5,000. Hawkesbury City Council developed a residential strategy that took many years to develop. Years of community consultation was conducted. The rezoning of the land was approved by the New South Wales Department of Planning through the gateway process. This required a voluntary planning agreement, which included a new bridge fully funded by the developer, and was signed off between the developer, Hawkesbury City Council and Roads and Maritime Services.

By the time the rezoning application had approval from State government departments and was voted on by councillors I was no longer a councillor on the Hawkesbury City Council. Needless to say, I am perplexed as to why the issue of planning processes was raised in the Independent Commission Against Corruption

[ICAC] in relation to me when due process was clearly followed by all authorities. I am disappointed at not being given a right of reply to misleading and factually incorrect information presented to the ICAC, especially when others on the Hawkesbury City Council—some of whom remain on the council—have displayed interesting anomalies in their voting patterns.

Certain councillors on Hawkesbury City Council, who I understand provided incorrect and misleading background information to ICAC in relation to me for politically motivated reasons, have traditionally voted against development west of the river. But they voted in favour of a land subdivision at Kurmond owned by a person known to one of them. This was as well as supporting development on land owned by a member of the Labor Party and former union official, and other landowners at Kurrajong. I will pursue these anomalies. It will be interesting to see whether the ICAC pursues them as vigorously as it has pursued Liberal Party members of Parliament.

In closing, I am proud of my achievements for and service to the New South Wales community, specifically to the Hawkesbury local government area as mayor and member for Londonderry as well as serving for more than 20 years as a member of the Liberal Party. I thank my family, friends, local Liberal Party members, parliamentary colleagues and community members for their magnificent support over the years, and especially their genuine support over recent months. I acknowledge the dedicated and professional service given by my electorate staff to the community. I have nothing to hide. I have done nothing wrong. I will not resign. I have served New South Wales by saving critically-ill children, as mayor I represented the Hawkesbury local government area strongly so that it had attention paid to it, and I intend to continue to serve the New South Wales community in the future.

ELM COTTAGE SPRING MOUNTAIN FAIR

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.04 p.m.]: On Saturday I had the great pleasure to join members of the community from Tumut and beyond at Elm Cottage for the inaugural spring fair entitled "Excite". Held as part of Elm Cottage's tenth birthday celebrations, this initiative was created through a partnership of Destination NSW, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Boggy Creek Shows, and local and regional producers. Some of those producers were Norfolk Punch, Franklin Butchery, Snowy Mountains Trout, Tumut River Brewing Company, Highfield Farm and Woodland, Yesteryear Plantations, Tumbarumba Wines, The Bush Goddess, Eat Local Thursday, Gundagai Rose Oil, Knight's Meats and Deli, the Thirsty Crow Brewing Company, Charles Sturt University Wines, and the Junee Licorice and Chocolate Factory.

Many events were held at the spring fair. The opening was marked by a welcome to country given by Councillor Sue Bulger, an elder in the local community. We also had a smoking ceremony, which was conducted by Robert Bulger and Lisa Cameron from the Tilma Group. There were many displays and wonderful food was prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. There were kangaroo kebabs, beautiful bush tomato sausages made from bush products and quandong pies. The public came out and supported this inaugural spring fair conducted on the banks of the beautiful Goobarragandra River, or "Little River" as it is known.

Also in attendance was my Federal parliamentary colleague Michael McCormack, James Reeson, Mick Pettit and Mark Lees. A number of speeches were made. I had the great pleasure of making some remarks about the importance of tourism to Tumut and indeed the Snowy Mountains area. Tourism is promoted through events such as this. Local operators David and Deborah Sheldon put their money where their mouths are and advertised heavily. They brought together all these organisations to promote local produce. James Reeson from the television show *Alive and Cooking* was definitely a highlight of the day. A delightful fellow, he entertained the crowd with his cooking skills. The television production crew was also filming him for an upcoming episode. So attendees were given an insight into not only cooking but also the world of television. Fourth-generation mountain cattleman Tim O'Brien from Tumbarumba and the Boggy Creek Shows captured the audience's attention. There was boomerang throwing and local Indigenous crafts as well.

A company I was totally impressed with was Norfolk Punch. This company has operated in Goobarragandra Road near Tumut for a long time. It makes a unique range of products. One of these is Wagga Wagga Rose Honey. The owner, Blair Montague-Drake, exports his products all around the world. It is a small business but it delivers products to Japan and to other places. He makes things such as fructus benedictus, Kendall Ginger Bliss, Timbertown Colonial Decoction, Hill End Herbal Tonic, Morpeth's Marvellous Elixir, Wagga Wagga Rose Honey as well as physio massage oil, et cetera. These unique products are made in our local area.

There was also a stall from Eat Local Thursday, which is a local organisation run by Penny Scott. She brings local producers together each Thursday so that locals can go and buy produce from the Riverina, which is pollution free and the best there is. I congratulate all those involved in this the inaugural Excite spring fair. I wish them well. I had a wonderful day there. I congratulate David and Deborah Sheldon on their initiative and on promoting tourism using local products. People came from all around the region, including Canberra, Queanbeyan and beyond.

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution matter of public importance proceeded with.

GO HOME ON TIME DAY 2014

Matter of Public Importance

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [6.10 p.m.]: I speak on the matter of public importance about national Go Home on Time Day. National Go Home on Time Day is being observed today. It was launched in 2009 as a light-hearted way to start a conversation amongst Australian employees and their families and friends about the importance of work-life balance and the many significant consequences work-life balance can have on physical and mental health, relationships and communities. I think it is fitting that on national Go Home on Time Day, with ordinary business the House would rise at about 10.00 p.m. on Wednesday evening but today the House will rise significantly earlier than that.

Six years on from the inaugural national Go Home on Time Day work-life balance is still an issue for millions of people across this State and this country. National Go Home on Time Day continues to promote conversations regarding work-life balance. To support national Go Home on Time Day the Australia Institute has released a paper entitled "Walking the tightrope: have Australians achieved work-life balance?" Work-life balance is a measure of how much work interferes with a person's available time to engage with life outside work to do the tasks and to have the enjoyment we need to live ordinary and acceptable lives.

This includes things such as: Do we have enough time to maintain our friendships and to undertake the community activities that we want to undertake? Does work interfere with our caring responsibilities? Can we make medical appointments to look after our health? Are our lunch breaks filled with the tasks we need to do because we do not have time to do them after work? Achieving a balance between a life which makes us happy and fulfilled and a satisfying job is an ongoing challenge for millions of people across this State and this country. National Go Home on Time Day gives us a chance to talk about that. The key finding of the Australia Institute's paper is that work-life balance continues to be an issue for many people, with only three out of 10 reporting an improvement in their work-life balance over the past five years in this country.

Work-life balance is obviously heavily affected by the length of our working week. On a list of average working weeks for full-time employees in OECD countries Australia ranks ninth highest at 42.8 hours. Our average working week is longer than the average of all OECD countries and is more than the average hours worked by full-time employees in the United Kingdom, Portugal, Switzerland, Slovenia, Italy, Germany and certainly the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark at the bottom of the table. Furthermore, Australians continue to work large amounts of unpaid overtime. Research conducted this year for Go Home on Time Day found that on average full-time workers reported working six hours of unpaid overtime each week and three hours in the case of part-time employees. The average worker effectively donates \$9,741 worth of unpaid overtime to his or her employer each year, with the national total of donated hours being 58.8 million hours. Based on the average income, that adds up to almost \$110 billion of donated hours across the country.

Unpaid hours represent approximately 14.7 per cent of all hours worked. If those hours were paid and allocated to Australians looking for work our unemployment rate could be zero. In 2010 Australians were working on average 2½ hours more a week than they would have liked. Only one in five workers reported that they were working the hours they would like to work. Not surprisingly, people who work long hours were most likely to want to work fewer hours and part-time workers indicated that they would like to work more hours. Since 2010 the balance between life and work has become even worse for 42 per cent of workers. Just less than 30 per cent said that their work-life balance had improved and about the same number reported no change.

I will briefly talk about the human aspect. Close to a third of the workers in this country, mostly men, are in their workplace for 50 hours per week. We know that the research shows that unsocial working hours

result in people being overweight and, as a result of parents not being around, increased obesity in children. Long hours increase stress, people take less exercise and the incidence of cardiovascular disease is increased. The expectations of our culture need to change. National Go Home on Time Day assists us in that conversation. I commend the organisers of national Go Home on Time Day.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [6.15 p.m.]: This is the first opportunity I have had to formally welcome my colleague the member for Charlestown to the Chamber. She and I are from that amorphous force in this Chamber known as the Local Government Mafia. It is wonderful to see yet another contributor to local government representing her community in this House. It is with a great sense of irony and some might say hypocrisy that I support the member for Charlestown on the matter of public importance relating to national Go Home on Time Day. As the member said, today is a day that draws our attention to the importance that maintaining a work-life balance has to our health, relationships and workplaces.

Staying in touch with friends, family, the community and social networks is important to ensure sound mental health outcomes. Ensuring that the pressures of working life do not encroach on time spent with family and friends is incredibly important to ensure mental wellness. It gives us time to exercise, enjoy hobbies and mentally recharge. These days, greater use of technology outside the workplace means that workers are increasingly finding themselves almost permanently on call. The use of iPhones, Blackberries, iPads and every other possible form of electronic device means we are often working even longer hours outside the office.

It is important to spend time on non-work related activities outside the office to reduce stress levels and clear one's mind. Government members recognise the importance of supporting sound mental health outcomes. I am sure that all members of the House join us in doing so. We have a record \$1.62 billion budget for mental health this financial year. Members may be interested to know that some of that money is used to provide mental health measures that are aimed at prevention and early intervention. It is aimed at ensuring people suffering from stress and anxiety are supported and provided with treatment before a more serious mental health issue develops.

It is in that vein that I commend my friend the Minister for Mental Health, Jai Rowell, and look forward to him visiting my electorate soon for a youth mental health forum. I hold a youth forum in this place every year. The number one issue to come from the students at those forums is youth mental health and problems such as youth suicide. I am looking forward to hosting Mind Blank and like organisations in my electorate. I am sure that work-life balance will be an issue raised as part of the education process at the inaugural Kiama Mental Health Forum to be held in a few weeks time.

The New South Wales Government provides \$2 million per year to Lifeline for telephone and counselling services for anyone needing someone to talk to. I commend former leader Barry O'Farrell and former leader John Brogden, who pioneered the campaign to ensure that we provide funds to those who are suffering from mental health issues. The 2013-14 budget included \$1.8 million for two LikeMind pilot sites in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. Those sites will feature the co-location of mental, physical and other support services and treatments under one roof and demonstrate the holistic approach that people must take to ensure their mental health and wellbeing.

While we may sometimes be in this place late into the night in the service of the people, I hope that workers across the State take heed of the important message of Go Home on Time Day. As the member for Charlestown eloquently said, many workers contribute well beyond what is expected of them. In some workplaces people feel obliged to do that. For example, local government sector staff do a staggering amount of overtime hours. Many people would be working now at councils around the State as we discuss this important issue in the Chamber.

For many small business people, no day is Go Home on Time Day. The pressures of running a small business mean that many people work late into the night balancing family and work—and the books. Mr Acting Speaker, I know you are incredibly aware of those burdens. We remind anyone who feels the pressures of work that today is an opportunity to pause, reflect and think about the things that are most important—your family and the ones you love. As difficult and challenging as it may be, I urge people to take the opportunity to strike the right balance this Go Home on Time Day.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [6.20 p.m.]: The Opposition joins the member for Kiama in supporting positive mental health outcomes. Members of the Legislative Council, who worked past 3.30 this morning, need to have a good look at themselves. Since it is national Go Home on Time Day they should all

leave work very early today. This is an important day for workers and managers. Workers are often asked to stay back late at the last minute when they have commitments to their children, spouses and other organisations. There is always the risk of losing one's job if one does not do what the boss asks. Today is a good day for everyone to reflect, in particular managers who sometimes ask a bit extra from their employees and put extra pressure on them.

On any given day 2.8 million Australians are uncertain about what time they will finish work. That represents about one in four workers who have to juggle their other commitments such as child care and social activities because of the unpredictability of their jobs. The issues that led to the creation of Go Home on Time Day in 2009 are just as important today. We must stop and have a good think about the issue at this time every year. People struggle with saying no to last minute meetings. They must turn their smartphone to silent when they get home. People are more productive if they take scheduled breaks and avail themselves of their leave.

Certainly I know from my previous workplace that we continually had to urge people to take their leave otherwise they would keep storing it and not take breaks. That was not good for the workplace and it was not good for them. We also need to consider the cost implications. Approximately \$110 billion each year is what free labour is worth. The average worker is doing six hours of unpaid overtime each week, which is worth an enormous amount. There have been some good outcomes from the research that has been published today. This important issue has been brought to the fore. People want more flexible working hours and improved finishing times to strike a work-life balance, but certainly they are unwilling to reduce their pay. We have to strike a good balance between work and life. It is time the Government took this matter more seriously.

Mr Gareth Ward: Good luck with that.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP: I would certainly like to think that the Government is doing that. Opposition members certainly do.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [6.23 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Kiama and the member for Newcastle for their contributions to this discussion on national Go Home on Time Day, which is a matter of public importance. As mentioned by the member for Kiama and the member for Newcastle, research indicates that long working hours contribute to health issues in our community for workers who experience a wide variety of health issues that include obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and an inability to deal properly with diet. Other issues include workers not being able to attend doctors' appointments when they need to. There are also family health issues when parents are not able to be at home with their children and their loved ones and are unable to look after the health issues of their family and loved ones.

There are also social issues involved in working extended or long working hours, such as the impact that has on relationships, partnerships, marriages, families and parenting. There are also the economic issues to which I referred earlier. If we could manage to balance out the long working hours—the unpaid hours and the donated hours that people are working—it is possible that we could solve the unemployment problem in this country. The national Go Home on Time Day really is aimed at dealing with the culture of what our expectations are in the workplace. It is aimed at facilitating discussion by employees and employers.

I cite the example of an employer named Rob Breadan, who is the sales manager of a national company. He turns off the phones at 5.00 p.m. and switches them over to message bank so that employees cannot take phone calls. He insists that people switch off their emails when they take leave. It is that type of effort by employers that recognises the health of employees is important to the vibrancy of the companies. That is welcome in this national Go Home on Time Day discussion. The fact that this issue has been met with agreement by both sides of this Parliament sends the really good message—that there is support from both sides of politics for a discussion of national Go Home on Time Day.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 6.24 p.m. until
Thursday 20 November 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**
